

Feb. 23, 1967

Dear Marj:

(That's what you were called in the Petoskey year book but I liked the way Hemingway spelled it better - and you too later on I noticed.)

(So you won't talk, eh? There aren't too many possibilities for me to think of. I'd start with cara but more likely it was such a descriptive as bella or bella donna, or else maybe: Mia cara, gioja mia, bene mia or anima mia; I don't know, of course, if he would have said my dear, my darling, my love or my soul, although I am very dubious about that last. Of course it was probably: Hi rossa (hi red) but that is not quite up to the level you suggest. In the dying scene of FAREWELL TO ARMS, Hem rose to such outbursts as: "You're all right Cat." (Her name was Catheri ne).)

As it happens I'm trying to bone up a little on Italian myself. It's never taken. Had a year in college and have made stabs but I'm really going to get it this time - by trying to speak nothing else. The odd thing is my father was a really great language professor, and was a specialist in Latin, but the subject has always been bitterly difficult for me. Squeaked through four years of Latin and two of French - al l in high school. The way they taught language in those days was a scandal, grammar, etc. what a waste of time. Now, too late, they have decided to teach languages the way we learn our own, and I think this technique was learned from the army during world war 2 when it was found that the only way to teach a man something on a crash basis was to skip the preliminaries completely, not lectures orienting a man on a gun, giving the man the gun, letting him feel it, test it, worry over it and use it.

It is so wonderful to have you return to a certain part of the story the way you do, filling it al l out without harassment or suggestion from me. You seem to know, netter than anyone I have met, how vital the little details are. Most people are willing to admire a skyscraper but they are unable to think of it as an assemblage of very ordinary bits and pieces. Together they have an impact; the building is more than a totaling of the whole. I go into this at maudlin length perhaps because some of the Hemingway people are inclined to anything below the level of death and marriage as simply trivia and a bit of a nuisance don't you know. (Sudden thought; those Italian verb endings weren't a residual trace of Hem were they or was it just creativeness on your part?)

I'm working on my second and final batch of queries and until then, - basta

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