

JAMES JOYCE

LETTERS TO NORA

DECEMBER, 1909

2013

I am so glad I am now in sight of Miramar. The only thing I hope is that I haven't brought on that cursed thing again by what I did. Pray for me, dearest.

Addio, addio, addio, addio!

JIM

1909. James Joyce lives in Trieste (Italy) with his family. End of October, he leaves alone for Dublin on a business trip, and stays there until the end of December. He makes a pact with his wife to write to each other erotic letters. The letters of his wife disappeared, but the ones he wrote were published in a now long out-of-print collection in 1975 – and, at the behest of Joyce's surviving family, were never printed again. The transcriptions of these letters are taken from Richard Ellmann, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, Introduction, Faber & Faber, London, 1975.

To NORA

20 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My sweet naughty girl,

I got your hot letter tonight and have been trying to picture you frigging your cunt in the closet. How do you do it? Do you stand against the wall with your hand tickling up under your clothes or do you squat down on the hole with your skirts up and your hand hard at work in through the slit of your drawers? Does it give you the horn now to shit? I wonder how you can do it. Do you come in the act of shitting or do you frig yourself off first and then shit? It must be a fearfully lecherous thing to see a girl with her clothes up frigging furiously at her cunt, to see her pretty white drawers pulled open behind and her bum sticking out and a fat brown thing stuck half-way out of her hole. You say you will shit your drawers, dear, and let me fuck you then. I would like to hear you shit them, dear, first and then fuck you. Some night when we are somewhere in the dark and talking dirty and you feel your shite ready to fall put your arms around my neck in shame and shit it down softly. the sound will madden me and when I pull up your dress

No use continuing! You can guess why!

The cinematograph opened today. I leave for Trieste on Sunday 2 January. I hope you have done what I said about the kitchen, linoleum and armchair and curtains. By the way don't be sewing those drawers before anybody. Is your dress made. I hope so- with a long coat, belted and cuffed with leather etc. How I am to manage Eileen's [*note: his sister*] fare I don't know. For God's sake arrange that you and I can have comfortable bed. I have no great wish to do anything to you, dear. All I want is your company. You may rest easy about my going with _____ [*note: a word is omitted by Joyce in the original, presumably "whores". His infidelities with prostitutes had upset Nora*] You understand. That won't happen, dear.

O, I am hungry now. The day I arrive get Eva to make one of the threepenny puddings and make some kind of vanilla sauce without wine. I would like roast beef, rice-soup, capuzzi garbi, mashed potatoes, pudding and black coffee. No, no I would like stracotto di maccheroni, a mixed salad, stewed prunes, torrioni, tea and presnitz. Or no I would stewed eels or polenta with...

Excuse me, dear, I am hungry tonight.

Nora darling, I hope we will pass a happy year together. Am writing Stannie [*note: his brother, Stanislaus*] tomorrow about cinematograph.

To NORA

2 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My darling,

I ought to begin by begging your pardon, perhaps, for the extraordinary letter I wrote you last night. While I was writing it your letter was lying in front of me and my eyes were fixed, as they are even now, on a certain word of it. There is something obscene and lecherous in the very look of the letters. The sound of it too is like the act itself, brief, brutal, irresistible and devilish.

Darling, do not be offended at what I wrote. You thank me for the beautiful name I gave you. Yes, dear, it is a nice name 'My beautiful wild flower of the hedges! My dark-blue, rain-drenched flower!'. You see I am a little of the poet still. I am giving you a lovely book for a present too: and it is a poet's present for the woman he loves. But, side by side and inside this spiritual love I have for you there is also a wild beast-like craving for every inch of your body, for every secret and shameful part of it, for every odour and act of it. My love for you allows me to pray to the spirit of eternal beauty and tenderness mirrored in your eyes or to fling you down under me on that soft belly of yours and fuck you up behind, like a hog riding a sow, glorying in the open shame of your upturned dress and white girlish drawers and in the confusion of your flushed cheeks and tangled hair. It allows me to burst into tears of pity and love at some slight word, to tremble with love for you at the sounding of some chord or cadence of music or to lie heads and tails with you feeling your fingers fondling and tickling my ballocks or stuck up in me behind and your hot lips sucking off my cock while my head is wedged in between your fat thighs, my hands clutching the round cushions of your bum and my tongue licking ravenously up your rank red cunt. I have taught you almost to swoon at the hearing of my voice singing or murmuring to your soul the passion and sorrow and mystery of life and at the same time have taught you to make filthy signs to me with your lips and tongue, to provoke me by obscene touches and noises, and even to do in my presence the most shameful and filthy act of the body. You remember the day you pulled up your clothes and let me lie under you looking up at you as you did it? Then you were ashamed even to meet my eyes.

