

To: Donald St John

From: Marjorie Bump Main

Date: December 21, 1966

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Dear Mr. St John,

I hope you were not as exhausted as I was after yesterday. I skipped dinner and slept three hours. I enjoyed the conversations but am glad they are past.

From time to time I may think of things to add, so I will jot them down to send later.

First, you asked about the appearance of my mother. If you can picture me with hair combed up and back from my face, and shaped in the back, you can see her. She was the same size, even to shoes. She was always well groomed and modestly dressed. She had a good personality. I doubt that she gave too much thought to Ernest. She had an interesting life of her own and she trusted me. She never objected to having me with Ernest, and I can't imagine the picture painted of a watchful ogre. Ernest was always welcome at both houses.

In all fairness to Ernest, I don't believe he meant to imply a lower social status in his story. I believe when he had Bill say I should marry someone my own kind he meant someone small townish, narrow minded and naive. I was all of these things, and did marry someone more my own kind. I don't believe he wanted to imply immorality either. In those days it was assumed that girls were moral. Times have changed and people of today read more into situations than could have existed. Even you, I am sure, couldn't imagine the innocence and ignorance of the girls of world war one era.

It comes to my mind that just as Ernest always assumed that I knew he wanted to take me to dances and football games, he may have assumed that I knew he might want to marry me some day. Since I didn't get the message, he might have felt it was rejection.

If you ever see Bill Smith, tell him I hold no resentment. If he did turn the course of my life, I feel he did me a service in turning it into a constructive pattern. In Ernest, and in Bill too, for that matter, I saw a goal of sophistication toward which I grew. It was subconscious but quite real.

It is strange how certain patterns follow lines entirely apart. All of our children had characteristics that Ernest would have liked. Barbara with her quite reserved beauty, Georgie with her warm sensitive artistic nature, and love of sports and activity. Sid with his love of hunting and fishing and his rebellion against a regimented life. All of them have felt repelled by phony situations and people. That trait may have been the greatest contribution that Ernest made to my character development. He hated anything of sham or pretense.

I talked with Sid about the pictures and he will send them. He feels I should have copies made of those you want. Will you be in Florida again to choose?

When you finish this Hemingway subject, how about telling me something about yourself?

As you can see Ursula was in Duluth not Rochester. These letters may let you see Ursula better.

When I talked with Georgie on Christmas I told her you asked if Ernest had seduced me. For a moment she was shocked into silence and then she started to laugh. She said she guessed no one in this world could believe any one like me could exist unless they knew me. I am drawn to worldly people, but live in a glass case myself.

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