

¹⁵ Millicent Bell, *Meaning in Henry James* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991) 286.

¹⁶ F. W. Dupee, *Major Writers of America* (New York: Harcourt, 1966) 766.

¹⁷ Leon Edel, *Henry James Letters*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984) 318.

LETTERS FROM DOROTHY BRETT, 1929 TO 1935

In mid-1929 Kathleen Cooke, a third-year Arts student at Melbourne University in Australia, was given permission to write her English thesis on Katherine Mansfield who had died in 1923. Miss Cooke wrote to several people whom she hoped might help her. These were John Middleton Murry, Mansfield's husband; Walter Lehman; Lesley Moore, Mansfield's friend and girlhood lover; and Dorothy Brett, artist and friend, who had gone to Taos in New Mexico in 1923 with D.H. Lawrence and Frieda Lawrence and who continued to live there.

The ten letters (seven from Brett) received by Miss Cooke between 1929 and 1935 have never been published. From Murry, Miss Cooke received a short note advising her to study Mansfield's stories not her life. Walter Lehman sent a poem. Lesley Moore promised that when she was less busy she would provide a counterbalance to Murry's "imaginative" public portrayal of his wife. (If such a second letter was sent, it has not survived.) Brett with great generosity wrote a long letter (Letter 1, undated) about her memories of Mansfield. This was followed by another letter dated October 31, 1929 (Letter 2) telling Miss Cooke about herself, her lifestyle in Taos, and her philosophy of life, as well as giving more memories of Mansfield. Brett included a photograph of herself, and a photo of one of her paintings of Indians. On November 4, 1929 she wrote again (Letter 3) to add details about the importance of Mansfield's discovery of fairy tales in her dying months. On March 10, 1930, Brett wrote to Miss Cooke with the news of the death of D.H. Lawrence (Letter 4). In this context she gave her some very Lawrentian advice about how to live her life — *know the beauty of physical love & then of spiritual love and never prostitute yourself either in love or art or living.*

Miss Cooke completed her thesis (which I have been unable to trace) in 1929. Though she went to England with her

family in 1930 she did not meet Brett and the correspondence lapsed. Four years went by before Miss Cooke wrote again to Brett, in June 1934. By now she was in love with a man *of very forceful & free ideas*. She asked Brett about love, sexual relations, earning a living, parents, travel — how she might live her life. Brett replied on Aug 28, 1934 (Letter 5) with encouragement and further questions, and again on March 10, 1935 (Letter 6, mis-dated 1934) urging her to marry her young man so that they could travel to Taos together to visit her. She urged them to live together, even if this was temporary. Brett's final letter, dated October 23, 1935 (Letter 7) is more generally chatty, about Taos and marriage. Brett wrote about the possibility of a visit to Australia but political events in Europe already loomed large.

Miss Cooke's letters record her 1935 reading of *Brett and Lawrence*, Brett's account (written in 1933) of her first year in Taos, with D.H. Lawrence, Frieda and Mabel Luhan, where she typed Lawrence's manuscripts in a tiny cabin at Kiowa ranch. Brett became an American citizen in 1936 and lived to be nearly ninety four. She was a full-time artist who supported herself by selling her paintings or exchanging them to settle medical or legal bills. By the time Brett died in 1977 she had a substantial reputation as an artist. A biography was published in 1984. In the film *Priest of Love* (1981), which tells the story of Lawrence in Taos, Penelope Keith's mocking portrayal of a dim-witted, sexually naive Brett serves to provide comic relief, and Brett is rejected by Lawrence in bed. But Brett was an artist who was serious about her work, as Mansfield and Lawrence were serious about theirs. She shared many of Lawrence's ideas. She also had her own philosophy of life which she lived with integrity. She seems to have been a significant influence on the life of Kathleen Cooke, my mother.

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THE LETTERS

Letter 1. From Dorothy Brett

(Undated - 1929)

Box 215,

Taos

My dear Miss Cooke,

Your letter has reached me at last. I do not know if I will be in time to help you over your paper on Katherine Mansfield. I do not know if I can convey to you, the Katherine of 1915 - & of 1922.

Let me try and show you a girl of extraordinary courage & venturesomeness. One who had met the misfortune of an early unfortunate marriage - released herself from it - & met & married the man who until she died was her first & last thought.

