

WHEN JOY CAME TO THE WORLD

By L Timmel Duchamp

* * * *

14 February, 2147

To: The Respected Narratologist, Elihannu 09
Dear Respected Narratologist:

Concerning your request in The Continuing Times Book Review for well-documented, firsthand, openly subjective eve-of-war accounts: I believe the materials here appended meet your requirements. They have been in our family-group since its formation, and originated from a descendant of one of our family-group's founders. I should explain that every one of the documents consists, materially speaking, of a laminated (paper) photocopy of a text laser-printed on paper. The text, by its own account, was transmitted from Florence, Italy, to Seattle, Washington, via "e-mail" (i.e., electronic mail), which is to say as digitized data over fiber-optic telephone lines (which, this generalist suspects, included at least one satellite relay), via an existing data network ("Universnet") that I believe served to link university workers throughout most of the world. No doubt you are more familiar with these technological terms than I, a mere generalist.

Because of their age and provenance, our family-group has taken great care to maintain these documents. I am sure you can understand that we do not care to part with the objects themselves. If you need to handle them physically, yourself, to verify their authenticity, or require further information you think we might unwittingly possess, please do not hesitate to message me.

Yours respectfully (etc.),
Gendron 14.

From Loreau@hist. Firenze.Universnet//23:23GMT190919
Received Baring@hem.UWASH.Universnet//15:28PDT190919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

September 19, 2019
Thursday, 10:45 p.m.

Listen to this, Nick. As I've told you, my desk is set up so that I can look out on the Arno while I work. Usually at night I bring the computer to bed with me & work from there (lazy bed-loving creature that I am, right?). But tonight, no way. It's just too fucking weird. (Keep using that word to myself, WEIRD, right? But it is!!!!)

Okay, here's the scope, which I imagine will make the regular Evening News over there (that being how WEIRD it is): It's snowing! It's eighty-odd Fahrenheit degrees (or so I figure: you know they only give you centigrade here, & though I've mastered most of the metric stuff, temp is still somehow beyond my patience), & it's snowing! Now you & I know it can't be snow. & in fact if I've translated the radio broadcast correctly, no one believes it's snow, & government officials are warning people not to touch it in case it's something toxic.

The Iversons — you know, the Canadians in the big apartment next door — well, most of the last half hour I spent sipping brandy with them (which is what I was doing before I sat down here & logged on), well anyway, the Iversons kept chattering about how ordinary dumb-shit “citizens” let their children play in fallout in Nevada & Utah during atomic testing there — & called it “snow.”

What a circus! You should see the crowds lining both sides of the Ponte Vespucci & packed along the Lungarno Vespucci & the street on the other side of the Arno (the name of which I forget)! There must be a dozen thick on either side. & they've got carabinieri down there, threatening people with stun-guns, to keep them up on the sidewalk. & needless to say the carabinieri, having to answer to government officials, are to a person dressed in full contamination-avoidance suits, including respirators!

Apologies for my idiocy, Nick, but I've just realized that I haven't told you that it's only snowing OVER THE ARNO. (What a lousy reporter I'd make! I can just hear you telling me what an airhead I am.) Okay, let me try to be more orderly about this. (But I *have* had quite a bit of brandy with the Iversons. & that on top of the usual vino with dinner.) 1) According to official reports of the Ministry of Science broadcast over radio & TV, it started snowing on the Arno at approximately 2030. 2) I heard a lot of yelling & screaming at around 2145. (At which time I was just finishing my meal of tortellini in red sauce, bread, salad & vino.) 3) I went to the window, & saw hordes of people descending to the banks of the Arno. 4) I rushed over to the Iversons', & watched from their windows as people lined the bridge (which is, after all, the best vantage point of all). I noted that though I could see snow falling over the Arno, it never fell on the bridge itself — which really, I tell you, is damned freaky. (& if you think about it, is even freakier than some snow-like substance falling in this kind of heat.) The “snow” itself LOOKS like real snow, from this distance — which is to say that it looks just as it does when you look out a window in Seattle & watch snow falling by street light. Same thing here, by the lights of the bridge, by the street lights running along this side of the embankment, & by the sodium lights that always illuminate the mini-dam below. As I write I can see fat white flakes pouring down in the lights, with the darkish sky as backdrop. Plus there are areas where some of the flashing blue police lights cut rhythmic swathes into the snow, giving it a spooky blue tint. I suppose only the blasts of megaphone noise, presumably the police issuing warnings, keeps it from being too eerie...As I said, it's a total circus out there. But a surreal circus — because, I suppose, of the backdrop including the Romanesque rear of Santa Maria del Carmine & the lighted

spire of Santo Spirito distantly thrusting up over all.

Twenty-five minutes later

Just took a quick break — because the Iversons knocked on my door to let me know they're saying on television (the Iversons, of course, have a set in their apartment, & watch it besides) that this weird unidentified "snow" is falling in other rivers, too. So far it's been reported to be falling in the Tiber, the Rhine, the Seine, The Thames, & the Nile. The Iversons, in relaying this to me, wondered how long before all news of this phenomenon is censored. They think it's ominous. In fact Donald wonders if it's not the intentional or accidental deployment of or side-effect from the testing of some superclandestine chemical weapon. While Caroline, of course, goes with a pollution-effect theory — as she ALWAYS attributes every negative thing that happens to one kind of pollution or another...I'm going nuts sitting here, watching. Think I'll go next door & join the Iversons 'round the old family hearth, & listen to the "experts"' gobblydegook (in Italian, yet — unless some of the English cable stations start picking up the story). I suppose, given the highly censored state of the news outside the U.S., you'll probably hear what this "snow" is before I do. But just in case the networks don't consider this an important story, I'll keep you posted (& will count on you doing the same for me, too).

Oh how I wish you were here, love — especially now. But I suppose if you were you'd probably be out there, trying to scope out the situation for yourself. (But they're wild out there, you know. With the crowd getting thicker by the moment, & the helicopters sweeping the area so thick in the sky I wonder we haven't had a crash yet. I'm glad we've got good heavy locks on our foot-thick wooden doors downstairs. I'm sure not a few people have gotten the idea that these windows would be great observation posts.)

More later —
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//07:50GMT200919
Received Baring@hem.UWASH.Universnet//23:55PDT190919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

20 September, 2019
Friday, 7:30 a.m.

But Nick, that's completely wrong! I assure you!!! The snowfall was not,

repeat was NOT a “mass hallucination”! It’s over, true, & no one knows what it was that snowed (except that it wasn’t water-based precipitation). But the newscasters on a French cable station were claiming last night (before they clamped down on public reporting on the subject) that “scientists” had taken samples of the “snow” falling over the Loire, the Seine, and the Elbe Rivers, respectively. You don’t really believe they could have taken samples of something that wasn’t there, do you? It’s true we’ve heard nothing concrete since then, but I find it exceedingly significant that carabinieri continue to guard the banks of the Amo — & in full contamination-avoidance gear, no less!