You are mine, darling, mine! I love you. All I have written above is only a moment or two of brutal madness. The last drop of seed has hardly been squirted up your cunt before it is over and my true love for you, the love of my verses, the love of my eyes for your strange luring eyes, comes blowing over my soul like a wind of spices. My prick is still hot and stiff and quivering from the last brutal drive it has given you when a faint hymn is heard rising in tender pitiful worship of you from the dim cloisters of my heart.

Nora, my faithful darling, my sweet-eyed blackguard schoolgirl, be my whore, my mistress, as much as you like (my little frigging mistress! my little fucking whore!) you are always my beautiful wild flower of the hedges, my dark-blue rain-drenched flower.

JIM

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To NORA

20 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My sweet naughty girl,

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To NORA

3 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My darling little convent-girl,

There is some star too near the earth for I am still in a fever-fit of animal desire. Today I stopped short often in the street with an exclamation whenever I thought of the letters I wrote you last night and the night before. They must read awful in the cold light of day. Perhaps their coarseness has disgusted you. I know you are a much finer nature than your extraordinary lover and though it was you yourself, you hot little girl, who first wrote to me saying that you were longing to be fucked by me yet I suppose the wild filth and obscenity of my reply went beyond all bounds of modesty. When I got your express letter this morning and saw how careful you are of your worthless Jim I felt ashamed of what I had written. Yet now, night, secret sinful night, has come down again on the world and I am alone again writing to you and your letter is again folded before me on the table. Do not ask me to go to bed, dear. Let me write to you, dear.

As you know, dearest, I never use obscene phrases in speaking. You have never heard me, have you, utter an unfit word before others. When men tell in my presence here filthy or lecherous stories I hardly smile. Yet you seem to turn me into a beast. It was you yourself, you naughty shameless girl who first led the way. It was not I who first touched you long ago down at Ringsend. It was you who slid your hand down inside my trousers and pulled my shirt softly aside and touched my prick with your long tickling fingers, and gradually took it all, fat and stiff as it was, into your hand and friggng me slowly until I came off through your fingers, all the time bending over me and gazing at me out of your quiet saintlike eyes. It was your lips too which first uttered an obscene word. I remember well that night in bed in Pola. Tired of lying under a man one night you tore off your chemise violently and began to ride me up and down. Perhaps the horn I had was not big enough for you for I remember that you bent down to my face and murmured tenderly 'Fuck up, love! fuck up, love!'

Nora dear, I am dying all day to ask you one or two questions. Let me, dear, for I have told you everything I ever did and so I can ask you in turn. I wonder will you answer them. When that person whose heart I long to stop with the click of a revolver put his hand or hands under your skirts did he only tickle you outside or did he put his finger or fingers up into you? If he did, did they go far enough to touch that little cock at the end of your cunt? Did he touch you behind? Was he a long time tickling you and did you come? Did he ask you to touch him and did you do so? If you did not touch him did he come against you and did you feel it?

Another question, Nora. I know that I was the first man that blocked you but did any man ever frig you? Did that boy you were fond of ever do it? Tell me now, Nora, truth for truth, honesty for honesty. When you were with him in the dark at night did your fingers never, never unbutton his trousers and slip inside like mice? Did you ever frig him, dear, tell me truly or anyone else? Did you never never, never feel a man's or a boy's prick in your fingers until you unbuttoned me? If you are not offended do not be afraid to tell me the truth. Darling, darling, tonight I have such a wild lust for your body that if you were here beside me and even if you told me with your own lips that half the red-headed louts of Galway had had a fuck at you before me I would still rush at you with desire.

God Almighty, what kind of language is this I am writing to my proud blue-eyed queen! Will she refuse to answer my coarse insulting questions? I know I am risking a good deal in writing this way, but if she loves me really she will feel that I am mad with lust and that I must be told all.

Sweetheart, answer me. Even if I learn that you too have sinned perhaps it would bind me closer to you. In any case I love you. I have written and said things to you that my pride would never again allow me to say to any woman.

My darling Nora, I am panting with eagerness to get your replies to these filthy letters of mine. I write to you openly because I feel now that I can keep my word with you.

Don't be angry, dear, dear, Nora, my little wild-flower of the hedges. I love your body, long for it, dream of it.

Speak to me, dear lips that I have kissed in tears. If this filth I have written insults you bring me to my senses again with the lash as you have done before. God help me!

I love you, Nora, and it seems that this too is part of my love. Forgive me! forgive me!