Katherine in 1915 was free of her illness. Before that date I did not know her. But she had at that time an insatiable craving for life - for experiencing all kinds of life - & she was also very poor - it was her poverty at that time that ultimately killed her - lack of good food - decent rooms. But rather than give up she endured. Among the intellectual set at that time she was cold and reserved. Her coldness terrified people. She had a way of folding up like a flower - & sitting - unapproachable. She would never give herself out to people - she hid herself behind an inscrutable mask. She felt that her inner self was too precious to be handed out to the world in general. But to her friends she was life itself. Brilliant, gay - daring - loyal - so thus she sought out life. She poked about in all the queer corners - until that illness took her unawares - She was wild in those former days to a point that might distress you - she would eat of all fruit. She had to *know*. & she could be cruel. & then like a bolt from the blue - came her illness & the slow inevitable cutting off of all life. It is difficult for me to give details of her life before her illness - tho she lived in my studio at times & took a floor in a house I had. I did not see so much of her. There are other friends of hers who could tell you more. Have you read the Diary? that tells too of the struggle - that tremendous spiritual struggle which her illness brought about. Can you imagine - this ardent passionate lover of life - shut up in a room - tied to a bed & a darkened room - separated for months from the man she loved. You should write to Lesley Moore who is the L.M. in the Diary and letters, who was

her companion in her early days, she could tell you more than I of the early Katherine - because I only came on the scene late - or Estelle Rice - she knew her well before 1915.

But I can tell you the difference between the Katherine of early days & the Katherine who came through that illness to my house in Hampstead & went to Fontainbleau.

It was as if all *fear* had left her. As if the same impulse to hide had turned to an impulse to stand revealed. To be *herself* to everyone - She seemed to have come to the knowledge that nothing and no one could hurt or destroy her. She was in a high spiritual condition - where love poured out in handfuls was all and everything. Compassion - tenderness.

I can see her now - in her black clothes - pale face - dark eyes & sleek black bobbed hair - coming slowly - oh so slowly up my steep little stairs to my room. Would I let her clean out my canaries - she hadn't cleaned out a birdcage for years. I put the cage on the floor & down she sat & scraped away - & then - half an hour's heartbreaking coughing and exhaustion - Or again - at Sierre in Switzerland, flitting through the sunlit garden - a fleeting whimsical glance at me painting - for we were incognito to each other in the mornings. Thus the very depth of her imprisonment from life brought her nearer to Life. Far more aware, more compassionate - more tender - & finally sent her to her death. The climate of Fontainbleau killed her. If only we had known of New Mexico she would be alive now - but she sought a further freedom - a renewal of her writing life & died in the adventure. She was lovely - lovely beyond words. With all the delicacy and strength of a high spiritual revelation - Were an apricot against the blue sky - a baby in a pram - the young and the old, were all as much the word of God as she herself.

This is all I can do for you now. If you need more let me know - anyhow I am wondering how you traced me?

Yr sincerely

Dorothy Brett

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Letter 2. From Dorothy Brett

Box 215. Taos
New Mexico
Oct 31st 1929

My Dear Kathleen Cooke

Who are you and what are you? for most surely you show an unusual interest in life. Before I say any more about Katherine, I will tell you a little of myself. I am not out in New Mexico for my health, but for the incredible reason that I cannot tear myself away from it - from my four horses - the little Ranch - the singing dancing Indians - so there you are. A friend - five solid years ago - coerced me across the Atlantic - a friend of mine who was also a friend of Katherine's - & so here I am in "God's own Country" and I am, as you may have gathered, a painter.

In the winter - which is now - I live in Taos in a seven windowed room - so that I can look all around the world. The sacred Pueblo Mountain with its head in a cloud - spotted with snow - a circle of snowy mountains frame the quiet desert - & along the road go the Indians - on foot, on horseback - in wagons - shrouded in flaming blankets. Mexicans and M [illegible word] - the old and the new - I need not more to see the world go by.

In the summer I go up to the little Ranch - perched on the side of the Rocky Mountains - & below me in a vast curve lies the soft desert - shadowy and mysterious as a sea. Behind me - the mountains. Sacred are the mountains here - & I live up there with my four horses swishing their long tails in the field - sometimes quite alone - sometimes a family of Red Indians - sometimes a friend or two - & paint & ride & ever with me - across the desert or up in the mountains - I carry Katherine with me in my heart.