I realize that’s not much to go on, but I tell you I saw it with my own eyes. Albeit at a removed distance. & I know I wasn’t hysterical or wishing for winter or any such thing at the time. Now if I were a neo-Joachimist, you might legitimately wonder. But watching, at a distance from both crowd & scene, what possible mechanism could be operating that could make ME — & the Iversons as well — hallucinate? Really, Nick! They caught this so-called “hallucination” on videotape — I know, because last night they were showing shots of the snow over the Tiber & Seine & Thames — before the newscasters dropped the story altogether, which was at about 12:45.

If you hear anything else, please let me know. I’ll do the same from this end. But now I’ve got to gulp the rest of my caffe & log out — the Archirio opens just one hour from now, & it takes me about 20 minutes of brisk walking to get there.

Love,
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:53GMT200919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//07:00PDT200919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Friday afternoon

Hah. I swear I don’t know how Florence has gotten into the twenty-first century. Yes, I know, Europe has a bit of a stretch on us in general, but somehow they haven’t allowed any of that famous progress entree into the Archivio di Stato, which might as well be accessible only through a time-machine catapulting one back into the middle ages. Yes, yes, I know you’ve heard this song before, but let me tell you, after what happened this morning I could easily sing a good fifteen new verses of it.

First, I arrived at the Archivio at eight-fifteen sharp, in time to queue up with three other Eager Beavers for the opening. I had some stuff I wanted to order before nine-thirty, & was itching to get at the Esecutore filza I hoped would (finally) be awaiting me in the Deposito. I said my Buon Giornos to the other three, they said theirs to me. & then we waited. & waited. & waited. Until it was after nine-thirty & there was a crowd of about two dozen or so of us waiting for the doors to the Sala to open. The foreign scholars (including me) were hard-put to refrain from complaining about the arbitrary ways of Italians, let me tell you. We did, however, theorize on the possible reasons for the delay (except that we almost instantly got facetious in our speculations). The fact that civil service workers in Italy get away with murder, and all employees of the Archivio di Stato are civil service, naturally played a leading role in our theorizing. (The juxtaposition of old and neomodern in Europe continually blows me away, Nick. The contradictions baffle me. About how Europe can be so stunningly prosperous yet its businesses and governments terrorized by unions, exceeds the grasp of a rational mind.)

At about ten o'clock the doors opened, and the infamous Dragon Lady, Palla herself, appeared. (Or so I gather from what some of the older scholars said — I myself had never seen this legendary figure, only heard about how she used to preside over the Sala before getting promoted upstairs, and of course about how she “modernized” the place — by which I always assume people mean that she dragged the Archirio kicking & screaming into the 19th century around the turn into the 21st!) At any rate, if the old-timers say it was Palla, that’s good enough for me. Certainly she didn’t look old enough to have been presiding over the Sala in the days of my own advisor’s (and his advisor’s before him) graduate studenthood. I was fascinated to note that she was wearing some of the designer paper fashions so popular here in Europe. Not the super-expensive kind the Glams wear (which tends to be made of handmade papers and be hand-painted and extravagantly adorned with the more expensive bric-a-brac), but a relatively simple affair, boasting lots of pleats & a tall ruff standing up around her face & the wildest of sleeves (features that would never work with cloth), & adorned with a few flat round mirrors about two antimeters or so in diameter, & glitter & spun sugar sculptures & who knows what else. (Believe me, Nick. I know already you’re thinking it’s impossible that ordinary middle class Euros wear paper clothing, but I’m not making it up, & I know damned well Palla’s no Glam. They swear around here that paper fashions are both ecologically sound (they get recycled at once) & economically desirable for being so ephemeral, & thus keep people both amused & employed (but note that the Euros consider a twenty-five hour work week with an entire month off in the summer “full employment”!). Actually, I heard some people talking about this at a party last week, grouching about how “grim” Americans are, about how we don’t appreciate the significance of aesthetics (& that if we did we wouldn’t live in our “Great Big Gulag”), & about how we’ve made it impossible for such “lovelies” as paper fashions to be enjoyed there, since a person visiting the U.S. would never dare wear something so easily vulnerable to attack! I can tell you my face was red, I was so pissed I wanted to go over to these so-superior smug creeps — one Brit, a Swiss

and two Florentines — & (besides punching them out!) tell them just how wrong they were to believe such arrant nonsense. But I didn't — because I just *knew* they'd turn their noses up at me for being so "rude" as to interrupt their private conversation — as though one could ever not eavesdrop at a party!)

Damn, I've gotten off the subject. Sorry, love. Though I've never been a superpatriotic type, life here (even if it's only been three weeks so far!) is enough to make a person into one via the crucible of reaction-formation. But anyway. Palla appears, graciously greets us, & then announces that the Archirio will be closed for the morning session, but may — MAY! — be open for the afternoon session! An old Florentine gent (who specializes in the cultural history of the late Duchy) fortunately piped up to ask why. (Given Palla's reputation for icy putdowns, I doubt anyone else would have had the nerve.) "The snow," she replied. "There are difficulties because of the snow." Now have you EVER heard anything so ridiculous? What possible "difficulties" could there be? But of course we all just meekly bowed our heads & accepted the inevitable. So off I went for a cappuccino & panini with my usual crowd of scholars, a mixed bunch of nationalities...& did we talk about the "snow"? No, of course we did not. I was the only who even saw it. & the others happened not to be watching television at the time. We discussed, instead, our research projects (plus some gossip about an art historian who instead of drinking *caffè* with us went shopping for a paper blouse "like

After *caffè* I went to Santa Croce to look at Ciambue's amazing frescos. & then I came home, & wrote up the notes I took on them, & then Lynette arrived for lunch & her run. Let me tell you, the story I got from her was something else.

To start, I don't know if I told you about Lynette's living in the suburbs? (I keep thinking lucky me, lucky the Iversons, for having such a charitable landlady — & North American — & for the connections that allowed me to rent from her in the first place. I haven't been able to bring myself to go out there yet to Lynette's place. (God knows there's no other reason for doing so — I keep imagining what it must be like living in one of those gigantic concrete blocks, & having the commute past the security screening point to manage every damned day. Just thinking about which now reminds me of Palla's feeling secure enough to walk the streets of the Centro wearing a paper blouse! Damned smug Florentines!) Anyway, Lynette lives in the midst of workers, mostly Italian (from a variety of city-states) lower middle class. (Don't get the idea they're poor, no! They've all got every gadget on the Euro market, be sure about that, even their toilets & bidets are those "automatic" Japanese jobs for people too lazy to wipe their own asses). Few people out there speak English, so she's really on her mettle, all the time.

