

Pensione Fiorenza,
Via del Presto di San Martino, 7,
Firenze -
December 29th -

Darling Laurie:

At last a precious & thrice - welcome letter from you! Found it waiting on my table when I got home yesterday afternoon. How I did want to sit right down then & there & have a long letter-chat with you! But first came an Italian lesson, and then friends came in after dinner & one of them brought a fiddle, & we played until 'most midnight; and this morning I was on duty as a sitter in the studio, as Eva & Veryl Birch (a gifted English girl) are both doing ~~bests~~ of me, and this afternoon was all filled with carving & shopping for studio necessities. Now it's already 10.30 P.M., & I've just got off a few Christmas "thank yous", but I must write you.

Dear, your letter was full of much news I'd so much rather not bear! Poor Fran, - and poor Frederick. O dear, I can well understand how hard everything has

been. I'm so awfully sorry - you know that.

And you so plucky & cheerful, too, about having to give up your Dale Street studio. I do hope the home one will prove just as good; I regret the lack of privacy it probably entails, but am glad that it will save much wear & tear on your time & strength. But what a move it must have been! Gosh! Don't I know?

It's rather blissful here, living so simply & with so few outside distractions, either personal or "objective". I'm wholly content to spend my short evenings & unconscious nights in this big, quiet old room, & trot out each morning with Eva, along the Via Romana, picking up things for lunch on the way out, (bread & cheese are our staples, with an occasional treat of Campbell's soup), out to our peaceful little studio-in-a-garden, where we model, carve, ponder, and chew the rag, and the hours fly by like minutes.

Am being gradually threatened with acquaintances, either living in or shortly coming to, Florence, but I shall see as little as possible of them. This year is too precious

to waste on social amenities.

I do hope, dear, that your Christmas was a happy one, in spite of sadness & problems on all sides. Shall look eagerly for your next word in the hope that some of the family problems will have been solved, & things looking up a bit.

Eva & I had a sweet Christmas Eve.

I surprised her with a tiny living Christmas-tree, all decorated & be-candled (the first she's ever had!), & she gave me one of her most precious possessions - a book of poems & essays by & about St Francis -. And later, we went to midnight mass at one of the Catholic churches. On Christmas morning, I took the fox-terrier of one of our co-pensioners for a grand rough-&-tumble walk in the Cascini gardens. It was awfully cold, though there was still green grass on the ground, & a good deal of foliage on the trees. But the surrounding hills, as well as the far mountain-ranges, were covered with snow - so beautiful. What a setting it is for this lovely old city! Wait 'til we see it together. I pine for my Laurie every time I wander abroad - there's so much on every hand that

would delight her -

And Eva is an increasing joy. Every nice thing we thought about her proves doubled & trebled on closer acquaintance. She is a very rare and splendid person, and I do feel I shall learn a lot from her, about how to work, how to think, and how to live.

I told you she's doing a head of me, - it's only just begun, but I believe it will be very good indeed. Andretti, the waster, told her to do a head, & she's so frightfully poor she just couldn't afford a model, so I volunteered.

Mother went off to Rome & Mrs. Perkins a few days before Christmas. They're now in Sorrento, and I hope, getting warm. To the eye, Florence does not appear cold, for in our garden there are green shrubs, & violets, and even some new shoots on the lilac twigs; but when I tell you that the temperature of my room here has been, for the last month, 48° without a fire, and 53° with, you may believe it is cold. We wear woollen everythings, & shiver. But keep well, in spite of it & the queer food. Did have a bad cold at first, but am all acclimated now. And think what the spring will be like!! O, I feel like a pig. not sharing it with you!

goodnight, dearest - Bless you -
Brendie