

Letter of James .... Dated "Don Fernandez de Taos, New Mexico, Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> 1855

*Dear Lottie,*

*You will be somewhat surprised I presume to receive a letter from your hopeful brother, seeing the date and place prefixed – but I have not much time to explain how and why I came here, so will postpone the explanation until I see you (God hasten the time!) when I will spin long "yarns" to you about my adventures, until my tongue wearies your indulgent ears - I am sure will never weary.*

*For the first time in my life I am in a country where my Mother tongue is not spoken. Hurra!. I glory in it- I can speak the language of the "Greasers" with fluenc, and, I flatter myself, correctly – So my tongue is as busy as ever – and my eyes behold every day some novel spectacle. How can I describe to you these mud walled villages filled with dirt, jack asses, dogs, fleas, lice and Mexicans? That is but one half the picture - outside, which I rejoice to say is the worse side. According to the free and easy manner of these hospitable people, I have the entree to all these long, low, mudwalled houses, invariably built so as to enclose a square, which I take the liberty to dignify by the name of "Courtyard."*

*Kicking dogs and belaboring donkeys out of my path, I passed the courtyard, enter the low door (stooping and turning my shoulders sideways), and, oh pleasant change! Am in a light cheery room whose neatly white washed walls are adorned with mirrors, crucifixes and most execrable pictures of the saints. I'm not invited to take a chair for the very good reason that there is none, but the fair Senora who is reclining dreamily on yon luxurious bank of gaily colored "Serapes", takes from her pretty mouth the fragrant "cigarrito" and puts it between my lips, points me to the opposite lounge and then as I enjoy the soothing fumes of the "weed" and chat with her about last night's "fandango". Her fair hands are busy making the delicious "tortillas", the dish of eggs and a cup of "Atole" (by the Yankees vulgarly called pudd'n-n-milk) which are to appease my keen appetite and teach me to prize, oh how dearly the sacred rights of Hospitality.*

*How pretty is my Seniorita! The dark "rebosa" half covers her jetty shiny locks, and floats in peaceful folds over her well turned shoulders - her arms are bare and her short dress does not conceal the petite foot, the pride of the Mexican damsel. A crucifix, some beads and sacred charms, blessed by the Priest and supposed to be of great virtue in preventing sickness and calamity, hang around her neck and comprise the only ornaments except perchance a silver ring or two upon her fingers – "Oh Senora! What a pity 'tis those tapered fingers know not to guide the pen! Those brilliant eyes cannot from the printed page, convey wisdom to thy silly brain!*

*The ground is covered with snow and far away to the north I can see the white summits of the "Sangre de Cristo" rise cold and gloomy between me and my camp in the sunny valley of the Arkansas. Today, **Kit Carson** told me, I need not expect to find the snow less than ten feet deep in the passes of those mountains. A week from today, when you are enjoying the loving Thanksgiving I will plunge into those mountains. What an agreeable prospect!*

*I wrote to Father some ten days since and also Lucian – I am hardly in hopes my letters will all arrive at their destined point – but if this should reach you by the first of January, please write to me, directing to Taos, New Mexico and the letter will reach me if it arrives here before I leave my camp – you cannot imagine with what anxiety I I await intelligence from home – Since I left Cala in June last I have heard not*

*a word either from Connt. or Cala – God grant that none but happy changes may have occurred among the friends I love – At times my heart sinks at the thought of what may have occurred – But I will trust a kind Providence has watched over you all and protected you from sickness, casualty and death – Give my warmest love to Father, Mother Brother and Sister, to your Husband and all my friends. I hope to meet you at the dear old homestead in the coming Spring.*

*I*