

AN ACCOUNT THROUGH LETTERS

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An Account Through Letters by Erica Cotterill

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AN ACCOUNT

I

I told you in what I wrote before that there are people about whom I have sudden feelings that they can help something thats struggling in me, more than others. I have had this feeling about you and it was through that I wrote to you.

If you let me into your lives I warn you you may be letting something in which will hurt you intensely—by hurt I dont mean injure, but I mean that it may bring you intense suffering, both of you. You said the other night you cared for courage more than for other things. If you both feel that then it will be easier.

II

I will come and see you tomorrow *unless* you are going to have people like Mrs. —— with you, in which case Id rather come some other time, not because I despise them or dont understand them—Ive been brought up among them—but just because, at present it happens Im no use to them or they to me—as soon as she came in the room last night you got into her circle—I dont mean the conscious seen one, I mean a hidden one, but its not any less distinct or any less definite for being hidden—and it may be in actualness youre more at ease in it and belong to it more than I had thought, its that Ive wanted to find out—you were in it again to-night, you said things, both last night and to-night that made me see there were a great many things, general and particular ones both, that you dont understand—it may be its not so much not being able to grasp things as not being able to hold them, with you—if I go on seeing you I shall see that more—and you know my lamb I shall be unhappy if I have to give you up but I shall have to if youre only a butterfly after all, theres too much lightness about me already, I need more steadfastness—its strange, but Layos

wasnt a real butterfly—theres more rock in Surd than in either of you but Layos could dive deeper even if it was only in instants.

III

Ive a great deal to say and I havent time—at least thats the way it feels—to say it in fewer words with more behind them that I could say it in if I took more than to-day to write it, so you mustnt mind its coming out nearer to the way I talk.

You know the things I said to you about what seemed a need for lifting associations of things, unfixing things—its as if theres a need at one time or another for something to smash apart every outside sign or symbol or whatever, thats got a fixed interpretation on it. Its as if mine has to do chiefly with what are called sex things. Two things to do with it havent got written down in either of my writings—I cant account always for what selects and leaves out in me, its not a wish to conceal, it just does select. One is, with the first person I wrote of, before he came and that feeling of a need to fling away everything and have my bare body come, Id written to him saying with exactness how I felt and how it would be if he came again. But I didnt understand then what something in me was struggling to break through. I knew something was freed and let loose when it was dark, and when my body could fling about the way a what can be called spirit body Im joined to is doing always, and I knew in a vague way that I needed my body to be loved by this person in some way, with all the people Ive felt it with I know its been a true feeling and a partly mistaken applying of it—and I think theres another thing, I think theres a part in me that doesnt recognise quickly enough when a thing is done and finished—it may have been that a thing needed to be done then was done at once, that after that, doing the same outside things was only mummery—I dont know. And yet I know now that neither of them, either this other person or Layos, knew or did *consciously* what was needed. Layos never understood clearly with

his conscious part either that though my mind stayed open always to watch what came and find out, in actualness in so far as it can be said people are not drawn to each other by sex feelings, I never was drawn to him by those feelings in the way its generally meant. And now, quite suddenly, the same feelings and same need has come for you. I mean quite suddenly in my conscious part. You know how you said my mind didnt do things by plan but by jumps. I dont know how true that is, but it seems its true here. But now its as if, watching back, its been growing all the time. When you said, in a funny dear way, that you wouldnt alter those ugly clothes, any of them, its as if in a deeper part I knew something was begun. And then, its as if thats why I was trying to say those things that seemed to need a so terrible deal of pulling to pull out into words. And then all those things that came in the beginning, that instant feeling that there was something you needed to give or do that came in the beginning and then kept seeming delusion and fantasy and yet each time coming back in a different form—it feels as if perhaps youll understand everything without my going on struggling to light it up, perhaps its only in me that I need to light it up clearer. If thats so, all Im trying to get clear is for me, but I must do it as if it was for you or I shouldnt do it at all I think. First, if you dont understand that loving my body is only a going on from loving my ugly clothes and things, that both and all is only in actualness a letting loose of something behind that cant be let loose any other way, then it wouldnt be any use. And if you could feel that a spirit part can be loved without any body loving, then too you wont have understood, its as if thats what asceticism means, its as if this is bigger, its not a repressing and crushing of what is conceived as evil, or temptation, its as if its what is meant by a redeeming. And Cett, shall you understand that if it feels that by loving my body, or the body of anything like me, that I stand for, is in any way being false to any other thing or person, that then still you havent understood. That the only concealment which could be possible to do with it could be *in no way*