Does this give you any idea of one of the strongest things in America - the land of the efficient. Out here nothing is efficient - even plumbing is mostly non-existent & to be possessed of a bathroom is to be possessed of Aladin's Cave. A hot bath becomes a priceless jewel - & yet - there stands the sacred mountain - at its foot the timeless pueblo - the blanket and white-sheeted Indian - timeless too - and the thought of England - Europe - hugging their glorious pasts - and looking frayed and feeble gives me the shudders. & I could not now live without the sun. I have become a Sun Worshipper too.

Now to return to Katherine. I am glad you sent that quotation. I did not know it. But I remembered I had not told you of Katherine's taste in colour. She had a curious love of dark colours - black - she nearly always wore black - & deep purple. Her rooms were nearly always greys and purples & a touch or two of dark reds. I repainted her two little rooms in my house for her & on the day I finished painting them - grey & gold - she died. I came down from them to get the telegram.

I remember the evening before she left for Paris & finally to Fontainebleau. I came down to see her. She was lying in bed - & the light was warm - a sort of Orangy pink - I can see her clearly now - & the whimsical brilliant look she gave me as I came in. Much of that same mystery was in her and about her - as in the flower she writes of - How am I here - what am I, & where am I going - fleeting as the sunlight - or a bird flashing through the air - "I belong to no one" - that was her ultimate cry - "Go free, my soul, go free." I can hear her on the terrace in a deep emotional voice cry this against a world that would hold her captive. I can see her again on that same terrace at Sierre - while I am sitting painting - come quietly into the garden - in her Venetian red little felt hat - dart that whimsical fairy-like look at me & vanish - for we had a law that in the mornings we were invisible to each other. & then again the other side of the picture - myself & Murry & Katherine playing billiards in the Hotel Billiard room - a vast tomb of a room - & a joke made & peals of laughter & then a fit of coughing that would wrack one to listen to - or else a sudden rush for the Doctor - a slight hemorrhage - brought on by talking to me — the effort my deafness necessitates was too much for her. Do you realise that one simple little drive in that one horse carriage excited her so much that she had to give it up - that she would want to show me the room in the Hotel she had written a certain story in - & she couldn't find it because she had moved the furniture around so much in her imagination she didn't know which was the reality!

But remember that this is all the vision - the final vision coming through much that overlaid it at the time. Ordinary life - everyday life - conflicting personalities - mistakes - muddles - I think of my own clumsiness and groan - & believe me the history of our friendship - that lies behind those letters was the story of a tragedy - & built up on that tragedy - the ultimate flower that bloomed - was tenderness & love.

You say - that you scent a secret behind life. oh - yes there is a secret - & some of us are lucky to glimpse it. I remember again Katherine saying "We could receive more than we are ready to receive." I would play to her - as you know - Beethoven's Apassionata & the 9th Symphony. Well - what is this secret - Have you never read the Life of Buddha? - of Christ - of Rama Krishna - Vivekananda, Chuong Tsu —? they knew — One of the secrets is to go out to Life - make a *living connection* with everything - the mountains - trees - & all animals.

"Put not the written word between yourself & Life". If you have a horse - go on until you get a living connection with it - know the horse and its needs & ways & let the horse know you - let the mountains & trees take care of you - let the animals in the mountains know you as a friend. Then know that when tragedies overtake you some vital lesson is being taught you & trace through the tragedy the lesson to be learnt. We bring most things upon ourselves. We make of Love and religion a prison house of horrors. The secret is yourself. Life is You and You are Life. And so behold Love is clothed in a different garment. The world becomes one's own. Instead of walking the earth as a timid stranger - One belongs - becomes part of it. As important, as precious to a flower as the flower is to one.

I will give a quotation from the Vedantic hymn -

"Death and fear I have not, nor caste, nor creed. Father and Mother I have not, nor birth nor death, nor friend nor foe - for I am Existence, Knowledge and Joy - I am the Blissful One - the Blissful One. I am not bound by happiness or misery. No book nor pilgrimage nor ceremony can bind me - the body is not mine nor its decay, for I am Existence, Knowledge and Joy. I am the Blissful One - the Blissful One. There was One, there is One, and but One."

This is the secret in its highest form. For us who can rarely rise to such heights - we meet the flower as Katherine met it - the Mystery and the Magic of the Flower - have we not got it also. Was not Katherine as magical as mysterious as the flower that blooms & blossoms & fades quietly away. Are you not as mysterious as magical - and I too.

"Whence come you? From the East.

Whence go you? To the West.