Well it seems this morning when Lynette left her little efficiency, a number of them — three young men & one young woman — gave her some bad (verbal) grief. About, of all things, the "snow"! Can you believe it.? She said they backed her up against the elevator wall & gave her a lecture on how terrible it was that such a barbarically savage country had been able to "wreck the entire earth" with its

immature ways, all because of its “vast mercenary military machine”...But I’ve told you some of the attitudes I’ve been catching since Day One here — I don’t need to go into further detail. It seems the people in Lynette’s apartment block believe the “snow” to be either a) environmental fallout (caused, of course, by U.S. military or industrial pollution); b) a new military move by the U.S., against Europe, i.e., more “power plays by the resentful inferior” (not the words they used to Lynette, but language commonly used by Florentine students); or c) the accidental loss of control of a chemical weapon — again, belonging to the U.S. (of course!). Lynette says that once she got away from them & out onto the street it got worse — namely, she had to listen to these people riding the bus with her theorize about what terrible thing the Americani had done now, that it should snow in the Arno in September — wet sticky snow, some of them claimed it was. (You know how easily rumors can propagate.) Oh, & as if that weren’t enough, it seems many of the people here are claiming that the reason the networks blacked out coverage on the news is that the stations broadcasting the news are all owned by multinational corporations, which we all know that the American government, being so bellicose, can make do whatever they want, & so the Americans naturally wanted news of this new atrocity quashed...As I remarked to Lynette when she told me all this, if the American government had all that much influence over the multinationals, you’d think our economy would be a hell of a lot stronger than it is. (But then the Euros, who have a political opinion about everything, don’t go in for logic much, do they.) I know I’m starting to sound like one of those political ranters, but I just have to add something else. Remember, my telling you the first week I got here, about how some anti-American Euro politicians were going on & on about that mob of women breaking into that warehouse in Arkansas last year, to seize a shipment of recombinant virus used for wiping breast cancers? Well if you’ll remember, one side of the argument was that the U.S. public is so arrogant & illiterate that the average Joe on the street thinks that just because a company has production operations on American soil that it somehow belongs to Americans. Which argument then led to the ridiculous contention that Americans don’t distinguish between what in business is American & what is not — that as far as the American public is concerned, everything in the world belongs to the U.S. (& of course they then trot out the old litany of Iraq, Colombia, etc.) My point is that these same people want to have it both ways — want to claim Americans don’t know the difference, then themselves turn around & imagine the U.S. government can dictate to multinationals for its own purposes. The depressing thing is that the other side of their “argument” is even worse, namely the charge that our social policies are “genocidal” because we insist that food, shelter & medical care be earned, rather than freebie “rights.” Listening to people talk about these things makes me feel as though I’ve gone through the looking-glass, where everything is backwards, & where backwards is accepted as “normal.”

I don’t know, Nick — if this is what life is going to be like here —shit, listening to all my advisor’s old stories about how lovely it is here...about the richness of life, the endless diversity & tolerance...It’s not as though I’m not instantly identifiable as from the other side of the Atlantic, either — I mean, I just

can't afford the clothes they wear here. So I'm branded everywhere I go as from "over there" (the only question being which country "over there" —except when I open my mouth they instantly know it's a northern one, since I never have been able to roll my R's properly).

Going to drip myself a strong cup of coffee before getting my things together & making another run on the Archivio. If there's an afternoon session, it'll be starting half an hour from now. (Not so important to be there on the dot in the afternoon, since any order I put in won't be in evidence until Monday at the earliest.) Hope your day goes better than mine so far has.

Love,
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//23:10GMT200919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:20PDT200919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Friday night

Nick

Sorry you're having such a rush before classes start. Don't worry, I won't be expecting much from you for the next couple of weeks (just so you keep the little notes coming — frequency rather than length is what matters most to me, you know — just to know you're there, & listening to my babble (or should I say **READING** my notes)).

The Sala was open this afternoon, by the way (though the Deposito comic book readers were positively **SURLY** to me, & I kept thinking the walkers were specially focused on me, as though **POSITIVE** I'd be whipping out a pen & using it, or a razor blade to clip out a page or two). I got a solid three hours in, poring over ye olde notary's wretched hand (probably cramped from hours of taking down testimony), which didn't have too many abbreviations I couldn't figure out.

Well I must say I'm glad you're going to take my word for what I saw —it bothered me considerably, as you might imagine, to think you thought I was hysterical. If you can get some solid info, that'd be super. It's the strangest thing — knowing it's probably nothing, but being driven by curiosity, just because I saw it with my own eyes. (Lynette, on the other hand, I'm sure because she didn't, has

little curiosity about it at all: & in fact if I hadn't made it plain to her that I'd seen it, I think she'd be going with the mass hallucination theory, too — for which one would hardly be able to blame her, given the way those people harassed her about it this morning in the elevator in her block.)

Guess I'll read a little, & then get an early night. Didn't get much sleep last night, & am anxious to be at the Archivio when the Sala opens in the morning.

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//21:50GMT210919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//13:54PDT200919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Saturday Evening

Dear Nick,

What a day it's been. Still, it was nice finding your note when I got home, especially with such tantalizing tidbits to thicken the "Snow" plot.

Had three invitations today. First, Blake Steubner (I don't think I've mentioned her to you yet) asked me to lunch at Villa I Tatti next Thursday. She's an art historian, & a fellow there. (Which is why she can ask me to lunch.) Of course I accepted, it would have been unthinkable not to. I'm sure I've told you about I Tatti — how it was left to Harvard by the famous art historian Bernard Berenson, last century, & how it's crammed to the rafters with the most fabulous art. There's a huge chunk of land it sits on, where grapes & olives are cultivated. & they have very formal la-di-da lunches there every weekday, attended by a mix of scholars & Florentine notables (judges, gynecologists, Catholic religious, corporate executives, you know the sort).

Second invitation came at the closing of the Saturday session of the Sala — three art historians — all Americans — & two Florentine graduate students (in history) asked me out to lunch with them. I felt so embarrassed — about turning them down, I mean — but one lunch out like that would have wiped out my cappuccino fund for the month. I hope I didn't sound too lame, saying I had Lynette coming over. (It's possible they know Lynette hangs out at my place on weekdays during the hours between sessions, keeps food in my refrigerator, showers there after her run...) She usually doesn't come on Saturdays, but had told me she was

going to today, because she said she was feeling uncomfortable about running in her neighborhood, given the hostility people there have been directing at her.