JIM

Get ready. Put some warm-brown-linoleum on the kitchen and hang a pair of red common curtains on the windows at night. Get some kind of a cheap common comfortable armchair for your lazy lover. Do this above all, darling, as I shall not quit the kitchen for a whole week after I arrive, reading, lolling, smoking, and watching you get ready the meals and talking, talking, talking, talking to you. O how supremely happy I shall be! God in heaven, I shall be happy there! I figlioli, il fuoco, una bona mangiata, un caffè nero, un Brasil, il Piccolo della Sera, e Nora, Nora mia, Norina, Noretta, Norella, Noruccia ecc ecc...

Eva and Eileen must sleep together. Get some place for Georgie. I wish Nora and I had two beds for night-work. I am keeping and shall keep my promise. love. Time fly on, fly on quickly! I want to go back to my love, my life, my star, my little strange-eyed Ireland!

A hundred thousand kisses, darling!

JIM

To NORA

16 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My sweet darling girl,

At last you write to me! You must have given that naughty little cunt of yours a most ferocious frigging to write me such a disjointed letter. As for me, darling, I am so played out that you would have to lick me for a good hour before I could get a horn stiff enough even to put into you, to say nothing of blocking you. I have done so much and so often that I am afraid to look to see how that thing I had is after all I have done to myself. Darling, please don't fuck me too much when I go back. Fuck all you can out of me for the first night or so but make my get myself cured. The fucking must all be done by you, darling, as I am so soft and small now that no girl in Europe except yourself would waste her time trying the job. Fuck me, darling, in as many ways as your lust will suggest. Fuck me dressed in your full outdoor costume with your hat and veil on, your face flushed with the cold and wind and rain and your boots muddy, either straddling across my legs when I am sitting in a chair and riding me up and down with the frills of your drawers showing and my cock sticking up stiff in your cunt or riding me over the back of the sofa. Fuck me naked with your hat and stockings on only flat on the floor with a crimson flower in your hole behind, riding me like a man with your thighs between mine and your rump very fat. Fuck me in your dressing gown (I hope you have that nice one) with nothing on under it, opening it suddenly and showing me your belly and thighs and back and pulling me on top of you on the kitchen table. Fuck me into you arseways, lying on your face on the bed, your hair flying loose naked but with a lovely scented pair of pink drawers opened shamelessly behind and half slipping down over your peeping bum. Fuck me if you can squatting in the closet, with your clothes up, grunting like a young sow doing her dung, and a big fat dirty snaking thing coming slowly out of your backside. Fuck me on the stairs in the dark, like a nursery-maid fucking her soldier, unbuttoning his trousers gently and slipping her hand into his fly and fiddling with his shirt and feeling it getting wet and then pulling it gently up and fiddling with his two bursting balls and at last pulling out boldly the mickey she loves to handle and frigging it for him softly, murmuring into his ear dirty words and dirty stories that other girls told her and dirty things she said, and all the time pissing her drawers with pleasure and letting off soft warm quiet little farts behind until her own girl-ish cockey is as stiff as his and suddenly sticking him up in her and riding him.

Basta! Basta per Dio!

I have come now and the foolery is over. Now for your questions!

We are not open yet. I send you some posters. We hope to open on the 20th or 21st. Count 14 days from that and 3 1/2 days for the voyage and I am in Trieste.

To NORA

6 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

Noretta mia!

I got your pitiful letter this evening telling me you were going about without underclothes. I did not get 200 crowns on the 25th but only 50 crowns and 50 again on the 1st. Enough about money. I send you a little banknote and hope you may be able to buy a pretty frilly pair of drawers at least for yourself out of it and will send you more when I am paid again. I would like you to wear drawers with three or four frills one over the other at the knees and up the thighs and great crimson bows in them, I mean not the schoolgirls' drawers with a thin shabby lace border, tight round the legs and so thin that the flesh shows between them but women's (or if you prefer the word) ladies' drawers will a full loose bottom and wide legs, all frills and lace and ribbons, and heavy with perfume so that whenever you show them, whether in pulling up your clothes hastily to do something or in cuddling yourself up prettily to be blocked, I can see only a swelling mass of white stuff and frills and so that when I bend down over you to open them and give you a burning lustful kiss on your naughty bare bum I can smell the perfume of your drawers as well as the warm odour of your cunt and the heavy smell of your behind.

Have I shocked you by the dirty things I wrote to you? You think perhaps that my love is a filthy thing. It is, darling, at some moments. I dream of you in filthy poses sometimes. I imagine things so very dirty that I will not write them until I see how you write yourself. The smallest things give me a great cockstand- a whorish movement of your mouth, a little brown stain on the seat of your white drawers, a sudden dirty word spluttered out by your wet lips, a sudden immodest noise made by you behind and then a bad smell slowly curling up out of your backside. At such moments I feel mad to do it in some filthy way, to feel your hot lecherous lips sucking away at me, to fuck between your two rosy-tipped bobbies, to come on your face and squirt it over your hot cheeks and eyes, to stick it up between the cheeks of your rump and bugger you.