For what? To find that which is lost -

Where do I hope to find it? In the Centre."

The tiger is always the tiger - he walks the earth unself-conscious yet completely aware of himself. The I am I of the tiger never fails him - yet we have lost much of it. Few of us know just what a human being ought to be - for a man to walk down a street as a tiger walks through the jungle - would call all sorts of epithets down on his head - and as for women - the Lord help them out of the tangle.

But have I, I wonder, given you a glimpse of the secret as it appears to me. Three solitary summers have taught me much - summers in which I went out to the sun - to the sacred mountain behind me, to the trees - the chipmunks, squirrels, porcupines & bears - my spoiled horses - for I do spoil them. I do not know if you live in a town - or country. Identify yourself with all life & you will find God at the end of the road — not that white-whiskered old monster leaning out of a cloud - but a magical mysterious being, as mysterious, as magical as the life behind the leaping flame.

(Y sincerely)

Brett

I send you a photo of myself taken the summer before last & a photo of one of my pictures called "Riders of the Desert."

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Letter 3. From Dorothy Brett

Box 215
Taos
New Mexico
Nov 4th 1929

My Dear Kathleen,

I forgot to tell you one thing about Katherine which was the beginning of her change in attitude about life - it may come in the Diary or in some of the Letters - I am not sure - Anyhow - it is the thing that ultimately landed her at Fontainebleau.

When she first had to go to the South of France she suffered beyond words - she actually cried for a whole month & more without stopping in one lonely place - & then by chance or the hand of God - she began to read some Fairy Stories - Hans Anderson - Grimm - the Blue Fairy Book etc. & in these tales she found the answers to her own problems & most problems of life. I remember her telling me this after-

wards - how she realised that in the fairy tales lay all the philosophy of life - that bit by bit as she read them & absorbed them all her misery dropped from her - & how gradually she was able to rebuild her life and overcome the torture of imprisonment. This I think is one of the most important things in her life - the actual turning point - when her illness from killing her spiritually as well as bodily became spiritually non-existent. There was a moment when she might have gone under completely - broken in spirit - but the fairy tales were her Open Sesame to a new life and ultimate victory.

The boronia flowers no sooner reached me than a wind took them and blew them right away - but I was glad to have glimpsed them. Brett

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Letter 4. From Dorothy Brett

Box 215
Taos
New Mexico
Mar 10th 1930

My Dear Kathleen

Your letter has reached me in New York - but by the time you get mine I will be home again -

Your letter finds me at a time when I have lost a friend once more - D H Lawrence - a very wonderful lovely man - as lovely as Katherine - and also a friend of hers too - so you see we all belonged together - and now he has died too - of that fearful disease. I don't know if you read his books - or believe what you hear of him - but believe me first - when I tell you - I who was his friend - that he was the most moral - the most chaste man I have met. Gentle - yet a living flame - & so, he also has to die - and I feel that I can feel no more - turned to stone. It's the only way to hide one's rawness - to cover up the wound. Why does death hurt so, even when one doesn't believe in it. I don't believe in it - I can't. When I hear Bach - or see a fine picture or read a fine book. I cannot believe in Death. Yet Lawrence is dead - that sensitive fiery man no longer walks this earth. He lies forever still & quiet in a French graveyard — Is death the end or a beginning — For the living it is an impenetrable silence — Someday, maybe the mystery will be pierced - I wonder.

No - I don't believe in being alone. I did not think I had given that impression — Sometimes it happens. & it is good to get a perspective - a withdrawal - for a time only — But this life is a life of contrasts. With men & women - & the world around one - & without that one is as nothing — Friendship is good - a wonderful thing - but the finest contact of all is marriage - the man - find your man my dear — don't be afraid — know the beauty of physical love & then of spiritual love — know the love of marriage and friendship - different but linked together. Your girl friend is good — very lovely and wonderful to have - but a man is better still.

So - go out to life — Enjoy it - so many people creep dismally through life like black beetles. Don't above all things cheat yourself out of anything — out of love or life - don't be afraid - if you want a man take him — even if it be for a time only - that is if you *really love*. But never prostitute yourself either in love or art or living — & that is no easy matter.

I am glad you liked my picture & I was immensely interested in what you felt and said about it. But here I have to deal you a most horrid blow - hope it won't be too great a shock - But all those lovely women were MEN. There isn't a single woman in the picture - Now look at it again and see what this does to you — The Indian man has long pigtailed & some of them do look like women - When I first met them I thought all the men were women.

