

the last day of a beautiful May

Dearest Nell Dorr,

My long silence after your thoughtful, priceless Christmas gift (and its generous inscription) must seem like the worst sort of rudeness. I could tell you that I've been too busy to write, which would be true, but such a small part of the truth as to seem like an insult to one to whom I feel so close. (Can it really be that we have only actually seen each other on two occasions?)

I write this partly because you are one of the few people I want to confide in and partly because your book has been such an important part of the recent events in my life. I have not had either the leisure or the courage to write or talk to anyone for a very long time. For the past year I have had to watch the terror-filled night of insanity enshroud the only woman I have ever loved - the one to whom I asked you to inscribe a copy of Mother and Child ten years ago.

Your recent book was one of the few companions she could tolerate and some pages of it I must have read aloud to her hundreds of times. The brief poem of Goethe translated so simply by Longfellow became virtually a prayer and she could not hear it often enough. She loved the pictures too and would listen with child-like wonder when I told her how they came to be.

I find that this is as much as I have the strength to say right now, but I hope you understand something of what your miraculous gift has meant to two people who love you and whose lives you enrich. Thanks seem futile.

Tardily but lovingly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nell Dorr", written in a cursive style.