The third invitation came when I got home (my string bag full of warm bread, tomatoes & flimsy-thin slices of mortadella), from the Iversons — actually, it was an invitation to both Lynette & me — to go with them to visit an old medieval town that the Consiglio di Firenze has (forcibly) kept intact. Needless to say the language of the statute preventing development (which, by the way, is publicly posted) resounds with reference to the need for preserving “Our Great Heritage of Antiquities” (or something to that effect), but the truth is the Florentines have done so well by tourism that it is unthinkable to them that developers be allowed to tamper with anything so old & therefore attractive to tourists.

So Lynette & I hopped into the Iversons’ van, & the eight of us drove south out of Florence & thence through the miles & miles of concrete blocks. It’s depressing, really. That & the usual light industry sprawl...But there are still rural patches in Tuscany, with lushly silver olive trees & tall dark pointy cypress sharp against the thick blue sky. The town has a sort of cordon sanitaire around it — like a little fringe of green space, as though that would protect it from its suburb — & then there are massive stone ruins from the time of the Romans, & old old buildings that give off a smell you’d swear was a thousand years old, massive piles of brick & stone pressed tightly against one another, towering over narrow streets of old rough paving stones. It’s funny, you could see oil stains on the paving stones, so you knew they once allowed motor vehicles inside the town, but of course they no longer do, so there was this dank muffled stillness, occasionally pierced by the sound of a man & two women quarreling. I even saw some laundry hanging out on a line strung between two buildings — red & white diagonally striped sheets, black & purple polka-dotted boxer shorts, a black brassiere & dress, & a white linen tablecloth & napkins. (Do you suppose the Florentines have made such disregard for the antiquities illegal? I wouldn’t put it past them. & if they haven’t, certainly if anyone who’s anyone ever catches sight of such lower class domesticity, they will.) I thought the laundry sort of amusing, but almost threw up at the smell of meat roasting mixed with the stench of urine & the scent of moldering old stone positively **PERVADING** the place from one end of the town to the other. The people there (besides the tourists, I mean) lacked the look of prosperity one expects in Europe. Imagine the sight of an old woman standing across from a church, wrapped in black from head to toe, only a bit of her face showing — a mass of wrinkles, a great bulb of a nose, a few strands of gray hair straggling out of her head covering, her two black beads of eyes fixed on the door to the church so fanatically I doubt she even saw us. Sensing high drama in progress, I wanted to stop, to investigate. But of course I did not. I doubt the others even noticed her. Certainly Caroline was anxious to get on to the next item in her Blue Guide...

The dreary necessity of going through the security screen on re-entering the Centro was more than usually unendurable. Because the Iversons had dropped Lynette off at her place before we even entered the Centro, it was just me they

invited for supper. I was of two minds about accepting. On the one hand, it was already seven-thirty & I was tired & hungry & interested in getting into my night sweats & curling up with my e-notebook in bed & entering a description of the town in my journal. Also, I'm not sure how friendly I want to get with the Iversons — since they do, after all, share certain amenities with me. (And Donald & Caroline, though they don't quarrel, vie constantly for my attention —which situation, as you can imagine, gets old fast.) (Donald, of course, as a Dean of his college, is used to having his every word fawned over & analyzed. I can understand it in him. In Caroline; I suppose, it's simply long deprivation.) On the other hand, I was pretty wound up, & was finding their company enjoyable. Anyway, I did accept. I have to say their apartment is wonderful — their dining room looks out over the Arno, you know. But not only is their apartment larger, everything is even nicer than in mine. So they gave me wine, & soup & pasta & bread & salad & cheese...& their kids chattered about the "snow" & what the kids in their school were saying about it.

But speaking of "snow" — I'm FASCINATED to hear that so many science-types have reported seeing the "snow" falling into the rivers, creeks and lakes of Western Europe & Northern Africa. & I'm excited to hear that some of them got samples. It's disappointing that SCIENCE reporter hasn't returned your call yet. You're right, Nick, she does owe you one for all the help you gave her explaining that Nobelist's work. But then it is the weekend. Presumably she'll get back to you on Monday.

I do think it's "curious" as you say that the weather sat was damaged at roughly the same time as the "snow" started falling. It may be a "totally wild conjecture" that some sort of meteor is involved, but at this point, Nick, it's the ONLY conjecture I've heard (besides anti-American nonsense about the Evil U.S. Government). (& don't worry, I won't breathe a word of it to anybody — I do understand what you can by "wild conjecture," you know.) Of course, the weirdest thing — even if we can assume the "snow" came from the meteor — is its falling only over water. But I suppose to explain that you'd need an even wilder conjecture...

Thank god for ScienceNet. No doubt when the people who took samples finish their analyses they'll put their conclusions out on the Net. But I'm too tired to write any more. It's bedtime for this little bunny.

Love love love love (if only we could TOUCH!) —
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//11:40GMT220919
Received Baring@hem.UWASH.Universnet//03:SgPDT220919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loteau
Re: Personal & Private

22 September, 2019
Sunday morning

Nick —

Just spending a quiet day at home. Been invited to Sunday supper at Chrissy Fowler's, will probably go. (Funny how solitary I am at home, but here accept almost every invitation that I can afford: especially on the weekends. Living abroad certainly does demonstrate to one just how much a social creature one really is, & how dependent one is on community members for maintaining comfortable assumptions — which the Florentines are always undermining.)

The temptation to telephone is almost overwhelming. It's often powerful, but this morning is fierce — because I keep thinking of how — when I'm home — we invariably get the newspapers & hang out in the Grand Illusion for the whole of a Sunday morning. Presumably at this hour you're sleeping...so you'd sound very very sleepy if I called now & woke you... which, needless to say, I'm not going to do.

Keep the e-mail coming, love.
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//23:20GMT230919
Received Baring@chem. UWASH.Universnet//15:52PDT230919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Monday night

Nick —

Interesting, that SCIENCE has assigned Railey to the story — & convenient, no? (If, as she promises, she keeps you in the picture.) I guess I can understand her attitude, though as an eyewitness it bugs me. Amazing phenomena that have never before been observed & described are bound to be tarred with at least a little of the lunatic-fringe brush. It's hard, though, to see what the hoax here could be, considering how many different places reputable persons observed the

phenomenon.

Am beat, don't think I can keep my eyes open another minute. Nighty-night, love (even if it is three in the afternoon for you).