I would say that perhaps the greatest form of happiness is the power to take out of Life the purest essence of all it gives & to give back to life the purest essence of oneself - one's own spirit coupled with that essence gleaned from life - Have I put it clearly:

“To him who hath much - much shall be given
— But to him who hath not, that which he
hath shall be taken from him.”

This is a great truth.

That is what Katherine had - Lawrence had - they had much - But what helped to kill them was their inability to adjust themselves to this stupid world — Dumb people — cruel - greedy - dumb — & so they wear out & die before they have learnt how to adjust themselves, or just as the adjustment takes place.

I may go to London next winter. If you are in England in about November — write to me at this address - not to be forwarded - 2 Tilney St, Mayfair, London & we might meet.
Now I have to go out & buy paints —
All good luck to you — Brett

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Letter 5. From Dorothy Brett

The Tower beyond Tragedy
San Cristobal New Mexico Aug 28 1934

Dear Kathleen,

I remember you perfectly and curiously enough had been wondering about you.... then your letter came...but a great deal of work has kept me too busy to answer... Now I go straight to the point I still hold to what I said...only when it comes to telling people... *no*.... never tell anyone anything... either what you do.. or feel... not in order to be secretive... but in order to preserve to protect your innermost feelings.... to tell is to court disaster... to risk criticism and the tearing to pieces of all that means most to you.... people cannot help it... especially those people who have suffered from not doing those things that you have the courage and determination to do.... The body has a life of its own.... a very urgent life too... to thwart it brings disaster... neurotic dead life..... to exploit it brings another form of disaster... but surely we can heighten the experience by love... to be in love brings to this bodily necessity an intense ecstasy.... and that ecstasy one should experience.... or else life gets deader and deader... And now with you the man and the moment has come.... and you spring into life..... dont be afraid.... dont worry yourself as to its lasting or not lasting... dont poison the well by anything.. just live and love.... and let the future take care of itself.. the hurt of losing a lover is nothing like so deadly as never having a lover.... tho the moment may half kill one.... something has been given one... something tremendous added to one..... We are never taught to develop ourselves.... to increase our powers.... Its not what we do but how we do it that is important..... The thing that distresses me is that you have to work too hard for too little.. that is the real cause of your dead feeling.... I feel you very much alive otherwise.....

Change is inevitable.... one may change right away from someone. or even more deeply towards them... I begin to think that depends much on the development of the two... one may develop more rapidly than the other.... and makes a rift.... Permanent marriage is possible in a certain state of development.... but usually it seems to me to be an impossible arrangement.... I think if two people realise themselves clearly... (as clearly as humans can) are interested in each others separate individualities... tastes and desires... and allow themselves to grow.. morally... and intellectually then a real marriage is possible but the average marriage seems to me to be just diabolical..... a tragedy where two people settle down and throttle each other... and both wither and die...

It will take a long time to throw off the ordinary moral codes... the man made social codes.... that are really thoroughly immoral.... About those two gentlemen.... the one with the nice clothes.. the epicure.. the fastidious.... my attitude would be very simple... come if you like.. I earn two pounds a week... I can only have the simplest clothes.. the simplest food etc... but what the week end in the country involves depends on which of these two gentlemen you favour in that way.... The travelling one... well can he not eat a dinner with you... the situation is a bit obscure to me.....

The difficulty of the problem of one's family is immense... I have not been home for ten years... my father died... now my brother has died.. my mother is crumpled up by it and yet what can one do? Outwardly if I returned I might strive to create a cheerful atmosphere... inwardly my mother would go on grieving and its the inward thing that really matters... For you with an invalid father the problem is worse... you may be needed... are needed.. yet is that what is meant.... are we born into the world to be guardians... nurses... to those of whom one happened to be born.... True the parent cared for one in one's helpless state... but that is the condition of marriage.... but ought the life of the young to be sacrificed in return for that... my instinct says no.... that there should be state care for the old and sick... but proper state care... which gives people the opportunity to hire some one to care for them... some-one specially trained whose profession it is.... some-day I suppose the world will wake up the these matters... to the awful waste of good material... of young people exhausted by long hours and burdened by home life..... the world is heading for it slowly.... but it is all too slow....

