

Dorothea: A Mini Drama

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (December 2020)



Interior with Table, Vanessa Bell, 1921

*A HOSPITAL: Genevieve, a nurse. Jason, a patient, about 80.
(The line arrangement is meant to suggest the rhythms of their
thoughts and emotions.)*

Scene 1: Nurses' Station

Genevieve: I thought I'd seen the full array . . .

death-bed, sick-bed,

not exactly conversions,

when the not-done, the unspoken

comes out just short of a haunting . . .

But this is so intense yet somehow straightforward.

At about 3 in the morning, his eyes closed:

"Did you ever know without my saying

how big, how thorough this love?

Did I hide it too well?"

Mavis his daughter brought those papers again.

She wants power of attorney so she can sell the house.

I think she has a buyer with a good price.

Jason lives there, expects to return.

He thinks he'll get well and I do too,

but maybe not if she keeps badgering, undermining.

I'd like to help him . . .

She uses his love for his wife, dead these six months,

as sure evidence of poor adaptation to reality,

mental incompetence.

She cites his "Love lasts,"

which I find no evidence at all.

Last evening she left a note with him.

He seems distraught . . .

I'm due again to take his vitals, bring his meds.

I think I can arrange the timing so as to stay longer.

Scene 2: Jason's room, small, no other occupant. Genevieve sits down and is silent for a moment. Jason has a page-long note in his hand.

Jason: Mavis found this upstairs in the sewing room.

I know from books my wife asked for

that she'd become interested in drawings and poems.

I was glad to go in and out of the library to look for what she wanted.

Her sewing-mending basket was placed

at a distance, few signs of use.

What she was doing seemed to interest her.

I thought it was making her happy . . .

It might have been a mistake to say so.

Genevieve (*reading the note Jason has handed her*):

"Do happy women have thoughts like these?"

Mavis has inked that in block letters in the margin?

“I have been here day
After, night after
I need to leave
But am afraid.”

And it ends with

“Threat of hazard
Realm of high alert
Turn if you can.
Memory of a painting
Companion in danger.”

Jason: This is a Dorothea who'd want to live inside a painting

or with the *memory* of a painting as her companion.

She needs escape that much?

What was the danger?

Why was she so lonely?

Something new was happening inside her.

I felt it . . .

began to call her by her full name,

Dorothea,

when for years she had been *Dot*.

She wore a shawl—

some gift she put aside a while back,
instead of always her utility coat.
She put drawings and what looked like word-sketches—
drafts of writings inside a large box
where there were winter mittens and woolen hats
until she stopped being able to go out.

Genevieve: It seems as though she was trying
to say the darker thoughts . . .

That takes strength—
not exaggerating,
not turning away,
to just admit the sorrows straight out.
Feeling loved helps with that.

She must also have felt there was
time and place for her chosen uses.
Her sewing room seemed to become her new-made garret,
extending the meaning of what *mending* was.

Jason: Then maybe she wasn't so deeply unhappy.

Mavis said she wanted to die . . .

But maybe when people make something out of their thoughts,

they're trying to out-live what is hard to bear . . .

Genevieve: You've said she was in a lot of physical pain.

Jason: Maybe what she wanted

was the end of her pain . . .

Not the end of her life with me.

When can I go back

to where I have lived?

[Table of Contents](#)

Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French have

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