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//22:50GMT240919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:02PDT240919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loteau
Re: Personal & Private

Tuesday night

Well yes, you're right, I am "horribly money-conscious" these days. But how else can I be, here, when I'm constantly being placed in a position where I have to be? & since it informs so much of my social interactions, & thus my perceptions, how can I avoid talking about it in my letters? I wish I could get you to understand what it's like here. I knew, in theory at least, that living "leanly" would be a necessity for doing this kind of dissertation. Which is to say, the BEST kind of dissertation, in history. In your field it might be analogous to the difference between doing lab research & merely a library-based analysis of research already done. Working with archival materials is the only way to do a first-rate piece of work. It's the fact that I do EUROPEAN history that makes it so difficult. Because it means I HAVE to come here to do it (since the Florentines continue to stonewall against having the ASF's holdings micrographed or read onto CDs). What can I say? I suppose if there weren't this community of scholars here it would be easier to be poor. ("Poor" by THEIR standards, not ours, I hasten to add, lest you jump all over me again!)

Anyway, if you insist that I censor my notes & letters to you, I will. But if I can't blow off steam to you; things will be even harder going for me than they already are...

Love,
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:44GMT250919

Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//06:52PDT250919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loteau
Re: Personal & Private

Wednesday afternoon

Your gleanings are, as you say, intriguing. I'm not sure exactly what you mean by "germ plasm" — remember, I'm a dumb-shit when it comes to science. Are we talking eggs, seeds, some special form of DNA, or what? The idea of these things — & you say there are more than one kind! —being wrapped up in egg white (that IS how I'm to translate "suspended in an albumen-like substance," isn't it?) completely blows me away. Egg white falling from the sky! If, as you say, this germ plasm can't survive for more than two hours at a time out of water, then there would seem to be a PURPOSE (or should one say rationale?) in the stuff's falling into water. (& you also say it can't live in salt water...But if we talk about *purpose*...then things get weird again really fast, right? I mean, how could this stuff *know* to fall into fresh water? (From the SKY, yet!) Stranger, & stranger...Guess you could say these analyses of samples are creating even more mystery than before, rather than explaining it all away. After your getting all this off the Net, I'm dying to know what your SCIENCE reporter will have to say on the subject.

Tomorrow's the big day — lunch at I Tatti. Blake phoned to remind me -& to warn me to dress in my best. Guess this will put my gray linen suit to the acid test. (Now watch, all the women there will be wearing paper!)

Love,
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//17:14GMT260919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//09:22PDT260919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

26 September, 2019
Thursday afternoon

Dear Nick,

Well I didn't really think it would be THAT bad. I mean. Really. So no one

ever taught me how to eat fruit with a knife & fork. Does that make me a barbarian? Though I suppose it was a little gauche of me to openly announce my dissertation project (when asked: because I took care to volunteer NOTHING) as a study of the Renaissance version of white collar crime & corruption, especially under the early de Medicis (god forbid any Americana suggest the honorable Cosimo & Lorenzo tolerated (much less WERE) corrupt). Can you believe, that snobbish neighbor who lives up on the fourth floor of this palazzo (the one the porter smarmily addresses as “Contessa,” & who simply gives one an icy stare when one dares to say Buona Sera in the evening to her), was one of the guests? It seems she’s a friend of the professor in residence at I Tatti. Oh, & get this, there really were the litany of “usuals” present that my advisor told me to expect! A judge, an attorney (with a high forehead & a long hook nose & delicately manicured hands), a plastic surgeon (rather than a gynecologist — must be a sign of the times, eh?) a Dominican monk (who happens to be the brother of a member of the Florentine Consiglio), the Vice President of the dominant communications corporation serving Greater Tuscany, plus a few art historians & an engineer whose mission in life is to save the Leaning Tower of Pisa from falling down entirely. Oh it was jolly, let me tell you. I was the ONLY historian there! Oh, & I forgot. There was some famous chef present, too. Who was “on sabbatical,” according to the Dominican monk. (Soaking up High Culture; no doubt to inspire his future cuisine!)

To start from the beginning — Blake met me at the Archivio, then we walked to her car & drove out to I Tatti. She promised me a tour of the place after lunch. Aperitifs were served (by very Slavic-looking men in full formal waiters’ regalia) in a room whose walls were plastered from floor to ceiling with paintings, all Italian, more than half of which originated in the Renaissance (or earlier). The room had French windows that looked out on a terrace, with a garden rolling down in terraced waves for quite a distance, before reaching the villa’s vineyards & grove of olive trees. The professor’s wife informed me that, per Berenson’s will, I Tatti produces most of its own food (& wine), & that most of the ingredients for the lunch had been taken from the gardens...(Because of the tone she took with me, I quite nastily considered asking her whether they grew & milled their own durum, for pasta, but knew that would only dig me deeper into the role of social inferior...) What else? Oh, I don’t know. The whole thing was appallingly pretentious. Don’t know how Blake stands it. I mean, the idea of it is more exciting than the reality. These people so full of themselves. & the conversation (even though some of it was in English) not at all intellectually stimulating. Just little stories about this, that & the other thing. (A condescending reference to the “mass hallucination” of snow, by the bye: never fear, I breathed not a word of what you’ve been writing me.) I was clumsy enough dealing with the main body of the meal & trying to think in Italian at the same time. I got a grilling from the Dominican (whose tie was a COMBINATION of handmade paper & silk!, as I think was his shirt), re the language with which I appear to be framing the terms of my study — the usual bullshit about not applying neomodern democratic definitions to Trecento & Quattrocento Florence, about all that I did not understand about client-patron relations, about how Renaissance art & letters could never have flowered without such relations, & worst of all bullshit about that most

dated of concepts, male “friendship” between patron & clients in that age. Right, I said, the way a mafia Don feels love & friendship for his “family” enforcers...

All of which talk didn't win me any brownie points.

But the worst moment came when they passed the fruit & cheese. Without even giving a thought to it, I helped myself to an apple & some Stilton. Imagine my horror when I saw everyone around me (& I mean EVERYONE!) using knives & forks to eat THEIR fruit! I chose to compromise — I split my apple into quarters, then ate it — UNPEELED!!! — core & all, with my FINGERS. (Horrors!) I suppose I should just have taken grapes. (Though I saw people peeling them, too, & then using their forks to eat them!.)

Guess I'm not cut out for the finer life. Hope I didn't embarrass Blake too badly. The meal wasn't even all that good, you know. Didn't even have a Secondo. & they were stingy with the wine. Still, the tour was DIVINE. Blake has her own study there. Imagine...& there's a real library, too. Which means Blake doesn't have to trot up to the Biblioteca Nazionale & deal with that set of intransigent folks in addition to the Archivio's crew. Very nice setup indeed (if only all the snobs could be kept out):

As for the ending of this highly “civilized” afternoon, Blake had arranged for Jamie Frost to drive me back into the Centro. Jamie was a fellow at I Tatti last year. This year he lives in an old tower near Fiesole. But the weird thing is that I know that he is having an affair with Lynette. (& nothing normal, either — because a) it's clandestine) & b) he wants only anal sex with her, & is little interested in anything else.) (Lynette says they use unsalted butter.) & his regular girlfriend, Sina Nemerov, was in the car with us during the drive. (Talk about AWKWARD. Lynette speaks with the most passionate hatred for Sina, in a way that's not at all characteristic of her. I felt...compromised.) All the way back Jamie & Sina told sneery stories about the professor & his wife who are pregnant at I Tatti. (Some kind of personal thing, I bet, especially the way Sins talked about the wife. Mean to ask Lynette if she's got any idea.) & of course I kept thinking how Jamie hadn't a clue that I knew about him & Lynette...