What I wonder are your religious views... that would interest me to know... the group you speak of must also have various opinions... ideas and so forth.... Religion is the next great event.... a Renaissance... but a very different religion... I have a hunch of its direction... I find most children are brought up with no religion no conception of it at all... with just a dim idea of the various churches which anyhow are swamped by dogma..... Churches leave me very cold... but what about you?

I wish you could see this wonderful desert... Today there is not a cloud in the sky..... a lovely fresh wind is blowing and everything is misty and wonderful.... Soon I am going to paint.... The painting will be a semi abstraction.... a serene radiance..... that seems to me to be the ultimate beauty in life.... The great peace that comes out a Serene Radiance..... Music and the Rising sun.... and the pale morning star.....

Yes I remember the smell of a hot wall-flower... tho I have not smelt one for ten years..... just as I remember the cuckoo... the lovely English Larks... and the mythical nightingale..... that is the best of England..... but even so for years I could not hear the cuckoo... then the lark went out of my life... but I am not sure of the nightingale..... Flowers are rare here... therefore one prizes them all the more....

Now I must paint... I have so much to do and so little time to do.....

I was not in England with the best will in the world you would have not found me.... I think I will make an effort to go over this winter as my second brother died suddenly and my mother seems knocked out by it..... Last winter I spent in New York and Philadelphia.... I was painting portraits of Leopold Stokowski.. have you ever heard of him. He is one of the greatest Orchestral Conductors in the world.... and an amazing man.... very beautiful to look at.... supremely intelligent and a genius.... I have done sixteen portraits of him.... and have still three to do ... as nineteen is my objective.... they are musical interpre. rather than portraits and some of them are beautiful..... it was a great experience to hear the marvellous Philadelphia Orchestra and to see the inner organization of it.... I worked terrifical hard all last winter and all this summer... as I had to memorise the head and hands.... I cannot bear having people sit to me... and nor could he have born to have sat... so I did it all from memory... he does not use a baton.. just his marvellous long flexible hands.... I bought a

Victrola and every morning before I begin to paint on the portraits I play some of the music he played at his concerts.....

Today is Sunday... in a little while Frieda Lawrence who has gone down the valley to lunch will return here and pick me up and we'll go up to her Ranch for tea.... we are extremely friendly all of us... Mabel and Frieda and I ... strange in a way is'nt it... and yet out here where the life is so tough it is not strange...

Do get a book to read called the *Fountain* by Charles Morgan it is beautiful.. one the most beautiful novels I have read for a long time.... I am not somehow surprised at the book problem with you.... it takes time for countries as well as people to rise up to Lawrence.

I think the whole world is changing over.. that we shall see the high wage and the short hour come in... and more leisure and life for every-one.... the ideal of the rich man is going in this country.. the American likes to live well... and he will see that he does.. the depression has opened his eyes again to the fact that he does not get his share.... England in her calm way will also have some kind of a change and so will you... it is only a question of time....

Keep faith with yourself.... with your inner deep self... and I think you will find that the way will open out to you... no-one can tell you what that way is... but the fact that you have had the courage not to deny life.... not to frustrate yourself proves that the way will open to you..... Do let me know how you get on.. what happens to you.....

All good luck to you
Yrs, BRETT

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Letter 6. From Dorothy Brett

Carmel
California
March 10th 1934

Dear K

I would be delighted to meet your young man - tell him when he reaches Taos - to ask in any store how to find me - I may be in Taos- or I may be seventeen miles away in the mountains - but tell him to pawn the family plate & bring you along - why on earth dont you get married - once married your people

are bound to let you have the money - go & get married & let come what come may - Good Lord - why wait. Now pop into a clergyman - get married - get your tickets & come along both of you - why frustrate yourselves - Travelling unmarried is tiresome & difficult - its just a convenience - if you dont like it afterwards then get divorced - but why waste the years now -

Any old thing can scramble up my mountains - better than expensive cars - so never mind what kind of an old wreck it is - but old Mexico is one of the magnets of the world - so make no mistake - marry - insist on your stupid parents giving you the money - & come along - you will love it - you will both flourish like the green bay tree -

This is in haste - I hope to see you **Both** in Taos -

Get married - then go to your parents - ask them firmly & politely for the money _____ & both of you take this wonderful trip - now go on -

Buck up - dont be afraid - BRETT

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Letter 7. From Dorothy Brett

Box 214 Taos New Mexico Oct 23 1935

Dear Kathleen,

You must wonder why I have been so long answering... but I seem to have had as usual a busy summer... and also I was very tired from a lot of work I did last summer and winter... but here goes...I just could not get over to see you..with the best will in the world I have not the time.... I have a job for the first time in my life in a big school this winter in New York... teaching theatricals about which I know nothing!! but probably that is a good thing... I am interested from the point of view of lighting... the actors these days leaves me always cold as never can you hear them..and without hearing them their acting is so bad that you never know what they are feeling or doing....

