

Feb 22 - Nothing from you yet, so
I'll mail this now -

Via dei Serragli, 109.

Firenze
February 20th '28

Laurie Darling:

Do you know the last letter I
had from you was dated December 11th?
Well, I know your hands are more than
full, so I wait a moment, but just repeat
to myself the old adage - "No news is
good news" - & pray that it holds true
in this instance, at least. I am anxious
to hear, though, what your plans are for
the summer, & what your reaction is to
my suggestion that I spend some of it with
you. Was that awfully nervous of me, & does it
threaten to upset any of your plans? It won't
be for the whole summer, anyhow, for I
find Dad is feeling very lonely & deserted,
now that all his family is far from home,
& I think he will want me for at least
a week or two on his boat in Maine.
Also, (quite between ourselves, for I'm not
mentioning it to family until it is over with,)
I shall probably have to spend several weeks
in the hands of the dentist - having an impacted
wisdom tooth chopped, leached, & gouged out.

Having been through this once, I know how long the after effects & treatments last, so I'll probably be going into retirement for this party soon after I get home. Otherwise, I want, O how I want to be with you. We've been separated far too long, and it makes me very unhappy. Also, I really want to work on & from you, seriously, if your offer of posing still holds good. And Colorado would be the place for that, as you say Denver supplies clay, castles, etc. Guess I'll keep this letter over tomorrow, which is a holiday, in the hope that last week's big boats may have brought me a word from you. The holiday means the last day of Carnival, which means at last one will be able to walk in the streets without having small boys throw handfuls of confetti into ones eyes & mouth & down one's neck, or be tickled with a feather duster by impatient youths.

It also means that my winter's work, such as it is, is drawing to a close, & I must begin finishing up work & thinking about packing & shipping. Of course most of the results of the winter have gone back into the clay-bin at the school, for we are not allowed to take any of our work away from there, but

I shall have one or two heads, & also my garden baby, which I've decided to have cut in stone here, & shipped later. It costs so much less than in America, I felt I should take advantage of it. I forget whether I sent you a "snap" of the baby, but here's another one incase I didn't.

At the school now, I am at last being permitted to copy one of Andreotti's own things - a lovely, simple Madonna & Child that I know you would love. I'm learning more from that than from all the other things put together. He himself is very deprecatory about it, but then - how seldom an artist knows which is his best work! He did it in a couple of days, as a demonstration to the class how to make a block of stone suggest a composition, & because he did it without much thought, he considers it trifling - but to me it is the very essence of Andreotti - which is something pretty fine. I see no more of him than ever. At most, I get a criticism about once in ten days. Not much - but I do think I have learned many things that will bear fruit

later on.

At the studio, I've just finished a head of a blind beggar, & am now doing what is practically my first girl's head (I don't count yours, for it was no good). A lovely, long, gracious, golden-haired young thing - a sculptor herself - who is one of a large & gifted family here. Only trouble with her is, she has so many social engagements - teas, dinners, balls, etc, that sittings are very few & far between, & I'm wondering if I'll get it done before I'm off to Genoa to meet Shirley. Her boat is due on March 2nd, & I'm going up to act as courier, & escort the whole family down to Viareggio (near Pisa, on the sea), where they are to settle for a month or two. There is a wonderful beach there for the babies, & it will be good for Shirley, too, who has been pretty well played out, I imagine this past year, with two babies and one incompetent cook-maid to train. It will be fun getting to know the babies. Nancy is still small, but very thriving. Desmond had tonsils & adenoids out a

couple of weeks before sailing, but seems to have got over the effects very quickly. I shall play about with them for about ten days or a fortnight, & then come back here to settle up my affairs in good earnest.

Laurie - isn't it just my luck? Just this last week I have gotten to know such a perfect dear of an Englishman - an artist - and now here I am going away for keeps!

He's decidedly middle-aged, but we do get on famously together. He is the most discriminating sort of critic of art, & extraordinarily apt in his way of expressing things, & also extraordinarily appreciative of what one is trying to do - as well as what one has done. We've had some great talks. He is now making some drawings of me at the studio while I work. They're rather too flattering - rather Burn-Jones-y - (& I'm too fat now to look like that, if I ever did), but it's good fun - nevertheless. Now why didn't we meet last winter instead of at this eleventh hour? He'd be a real friend to have - something on the Hervey order, if you know

what I mean.

I don't think I've written you since I actually brought my passage home. On the Carmania, sailing from Southampton May 12th. Shall I be seeing Kettleby Abbey again, & without you? I think I must get out there, if only to see what havoc the restorers have wrought. Remember how they were beginning to rip off the ivy last time we were there? And there were some ominous-looking steel girders in the roadway?

Did I tell you Eva has offered me a bed in her London studio (she now lives at the Club), & I shall have a lovely two weeks with her before coming home. I do long to get back to the U.S. now, though I'll probably hate it's crudities at first. But I'm tired to death of being a stranger in a strange land. I want my people, good, bad or indifferent.

Mother will stay over here a few months longer, but insists that she wants to be home next winter, to divide it between Dad & me. She is looking so pretty & well now - is still rather apprehensive about herself, but the doctors have given her a practically clean bill of health, so we're all much relieved.

Dearest, it is midnight. I must stop. I'll go to bed & pray for a long letter from you in the next mail!