But isn't that the way of things here — everything so, well, seamy. Money & sex, you know...Maybe it's just that it's such a small everybody-knows-everybody-else's-business community...Anyway, all this has made me feel anxious. & homesick. & wanting nice clean Seattle & my old comfortable relationships back.

Love,
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:45GMT2.70919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//06:57PDT270919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

27 September, 2019
Friday afternoon

Nick —

I can't stand it. I just can't stand it. I don't see how I'm going to do this dissertation. & when you think about it, the whole idea of it was stupid, anyway. I should have just decided to study crime & punishment, something like that, where one can find all the documents in one obvious place, easy to access... Instead of spread all over the place in a dozen different archives, & every bit of the work an unending investigation chasing down every slightest trace of a clue... & anyway, it's not as though people don't REALLY know, in their heart of hearts, that the early Florentine Republic was basically corrupt, & run according to a modified mafia scheme, with the system set up to avoid major vendettas, while keeping the principal players happy...

In short, I've made a big mistake. I guess I just talked too smooth a line to my advisor & the rest of the dissertation committee...

I don't know how I'm going to show my face in the Archivio again. (Oh I will, don't worry. I mean, I know what I'm here for, & why I'm spending all my inheritance from my grandfather to do it.) But it's just too fucking HARD!!! Listen. I don't know WHY they did this to me today. I suppose it's because I'm an unwealthy Americana, a graduate student, a nobody. (They can't have heard the real subject of my dissertation already, could they? Anyway, they wouldn't *persecute* me for that. Though Jeff did suggest the vague wording for describing my subject of research in the letter of intro he wrote to get me my permesso...)

So this is what happened. Like a nightmare, only *real*. I go this morning to the Deposito to pick up my documenti. One of them is an item from Notarile. I happened to have had it out two weeks ago, but because I wanted to follow a lead from it & didn't want to give up my other documenti, & given the limits on the number of items they allow you to have in the Deposito at any one time, I sent back the item from Notarile & ordered the new piece that I thought would shed some light on what I'd read in Notarile. & the new piece was very interesting. But it made me question my transcription from Notarile. So I decided to call up that item again (& of course duly gave up the spoglio I had out from Aquisite Doni in order to stay under the limit). So this morning I pass over my little carbon copy of the request slip (the

fools make us use carbon forms — not even that part of the process is computerized yet!) to the comic book readers in the Deposito, & what do I get but a verbal explosion of abuse! It all came out so fast & violent that it took me about a minute to figure out that they were objecting to my having re-ordered an item I'd had two weeks ago! (NO ONE EVER TOLD ME THERE WAS A RULE AGAINST DOING SO!!!) (AND THERE ISN'T — EVERYONE I'VE TALKED TO SINCE THE INCIDENT ASSURES ME THAT EVERYONE FREQUENTLY REORDERS THINGS, BECAUSE OF THE

Naturally I tried to explain that I'd needed a second look at it. But no, that wasn't good enough! They just kept repeating over & over — in a high-pitched accented voice that was clearly meant to be an imitation of me: “Est finito, questo documento.” & when saying “questo documento” stabbing their index fingers at the filza in question, to make clear that I had said I was done with the document & wanted it sent back to the stacks.

& then the man who presides over the Sala di Consultare came back to the Deposito & added HIS fifty life to the chorus. Jesus! You'd think I'd tried to write my notes in pen or stuck a 25 watt bulb in one of their nasty little 15 watt reading lamps! You must not do this again, the prissy little jerk harangued me. So I tried to explain to HIM. But unfortunately, the more upset I got, the less Italian I seemed to remember, & LATIN & FRENCH (but especially the former) started to come out of my mouth, as though evil spirits had overtaken me. Ho bisogno, I started out in Italian, licet habere, popped out in Latin, tre documenti, I reverted back to Italian, eodem tempore, I concluded in Latin. I suppose it was that did it. The head honcho of the Sala goggled at me, then exchanged looks of “la Americana e pazzia!” (I could fairly hear them muttering “Americana pazzia” under their breath), & grabbed me by the arm & marched me past all those rows of reading desks in the Sala (EVERYONE was watching!) & up the stairs, to La Directrice (which is to say, to Palla herself).

Her hair a magnificent structure combed high over an extreme wire edifice that looked more Fellini than neomodern, her collar a rival to any worn by Elizabeth I of England, Palla bestowed on me the most scathing, glacial glare, then very quietly told me I had wasted everyone's time with my lack of consideration, & that I must never again send back something I wasn't finished with. That the staff had no time to cater to such flightiness. & then she returned her eyes to her computer screen & ignored me as I tried, again, to explain in my polyglot mixture of tongues, that I'd had to do it that way. Signorina, the fellow who'd dragged me up the stairs hissed in my ear, then strong-armed me out of the august presence (while half a dozen men who could be mistaken for his clones sniggered behind their hands at the spectacle).

They might as well have stood me in the center of the Sala near the request desk, torn my shirt off my back & given me twenty-five lashes for my effrontery. Except for the absence of physical pain (although my stomach has been full of acid all day), I felt as though I'd been publicly disgraced in just that way. Returning to the

Deposito, getting my documenti & creeping to a desk far from the window (since they'd kept me so long all the well-lighted desks were gone), I fantasized standing on my chair & beating my breast & shouting MEA CULPA! MEA CULPA! MEA MAXIMA CULPA!

But I figured they'd have me arrested for disturbing the peace & carted off for public display of madness, & never allow me back in again...

I want to come home. I miss you. I feel like shit. (Maybe I am shit. Maybe this really is all my fault.) Americana stulta! No. Not LATIN!!! Americana STUPIDA!!! MOLTO MOLTO STUPIDA!!!

Questa Americana misses her Nicky...)

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//1 8:25GMT280919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//10:28PDT280919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

The bells of Ognissanti, Nick, the bells are pealing & pealing & pealing, sending their deep mellow clanging sailing in through the casement windows — with the smell of orange blossoms. Or sort of. Can't really describe the smell, except that it's a sweet citrus fragrance, with some zing, that makes one's insides melt with the pleasure of it.