from shame of it or thinking of it as wrong, but *only* from a waiting till something could be lit up in the minds of who it would be held back from, by which they could feel, not that it was a falseness, but a spreading out and growing on of truth—I think now its been from this Ive wanted so much to tell out things in me when Loom was there, so that she should understand, I think Ive thought of her—not herself but what she represents—as something to be broken down too, not by hitting and fighting but by a particular kind of loving—a kind that gathers up and sweeps along with it the thing its loving before it knows its shifted even. But you dont trust my instinct yet, it may be partly because youve seen what seemed to be it smashing into things in an ugly way—it may be it hasnt been the part that loves in me youve seen working yet, there are other parts. And Cett, there was a thing that was a bad thing to say that you said. You said—If you are going to tell things to Loom you mustnt see her—I didnt say anything when you said it, because I had a feeling there was something going very fast in you that had better be left for then. But dont if you can help it ever say *you mustnt* to me—you spoke then as if you were defying or commanding or both, dont ever defy or command me, what you wish, even if I think it mistaken, if you tell me out of a particular kind of wishing in you I should do always, but dont defy or there may be something in me will do the same—and Loom belongs to me and to herself and to everyone as well as to you.—And when I speak about loving the bodies of people, I dont mean something vague and mystical only and what is called theoretical, any more than I mean doing fixed things, like that mingling through which children come, or dont come if its prevented, I mean more that there should be no impulse of movement from one to another which is controlled by a conscious tenderness of one person for another which should not be freed from all fixed rules and customs to find its own way through everything that has power to shake it and pull it awry, like those feelings which are generally meant when people say sex impulses, which do pull awry when they arent controlled by conscious

love of one particular person or even by any quality in them—you know my lamb I know its funny rather and like a lecture the way I am saying about everything but it wont come any other way.—And then if you would still be thinking, that though it may be you love something in me, yet it hasnt to do with my body, youre mistaken in one or another, I mean its a law, you cant *love* a thing, itself, without loving everything it is thats true about it, my shrinking about my body makes it seem hard for anyone to love it, but in actualness what they are drawing back from isnt *first of all* my body, but first of all its my shrinking and conception of it they are drawing back from—and do you understand Cett, how thats linked on wide to that conception which comes expressed in the redeeming of sins, do you see how its only by the loving of what seems ugly things that they get changed into beautiful ones, and get freed—there are masses and masses of myths and fables that light that in some form—and I dont mean the quite superficial and obvious thing that can be seen at once, I mean something deeper hidden with everything spreading from it—its a whats called mystic thing.

Ive finished that part, at least for to-day, it may go on to-morrow. But Cett, theres a thing Ill tell you. I found in you last night a particular power of tenderness thats as near what I mean by Christ tenderness as any Ive ever found in any one. I know you think I jump all the time and miss all the things between and I think its often so consciously. But I think the way things work in me is that the parts in between get threaded in, to an extent afterwards—they somehow appear when I didnt know Id felt them. I found from what you said last night Id felt rather a good deal of what you were feeling about Surd before you told me. And all the while last night I was feeling and it was as if knowing things you were feeling. And yet, even though nearly all the time, at least in the beginning, things were rushing and blazing in you, yet a particular gentleness stayed in a way Ive not found before inside a nature which is like yours. It feels youve always loved a particular kind of person in a