

Firenze -
March 5th? - 1927

Laurie Darling:

A breathing space between two storms: - the storm of packing up, and that of moving to another pensione. We now await the strong man with the hand-cart, and having had my tea, I'm fortified for a scribble to you on some paper I left out of the trunk on purpose. O, we're not going far - as a matter of fact we're going nearer: - nearer the studio and nearer the Istituto d'Arte where Eva spends the greater part of her days absorbing inspiration from Andreotti.

We're also "fed up" with this place, and as Eva's financial adviser tells her she can spend 504 more per day on living expenses, we are going to a somewhat nicer place. My room will be much smaller, but it is still large enough for the piano, and it overlooks

a really-truly garden, instead of a court
into which the sun has never penetrated.
It's a queer court. The inhabitants of it
neither pavements seem to be of three
different species. Firstly (because he's
first in the morning) there's a dilapidated
old rooster with a rusty crow. He's
apparently spending his senseless days
in a state of enforced celibacy (there
are no hens to be seen), but he makes
up for loneliness by crowing long &
mightily every A.M. He's at five. At
six, there's a high-powered motor-car
which is pushed out into the open
to have its morning bath, and then
proceeds to race its engine reverberating
for half an hour before it backs out
through some invisible gate & is off
for the day. At seven, there's a child
who awakes with soul bursting into
songs of joy, and she sings, entirely
without tune or rhythm, at the top
of her lusty lungs, until in self
defense I get up & bang the windows

sheet. This, as you see, concerns only the morning hours. At night, there are two divisions: - a youth in a neighboring apartment who practices (sic!) violin from eleven to twelve every evening. He hasn't a bad tone, but he has only a hazy notion of pitch, and still hazier of time, and he practices Bach with neither key nor rhythm, which is trying, to say the least. Especially when it's at midnight or thereabouts. Then, in the wee sma' hours there appears to be a (fairly distant) "toiletta", which, so far as I can judge, has discovered the secret of perpetual motion. Once let someone give it a good start, and it goes on by itself for hours, quite automatically, alternately filling & emptying itself with all the rhythm that the aforesaid violinist lacks.

O, I'm not complaining - just trying to divert you from your ever-overwhelming job, by telling you some of the quaintnesses on our way. We've not fared really

badly this winter, you know, even though the house has been frigidly cold, the food poor & deadly monotonous (we've had an orange spiece for dessert for both lunch & dinner ever since December 1st! Before that, it was an apple), and the inmates none too inspiring. I've grown fat on it, and you ought to see the calves of my legs after four months of such stair-climbing as we have here! They are round & solid as rocks.

Where we are going the food is better, we both have sunny rooms, and we'll be with several charming friends, old & new, of Eva's. So next time you write me, dearest, address to:

Pensione Isola,
Via de' Verraghi, 109 -

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8 A.M. Next morning

And here I am, still abed, after a ten-hour sleep into which filtered, like a benediction, the patter of rain on the leaves in the garden. And one of my little old ladies has brought me breakfast with toast. Such a welcome

change after tasteless dry rolls of the ³
Mussolini variety. In an hour I must
up & tie me to the studio where
Mercatelli is to give some hard whacks
to Bauer this morning. Don't worry,
dear, about B.'s naked shoulders.
The criticism is all too just, & I never
really intended to flaunt them bare
like that in the finished stone. The
thing was that I didn't know but
that I might want one shoulder, or
even a part of one, and I thought
that while I had my sitter there
I'd better grab all while I could,
and eliminate later on. I don't
think I'll put clothes on, but as
just head & neck will "surge"
out of the block, he won't, I'm sure,
look "naked". I may even leave one
side of his head half buried in the
stone. The marble itself suggests many
possibilities, and I have to go awfully
carefully so as not to lose what would
be a fine effect. I don't think it is much
use asking Eva's advice, much as I
admire her taste & judgement, for she
would never, in the first instance, have

done a man like Bauer at all, and if she had, she'd have approached him from such a different point of view — sculpturally static, instead of musically dynamic — that she's sure to be entirely out of sympathy with what I'm trying (rightly or wrongly) to do. O, she's awfully nice about it, but her approach to sculpture is so totally different from mine.

She has taught me much, and I often wish I had started work when she did, when the modern-ancient belief in simplification, decoration, and "inner", not outer expressiveness, have come to be accepted as the only true foundation. All my training was done in a transitional period, when the old neo-classic was still admired, the "new", as represented by Rodin, openly condemned ~~by~~ but secretly & wistfully aspired to; and the really "modern" was just born, & instantly condemned as mad. Not one of my teachers really had any standard at all to go by, or any very definite idea of a technique

that would fit us for different kinds of sculptural expression. We just learnt to model — And one of the most dangerous ideas of all, (really a trailing remnant of the Baroque) was that a work of art should have action & expression. How far astray these standards have led me! You were one of the first good influences on me, you know, with your sense of the purely decorative and your instinctive leaning toward the passive and permanently beautiful.

I took a great stride forward that day we went to the Louvre and passed by the Winged Victory to worship, instead, the Bronze Charioteer. Remember? (I've got some lovely photographs of that for you, by the way) —

There — I must get dressed and be off — more anon.

----- The studio
11 A.M.

And Mercatelli hasn't come at all, darn him, though he promised to yesterday when I went to the school especially to ask him & to beg for some more sharp tools. We find that these Italians mostly "don't come", no

matter how good their intentions may be. However, I've been having fun digging in & out of Bauer's wavy hair, until the combination of dull tools and heavy hammer has made my arm too lame to work any more for a while.