I think it must be the flowers that have sprung up in the Arno — their many tiny petals are blowing everywhere — like our cherry trees in the spring Nick. & it's like spring here today (except that it's troppo caldo for a Seattle May, you know?)...& everyone is walking around in that joyous kind of ecstasy that sometimes bites one after a particularly nasty winter.

Thanks for the note of support — though it was yesterday I needed it. Today I'm so happy to be here. The sky's the purest azure, the air is sparkling & scented, & people everywhere are laughing & smiling. Even the Contessa smiled at me when I came in a few minutes ago, smiled & greeted me with the most pleasant of Buona Seras, & a few minutes before that the transvestite prostitutes who hold the street in back of Ognissanti.

Ciao, love!

(But oh do I wish you were here! I'm FIERCELY horny!)

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist. Firenze.Universnet//23:02GMT290919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//15:04PDT290919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Sunday night, late

Sorry, Nick, that you sent me so many messages that went unanswered. I've been mostly out — partying, actually. Chrissy Fowler threw the most joyous of bashes last night, on the spur of the moment. & I stayed until FIVE A.M.! Then slept for only a few hours before the Iversons asked me out — & treated me to the most lovely of luncheons at a ristorante on the other side of the Arno, near Santa Maria del Carmine. (We ate outdoors, on a patch of the piazza. It was divine — especially since the air still has that wonderful scent in it. My idea of ambrosia, I guess — ambrosia one inhales.)

Which reminds me. About your many & many notes. Nick, you **MUST NOT** worry about this scent. Stop asking me to wear a face mask, because there's no way I'm going to do it! I appreciate your concern, but if you could smell it, you'd know it couldn't possibly be anything noxious. I agree, it's possible that it's coming from the flowers in the Arno (in fact most of us believe it does). But just because there have never been flowers in the Arno before (that anyone has heard of) doesn't mean they're necessarily a bad thing. (Or "unnatural," I think that's the word you used?) So what if they did come from the germ plasm that snowed into so many rivers last week? I don't see that as a reason to get hysterical!

Do you think there's any way you could get someone to pay your expenses to investigate here — as a chemist? Because baby, I could really use a few hours alone with you, pronto! Seriously, work on it. (Anything's possible, you know. **ANYTHING!!!!**)

Oh I miss you more than you can know. My body burns with passion. & I do mean **bums**! (& a certain place is, accordingly, awfully wet.)
Think about it, Nick.

Love & many many kisses & other similarly beautiful things —
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//12:23GMT300919
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//06:08PDT300919

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

God, Nick, I'm in love with the World, everything here is Bella, Bella,
Bellissima! Oh how I WISH YOU WERE HERE!!!!

Molto, molto l'amore!)

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//22:42GMT021019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//16:57PDT021019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loteau
Re: Personal & Private

Monday (or is it Tuesday? I seem to have lost track)

Nick —

I'm sorry my not answering your messages has got you so worried. I promise to do better in the future. (Though really, how can I answer when you send seven or eight a day, especially when I'm hardly ever home!) Listen, it's really truly beautiful here, more beautiful than I've ever known any place to be. This afternoon a myriad little bees & butterflies suddenly appeared in the air, mixing & meshing with the lovely white petals. Like shards of rainbows cut loose in the air, darting this way & that, shimmering with the purest, most intense colors any painter has ever had on his or her palette.

& speaking of painters & palettes! This morning I tried to go to the Uffizi. I had the most intense urge to see the Botticelli again — I think I dreamed about it, for certainly that loveliest of faces was in my mind when I woke this morning. But it was not to be. Not only was the Uffizi so packed it was hard to move through any of its rooms, but I couldn't even wedge my way into the room with the Botticelli much less catch a glimpse of it. (As though the entire city had the same idea.)

Funny. The Iversons had a similar experience — only they went to the Accademia to see the David — with the same degree of success as I had trying to see the Botticelli. So they & I packed our string bags with bread, cheese, fruit &

mineral water, & trooped over to the Boboli Gardens for a picnic. We had a wonderful time, played all sorts of children's games with the girls; games I'd forgotten I even know.

I'm so sleepy. Will have to stop very soon. I half-suspect part of the reason I've been feeling so wonderfully sane & healthy lately is that I've been sleeping for fourteen hours at a stretch since the night of Chrissy's party.

But I did want to say that your doom & gloom is inappropriate, Nick. There's nothing wrong with my feeling good (& even if I were guilty of being in a "state of prolonged & excessive euphoria", what would be wrong with that??). Also, I think it's *fabulous* that Japan has gotten "snow" too. As for coming home now! No way! As I said before, I'd love it if you were to come here — then at least you'd see there's no cause for your alarm over this "unknown aerobic agent."

Lighten up, love! Life's too beautiful to waste it worrying about what terrible thing is indicated by the fact that a lot of people are feeling better than they ever have before!

Con l'amore tantissimo — e baci molti!
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//12:04GMT041019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//10:27PDT041019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

4 October, 2019
Friday morning

Nick —

Have you really been trying to call me since Tuesday? I've been out a lot, but have been sleeping at home. Sorry for your worry. But sophisticated systems do sometimes break, you know. Have you checked with U.S. West? It's probably something at that end. You know how shoddy U.S. work can be.

But I want to assure you that I am in the finest shape possible. For all your fears, not a single sign of neurological degeneracy has shown up, not a trace of pulmonary damage. My body is, in short, working like a charm. (Except that it would LOVE some cuddling from a certain person with the initials N.B., not to

mention days & nights of quality fucking. Which is what the Iversons have been doing lately, in every room in their apartment, so much so that the girls, who are still a little giggly on the subject of sex, have taken to hanging out over here, whether I'm home or not. Which reminds me: if my phone rang while I was out, the Iversons would have gotten it, since we share the same line!)

As for the various European markets closing down, I don't see why you're so upset. People were too money-oriented over here anyway. & now they're focusing their attention on the beautiful side of life. As for the rumor you heard on the Net, to the effect that Joachimists are declaring the New Millennium, they've been doing that for ages already. It is true they wanted to burn some paintings, but a Franciscan brother (barefoot, in a coarse gray angle-length robe & tonsured, his beard a blend of gray & white reaching his chest), speaking in a marvelously mellifluous voice convinced them that aesthetic objects inspire spirituality in people who might otherwise have to be written off (soul-wise). I don't know what it is the media are saying about us over there, but no doubt they've got it wrong. I hate to say it, but my fellow Americans are known for their painfully tight assholes (which inevitably accompany greed & selfishness, for the obvious reasons). & as I've lately discovered, you can't have a tight asshole & the Good Life at one & the same time.

But hey, I'm preaching, aren't I. & that's the last thing I feel like doing. Live, Nick, LIVE! It's time we stopped spending our lives dying. Life IS for living, believe it or not!

Which is exactly what I am doing.

