



Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters Of Eleanor Roosevelt And Lorena Hickok

Roger Streitmatter

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The relationship between Eleanor Roosevelt and Associated Press reporter Lorena Hickok has sparked vociferous debate ever since 1978, when archivists at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library discovered eighteen boxes filled with letters the two women exchanged during their thirty-year friendship. But until now we have been offered only the odd quotation or excerpt from their voluminous correspondence.

In *Empty Without You*, journalist and historian Rodger Streitmatter has transcribed and annotated 300 letters that shed new light on the legendary, passionate, and intense bond between these extraordinary women. Written with the candor and introspection of a private diary, the letters expose the most private thoughts, feelings, and motivations of their authors and allow us to assess the full dimensions of a remarkable friendship. From the day Eleanor moved into the White House and installed Lorena in a bedroom just a few feet from her own, each woman virtually lived for the other. When Lorena was away, Eleanor kissed her picture of "dearest Hick" every night before going to bed, while Lorena marked the days off her calendar in anticipation of their next meeting. In the summer of 1933, Eleanor and Lorena took a three-week road trip together, often traveling incognito. The friends even discussed a future in which they would share a home and blend their separate lives into one.

Perhaps as valuable as these intimations of a love affair are the glimpses this collection offers of an Eleanor Roosevelt strikingly different from the icon she has become. Although the figure who emerges in these pages is as determined and politically adept as the woman we know, she is also surprisingly sarcastic and funny, tender and vulnerable, and even judgmental and petty -- all less public but no less important attributes of our most beloved first lady.

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