I have achieved two lovely paintings this summer.... and when I am in New York I hope to do some water-colours... I want to try out a great many colour schemes...and also to find a way of using water - colour that I like..as a rule they just slop all over the paper with me and just make a mess....the selling is bad..rather worse than last year and I wonder if the world is not heading for a general revolution money just

dissappears..where does it go to? somebody must have it. But I am so interested...so really absorbed in this strange business of form and colour...why is it so facinating? I dont know...

I like your ironical letters.... parents are my bête noir..as you have probably guessed... it seems to me to be the most difficult job of all and the most abused... there are of course exceptions ... one would like to meet them more often!!! but did you get married? did you go to Italy? what did you both do ultimately....

I felt my great push towards marriage may have been premature.. but to me I would rather see you living together married or unmarried than spoiling your youth and lives by inhibitions....honestly I think this business of living together has been made too much of a bugaboo I cant see the smallest difference between being fond of someone completely all the way through so to speak than partially.... to love someone partially is no greater than to love them wholly... but of course these things are based on social conveniences mostly..and the jealousies of the human race.... Marriage has its drawbacks.... if the noose is held too tight... Has the ill health in both of you cleared up...is it only bodily or have the inhibitions and the unfulfilled relationship got you both upset.. if is it not fulfilled.. or ought I not to ask such an indiscreet question...

My Ranch is indeed simple.. it verges almost on the too simple... but I have certain peculiarities...which is that I insist on having rooms to myself... My studio is entirely my own.. and my sleeping porch....downstairs.. (for my cabin has the unusual thing a second story) I dont mind about..I can have a guest there or not... I have a guest house away in the trees... eight foot by ten!! But my own particular studio and porch are my own and I rarely have anyone to stay who cant look after themselves.... if they are late for meals they have to make them themselves... I never wait and I never will cook more than one meal a day.. supper... I am not a very kind hostess. I dont like being cluttered up with a lot of housework..cooking and so forth....why should I? so you can immagine my guests have to be carefully chosen...and very capable at that!!!

Indian and Mexican things are fairly expensive...unless you go to the Navajo Land and pick up the thigs from the Indians themselves..the stores run up a big price for most things.... The Mexican blankets are very lovely but also fairly expensive.... For the moment I would wait for such things and get any native Australian things that have any colour or

loveliness... Here in this room of mine in Taos I have rather ordinary rented furniture... but most of us make and carve our furniture... then wax it...that really makes a room very lovely... I never care for curtains or blinds... not in my studio except in windows where the sun comes too much if I am painting.... and in my bedroom for a certain amount of privacy... and a sleeping porch needs only a bed as far as I can make out... and perhaps a couple of comfortable chairs... I dont like possessions.. or too much stuff in a room... perhaps that is because my painting things take up so much space and are so hard to keep tidy.... I never have the curtains or blinds drawn except to undress by..... and up on the Ranch I dont worry about that..... my nearest neighbour is at least a quarter of a mile away..

Remember that here we build in mud.. our houses are all adobe... with beautiful poles and the trunks of small aspen trees laid in a herringbone pattern across them and then dirt.... some of the modern houses have planks instead of aspens...and then roofing paper.. which is better in wet weather.... it is exceedingly lovely in the landscape these earth coloured houses... different earths...some reddish..some brown..light browns going to white....

I have never been able to afford to make the house I would like...someday I may achieve it... perhaps by adding to my cabin...but it would consist of one room into which nobody was allowed... I want very much to have one room absolutely private....

Does this letter seem too scrappy to you... I am on the brink of moving up and packing and so on.. its such a fuss... I am sure I would be excited by Australia... and someday I would like to come... but what of Italy and her diabolical massacre of the Abssynians.... its just too horrible...

I am writing to your young man ...to suggest if you are not already married to have some kind of an experimental try out... but that may shock you both...and it certainly would shock your parents to splinters....

All good wishes to you both.... I am sorry at my delay in answering but I just get swamped out with things...

Yrs BRETT

Jill Golden

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