Amore, love, amore!
Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//11:34GMT051019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//19:57PDT041019

To: Nicholas Baring
From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Nick —

Please calm yourself. Really. I beg you. Your tone is one of abject terror, & this concerns me. (Again, I'm telling you would be a lot happier here, I ASSURE YOU.) I can't say I think the New York stock market crash is a bad thing. The panic you feel at this, though — THAT is truly terrible. You need to take some perspective, Nick! As for the U.S. Government's decision to quarantine all its

borders “until such time as adequate decontamination measures are implemented,” well that strikes me as simply pathetic. (It certainly doesn’t frighten me to think they might not let me back in. More important is whether they will let you OUT!) So much fear, so much anxiety, so much dread over truly inconsequential matters — it grieves me, Nick. Particularly since it reminds me of how much of my life I spent gibbering in terror rather than LIVING!

I know nothing about hormonal “aberrations” (though I can imagine how sorry those people are for having returned to the U.S. at all — only to be penned up in some dreary “sterile” place to be poked by robots with needles & have X-rays beamed at them & wires inserted in places they don’t belong). I do believe men’s breasts are filling out. & maybe mine are a little larger. I’m certain Palla’s are, for instance, for as far as I could tell she had very small breasts before, but when I saw her dancing in front of the Duomo the other day, they were very clearly full and round. Actually she looked wonderful -radiant, if you don’t mind my using such a word. (Her hair looks so much better short than combed high over wire sculptures as she used to wear it.) Her face was flushed. She was wearing only a pair of paper shorts and paper and silk bracelets, necklaces and earrings. And her pleasure was open and shining.) If there is a “general rise in estrogen levels in both sexes,” I don’t see what the big deal is, Nick. So we’ll all have stronger bones! & men will have protection from coronary disease. Big deal!

More important is what is happening here. We no longer have motor vehicles in the Centro at all (barring the occasional light truck delivering food.) Which is to say it’s safe to walk as and where one wishes. Just this morning there was a lovely ceremony in the Piazza della Repubblica in which all the small arms of the entire brigade of carabinieri stationed in Tuscany were piled up. The weapons will be melted down at a smelter outside the Centro. The metal will be used to cast a new statue, to be erected out in the Arno. This statue won’t be named “Liberty,” though, but “Joy.” & it won’t be an image of a female human body, but of flowers being buzzed by those scintillant rainbow bees & butterflies.

I now know what “peace” means, Nick. It is more than contentment. But it begins with the shedding of fear & anxiety. Which is what, I’m sad to say, you can’t begin to imagine. (Yet.) Maybe someday . . . you will come here. Or Joy will come to you. Nothing could make me happier, love.

Denny

EOT

From Loreau@hist.Firenze.Universnet//14:58GMT071019
Received Baring@chem.UWASH.Universnet//23:22PDT091019

To: Nicholas Baring

From: Denise Loreau
Re: Personal & Private

Nick, love —

You're right. I hadn't really noticed how much longer our e-mail transmissions are taking. As you say, if this mode of communication goes, we will be lost to one another. With phone service so sketchy & travel interdicted, this is our only link. (It has occurred to me lately that telepathy might be possible, but the fact is we wouldn't know how to begin: though I believe it would start with the body, & be easiest between bodies that have shared Joy.)

This is the beginning you know, of a new epoch in the world. I do not believe we will ever be so foolish as to go back to fear, anxiety & all the evils that attend these weaknesses. (Lynette believes that Joy is the means to a new evolutionary stage — that casting out all fear will allow us to leave behind our most destructive animal instincts.) When I think of all we have forgotten, all that has been in our bodies, waiting all the time, waiting for Discovery! & I just know, Nick, I just know that if you could taste Joy, you would embark upon Discovery, too!

I can only shake my head when I hear that the President of the United States has declared a State of Emergency. It's not just that they're afraid of Joy. I believe they're afraid of living without fear & anxiety, because these have been the bases for all our government has been & done for a long long time. (I've no expertise in U.S. history, so I don't know if they were just always like that, & impressions to the contrary simply the propaganda of myth.)

Once again I'm going to say it: come to me, love! (Yes, & in your next letter you will urge me, again, to wear a face mask & be careful about what I eat! I know, I know, we are talking at cross-purposes. But it is love that moves me, & fear that moves you. Which should tell you something, Nick. Don't you think?) Come to me & taste Joy & Live.

But I've been at this too long — there's dancing every afternoon in the piazza, as long as the weather holds, & Lynette's just arrived now, to sweep me away. (When it rains, we will really celebrate!) If the President should "declare war" (but on whom? Doesn't it take two to fight ?) then undoubtedly we will, as you say, be cut off altogether. In which case I want you to remember me as last saying these words: Taste Joy, & Lose Fear Forever — for that's the only way to Live.

Denny

EOT

1 March, 2147

To: The Respected Documentary Contributor, Gendron 14
Dear Respected Documentary Contributor:

I have read with deep appreciation the documents you so kindly sent me. They are exactly the sort of thing I am looking for. Greater detail, analysis and insight would have been welcome; but in persons of the prewar period such a combination of skills must have been rare, if not nonexistent.

I found especially interesting the comment about evolutionary stages made by the person identified only as “Lynette” (copies of the earlier correspondence might be helpful here — but I assume such earlier “e-mail” is no longer extant?). It is a pity that communication broke down with the U.S. Government’s panic and reckless precipitation of war. Undoubtedly you are aware that a “Declaration of War” was made by the U.S. Congress only twelve hours after the time given for Nicholas Baring’s receipt of Denise Loreau’s message.

As to verifying the authenticity of the documents, I can do this only indirectly — through documenting Nicholas Baring’s career and his official existence as a U.S. “citizen,” and by the lack of documentation for Denise Loreau after her departure from Seattle, Washington. (The records that could have been used to document her travel from the United States to the City-State of Florentia, Europe, have been lost.)

In closing, I wish to thank you for the pleasure afforded to me in reading a firsthand account of the advent of “Joy” (as Denise Loreau calls it) to the world. We must never forget what we once were; nor the first touches and steps and words of the child learning to taste and touch life — even if that child is a biologically developed adult. My thanks, Gendron 14.

Respectfully and appreciatively yours in Life,
Elihanu 09

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L Timmel Duchamp’s “When Joy Came to the World” is the first of many appearances she will make in the pages of F&SF. She received quite a bit of notice a few years ago for her short story, “The Forbidden ‘Words of Margaret A.’” which appeared in *Pulphouse: The Hardback Magazine*. She has sold short fiction to other anthologies, including Bantam’s Full Spectrum series

“When Joy Came to the World” is an unusual futuristic story told through a standard literary device — the episode. Only in this case, the letters are sent via electronic mail, which has, for some, already become the communication device of the present.