

The Collection of Unsent Letters in the Pocket of James Harbour

by Hailey Cavanagh

This collection of letters, along with a dried cherry blossom, was recovered in the breast pocket of James L. Harbour, a soldier on the frontlines of the American Revolutionary War, shortly after his death in the Battle of Saratoga.

Dear Evelynne-May Connell,

For every letter I write home, I write one to you. Never do I send them, though I pray that one day they will be granted emergence into your life. My inspiration comes from the hope that you do the same from where you are, which having known you for as long as I have, I expect is somewhere of great importance and growing prosperity.

I believe if you knew how I imagine you, you'd find your father's scythe to cut me down where I stand. No matter the length of time that has passed, you live in my mind as you always were. I cannot, even with immense effort, visualise your hair short. I know, however, for what it stands, and feel only a sense of pride at my imagining it.

Bern Druss, the Gentleman with Three Outs in our battalion, is watching me with claws twitching. The prig is desperate to catch me in an act that will discredit me, and so I must lay my pen to rest.

With all the grand love of falling white cherry blossoms,

James (Leonardo, at your insistence) Harbour

Dearest Evelynne-May,

Or Elliot-Matthew, I suppose. I'm writing to inform you of my day. It was, unfortunately, rather mundane – mainly cleaning tasks – but marriage is the topic of countless mundane stories, one after another. My God, I can practically hear your scoff. But laugh not, for I shall convince you someday of my aptitude for husbandly duties.

In other accounts, there is word that your battalion shall meet mine shortly. I had promised myself never to credit this on paper for fear it may provide me with false hope, but I could not keep something so important from you, now or ever.

From merely a suitor,

Jamie Harbour

My Evelynne-May ~~Harbour~~ Connell,

A feeling of true whimsy has overcome me today, as it is raining. Of course, you know to what I'm referring. It perpetually saddens and warms me to think of the memory of soaked sandwiches and the look on your mother's face as we stampeded into the foyer, leaving puddles in our wake.

I heard from your mother recently, at which time she told me your brother is recovering from fever but will not be returning to battle. She wishes you love, but I'm certain you've heard the words from her pen directly.

It is ever difficult not to be overcome with melancholy upon remembering the truth of my absence from your new life as a forbidden soldier. While my pride is abounding, any reflection on where you are fills me with a bitter terror. ~~If you were to be caught~~ ~~If you were to be~~ So many brutal actions could befall you, and it is my only mission to pray hard enough to protect you where my arms cannot.

Stay far from danger, your forced illusioned,

James Harbour

Dear E.M.,

Remember that name? Your look upon my calling you that led me to my love for you. I wish now that I'd told you so before.

I hope, sincerely, that you are doing well, and that you have done all you set out to do. I pray each night that our childhood games, of which you were always the hero at my expense, will become your reality, as your dreams have always grounded you in a way that I only experience when I think of you.

Let no one deter you from becoming, not what you want to be, but what you must be in order to keep your soul afloat.

With love and constant support,

James (or rather, the damsel)

Dear James,

I have never displayed such cowardice in the written word as I have in my delay to write this letter. I have attempted to find the words for the past week, but each time I was overcome with too much sorrow to continue. We received word of the death of our beloved child, Evelynne-May, a week ago. She was the light of our lives; my husband and I know how much you cared for her. We are holding a memorial by the "cherry" tree, and though we know you cannot attend, we will hold your presence in our hearts.

With love,

Mrs. Lilian Connell

My Dearest Evelynne-May Lucia Connell,

You are the gift for which the world has been waiting. The giddiness of childhood swept us both up in the chaos of falling in love, and it has remained relentless in me every second since. Your words have burned marks into my skin like chalk dust on fingertips.

My grief has never been so evident as it is now, so utterly consuming and fracturing. The thought merely of your protective glance is enough to rile me into a frenzy of longing so strong it may drag a wrench through my chest until it pulls me to the ground, melding my essence to your own.

And though it makes no sense, I want nothing more than that to be true. I want to disassemble my bones and bag them and give them to you to carry gently against a current.

The impossibility is a torment that is as indescribable as the purpose behind human nature itself. I am the flagpole of a burned flag. I am frozen, watching the ashes scrape the sky and be pinned down by rain. Letting go of you is the only thing I am incapable of doing, and I sincerely hope I will perish with my persistence to hold on. I hope it will drown me, this bridge that was never quite built and hangs limply over a cliffside.

I am writing today, however, to talk about the mundane. The weather was calm. It didn't rain.

Your loyal friend, forever deeply in love with your soul,

Jamie Leonardo Harbour

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