Basta per stasera!

I hope you got my telegram and understood it.

Goodbye, my darling whom I am trying to degrade and deprave. How on God's earth can you possibly love a thing like me?

O, I am so anxious to get your reply, darling!

JIM

To NORA

8 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My sweet little whorish Nora,

I did as you told me, you dirty little girl, and pulled myself off twice when I read your letter. I am delighted to see that you do like being fucked arseways. Yes, now I can remember that night when I fucked you for so long backwards. It was the dirtiest fucking I ever gave you, darling. My prick was stuck up in you for hours, fucking in and out under your upturned rump. I felt your fat sweaty buttocks under my belly and saw your flushed face and mad eyes. At every fuck I gave you your shameless tongue come bursting out through your lips and if I gave you a bigger stronger fuck than usual fat dirty farts came spluttering out of your backside. You had an arse full of farts that night, darling, and I fucked them out of you, big fat fellows, long windy ones, quick little merry cracks and a lot of tiny little naughty farties ending in a long gush from your hole. It is wonderful to fuck a farting woman when every fuck drives one out of her. I think I would know Nora's fart anywhere. I think I could pick hers out in a roomful of farting women. It is a rather girlish noise not like the wet windy fart which I imagine fat wives have. It is sudden and dry and dirty like what a bold girl would let off in fun in a school dormitory at night. I hope Nora will let off no end of her farts in my face so that I may know their smell also.

You say when I go back you will suck me off and you want me to lick your cunt, you little depraved blackguard. I hope you will surprise me some time when I am asleep dressed, steal over me with a whore's glow in your slumbrous eyes, gently undo button after button in the fly of my trousers and gently take out your lover's fat mickey, lap it up in your moist mouth and suck away at it till it gets fatter and stiffer and comes off in your mouth. Sometime too I shall surprise you asleep, lift up your skirts and open your hot drawers gently, then lie down gently by you and begin to lick lazily round your bush. You will begin to stir uneasily then I will lick the lips of my darling's cunt. You will begin to groan and grunt and sigh and fart with lust in your sleep. Then I will lick up faster and faster like a ravenous dog until your cunt is a mass of slime and your body wriggling wildly.

Goodnight, my little farting Nora, my dirty little fuckbird! There is one lovely word, darling, you have underlined to make me pull myself off better. Write me more about that and yourself, sweetly, dirtier, dirtier.

JIM

To NORA

9 December 1909: 44 Fontenoy Street, Dublin.

My sweet naughty little fuckbird,

Here is another note to buy pretty drawers or stockings or garters. Buy whorish drawers, love, and be sure you sprinkle the legs of them with some nice scent and also dis-colour them just a little behind.

You seem anxious to know how I received your letter which you say is worse than mine. How is it worse than mine, love? Yes, it is worse in one part or two. I mean the part where you say what you will do with your tongue (I don't mean sucking me off) and in that lovely word you write so big and underline, you little blackguard. It is thrilling to hear that word (and one or two others you have not written) on a girl's lips. But I wish you spoke of yourself and not of me. Write me a long long letter, full of that and other things, about yourself, darling. You know now how to give me a cockstand. Tell me the smallest things about yourself so long as they are obscene and secret and filthy. Write nothing else. Let every sentence be full of dirty immodest words and sounds. They are all lovely to hear and to see on paper even but the dirtiest are the most beautiful.

The two parts of your body which do dirty things are the loveliest to me. I prefer your arse, darling, to your bobbies because it does such a dirty thing. I love your cunt not so much because it is the part I block but because it does another dirty thing. I could lie frigging all day looking at the divine word you wrote and at the thing you said you would do with your tongue. I wish I could hear your lips spluttering those heavenly exciting filthy words, see your mouth making dirty sounds and noises, feel your body wriggling under me, hear and smell the dirty fat girlish farts going pop pop out of your pretty bare girlish bum and fuck fuck fuck fuck my naughty little hot fuckbird's cunt for ever.

I am happy now, because my little whore tells me she wants me to roger her arseways and wants me to fuck her mouth and wants to unbutton me and pull out my mickey and suck it off like a teat. More and dirtier than this she wants to do, my little naked fucker, my naughty wriggling little frigger, my sweet dirty little farter.

Goodnight, my little cuntie I am going to lie down and pull at myself till I come. Write more and dirtier, darling. Tickle your little cockey while you write to make you say worse and worse. Write the dirty words big and underline them and kiss them and hold them for a moment to your sweet hot cunt, darling, and also pull up your dress a moment and hold them in under your dear little farting bum. Do more if you wish and send the letter then to me, my darling brown-arsed fuckbird.

JIM