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Dear Laura:

Your nice letter came today. I did misunderstand you on the phone.

I think, in fact ^{on drawings} I'm sure, that all the book needs now is either photographs of all the string games--just the designs--and the story that goes with each design.

Mary Chavez told me in her Christmas letter that she thinks now she can find someone who would be willing to record the stories.

I have discussed this project with a number of anthropologists who have themselves studied Navajo culture and myths, and have read everything that has been written by other anthropologists and ethnologists, and they are very enthusiastic--even excited.

The string designs, and the stories they illustrate, are very much a part of the origin myth, but none of the many ethnologists or anthropologists have made a study of these particular myths.

So, if you're willing, you wouldn't need to do anything but photograph the designs themselves--and Mary knows them all. Or do you think they should be drawn by an artist?

An artist friend in Gallup, whose husband is a psychiatrist working with P.H.S. has told me that she would love to do simple drawings of all the string games. She and Jack, her husband, are old friend of Mary's (he worked as an M.D. in Crownpoint while Mary was teaching there.) ^{But I think photographs--especially by someone with your special talents--would be much better.}

Mary has a cassette tape recorder, which I bought for her, and I sent her \$25 last fall to pay someone for the stories. And I'm sure she can arrange to have them recorded--since she said so, and no one has ever known Mary Chavez not to keep a promise.

The pictures you took will illustrate, beautifully, the relationship between young Navajo children and their grandparents, in a traditional home. They needed to be dressed traditionally, of course. For many generations Navajo grandparents have been teaching their grandchildren how to make these designs, and grandfathers have been telling the stories. Mary told me the twins were the first to learn them--from Spider Man and Spider Woman, and ever since then the Earth People have been teaching these to their children.

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I now have a literary agent in New York, who specializes in juvenile books, and I think it would be very easy for her to find a publisher who would snap this up.

I do need to know if you want to see Mary and take pictures of all the designs.

I'm very much aware that you would be, as you are already, taking a chance with your time, and talent, and equipment--as you are already, having taken those beautiful pictures of the children with their "grandparents."

But I'm convinced that this can be a very distinguished children's book, that may be of interest to children all over the world, and ~~fixxxx~~ your part in it will be recognized, as the distinguished photographer, and financially. Judging by the rather disappointing income from my little books there won't be a huge profit, but a little every year--maybe for many years.

Of course after Mary records the stories she will have to interpret them, which she says she can do, and I'll put them into words that will perhaps be more clear to the average child.

You're probably very busy, and letter-writing may be a chore, as it usually is for me (I have a stack of letters I owe, and have owed for weeks) but I would like to know what you now think about the project. Would you rather have Mary come to Santa Fe--if you want to do the pictures--or would you rather see her in Gallup?--*Navajo?*

Of course winter will be over soon--it used to be a long, long, time from Christmas to Christmas. It could turn out that we'll all have to wait until next winter. I hope not, but one of the many good things I learned from Navajo people is that one shouldn't feel frantic about time--that patience often serves better than haste to get things accomplished.

You did tell me that your friend had died, and I'm so sorry. I learned to know her by reading your The Enduring Navajo, and she must have been a very nice person. Anyway, I felt that I knew her.

I asked Houghton Mifflin to return the copy of your book I had sent them for the illustrator to see, and I sent it today to my ~~xxx~~ agent, for my new illustrator, whoever he is, to see.

I still have the one you autographed for me. And I look at it often. I really am homesick for Navajoland, and my Navajo friends.

Sincerely,

Mary