It's an awfully hard artistic problem, Laurie, & one with which I'm sure you'll fully sympathize - this having to work on & finish up a thing done before I'd gotten a grasp on this new & better way of doing things. At one time I came very near chucking the whole business, but then I decided that it would be futile and cowardly, and unfair to Bauer himself, to throw away all that he and I have put into this already. So I'm plugging on - trying to use my new knowledge in the interpretation of old stuff.

The same, in a way, with the F. R., though perhaps not so much so, except that to satisfy the portrait element in that, I must not stray far from facts in my working out of

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costume, drapery, pose, etc. For instance, one of these massive army cloaks makes infinitely more sculptural folds (when I drape it on my model), than the cloak Hamlet wore. But it bears no resemblance to Hamlet's cloak. A heavier body, made massive & thick & simple would be far more suited to the old stone throne & the general solid effect I want to get, than does the thin & somewhat angular body of F. R. But how can I change that, and not lose a part of his very self? Wow! But it's hard! Guess I'll have to wait for some entirely symbolical & purely imaginative piece of work to try out my new ideas on. Now I am perforce still harnessed to the old.

Dear heart, how I do run on! But you understand this sort of thing so much better than anyone, and I do so long to thrash things out with you. Eva's point of view is fine - noble, direct, sincere and fundamentally right. But as she's never had the long years of readjustment & upset, her understanding is somewhat limited. She

sees no other approach & cannot even
imagine any other. Her vision is very
clear, but very limited.

Now to change the subject: —

A fine letter from you written Feb. 8th.
Just about the time you were writing.
I was in ~~at~~ the Bordini Museum
buying you a photograph of the
Lovely Lady you write of. Yes, it's terra-
cotta, painted. definitely beautiful.
Unfortunately, in the firing, the face
caved in just a wee bit, giving her
a slightly toothless expression (sounds
awful, but is only a shade off perfection,
really). Alinari has only just been
given permission to photograph every-
thing in the place, but by the end
of the month they hope to have several
different views of the Madonna (her
rear view is exquisite) & then I hope
to get a representative collection
for you. I'm going there with Mother
next Sunday. She's just back from
a happy time in Sicily. Her plans
for the future are somewhat vague,
but she expects to join Mrs. Perkins
again sometime next month, for a

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bit of Riviera, & possibly Spain or the
Balearic Islands. I'm a little troubled
to know just what to do about June.

And thereby hangs a tale. Have you still
got, hidden away somewhere, a "story"
I wrote you last year? Well, dear,
if you want to, you can add a final
chapter, & then burn it up. Dell
and Edgar are to be married early
in June, and are coming over here for
a brief honeymoon! So put that in your
pipe & smoke it, but don't tell anyone,
please, as they're keeping it very dark,
& I'm the only one who's supposed
to know anything about it. She may,
for professional purposes, & if she
continues teaching at the Bryn Mawr
school, keep her own name, & they'll
probably have to live apart almost
as much as now, for they've no money
to start a dual establishment. There's
the pity, for he, especially, does so need
a home and loving, intimate care.
But I'm only too glad, as you know,
that he's to have some real happiness
in his lonely and rather difficult life!

Bless both the dears! I've had such sweet & infinitely touching letters from them both. You may think it strange that they propose to come straight to me, but you must remember that before I left I made him distinctly understand that all the old problem was over & done with as far as I was concerned. And of course she has never known of it at all. I'm simply the best friend of both of them, and I am pleased and touched beyond words that they want to share their happiest days with me. They expect to sail about the 11th of June going straight to Paris for a couple of days, & then coming down to Florence. It will be hot here by then, I fear, but we shall soon be off to some of the hill towns, & they will be paradise. Now, Laurie, what shall I do about Mother? She was planning to be with me in June, but if things work out, & if those two come over, I absolutely must have them to myself. Alone,

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I can handle it beautifully, I'm sure, but if there were another person here who knew (as Mother does), it would be absolutely intolerable. Now what about it? Am I utterly selfish in claiming three weeks to myself & them in June? Have I the right to send Mother off alone somewhere during that time? O tell me what is right! I'm all at sea.

The Hervey's write that they are coming over at the end of July, & want me to meet them for a few days somewhere in France, as they'll be too late for Italy. I may do that, as I must undoubtedly go to see my three Aunt in Geneva before returning to the U.S., & that will lead me to the French Alps, where the H.'s expect to go. Then perhaps Paris again before I sail. If I'm to get any kind of studio in New York next winter, I suppose I must be back by mid-September, anyway. If it weren't for my friends,

I'd stay over here another year. Living is so cheap and I sold the "Mischievous Fawn" a little while ago to the Dallas Museum, which (when I've paid back notha), will give me \$ another thousand to live on. But O, I do miss my friends! You most of all - even though I don't see so much of you in the U.S. Also I have compunctions about Shirley. She's been handling all my business affairs this winter, and it's been such an awful chore I can't ask her to repeat it, unless she'll condescend to a secretary, paid by me, which she probably won't. You're right, getting off business letters through a stenog. is well worth while. I'm so glad you & your Dad are doing that.

This won't go through the mail if I write any more. Maybe I'll have to send it in two sections, anyway. And I haven't really answered your letter at all. No proofs have arrived yet, but I live in hopes. I'll keep going back to the Fioranza, every day or two, in case they should come there -
Must hurry off, dear - all love
to you - Brendie