

March 4, 1967

Dear Marge:

Hallelujah. I never thought you'd nail that date so quickly; nor was I right about it; I had been leaning to 1940 because of my impression that he was mostly through with the writing. In Nov., 1939 he told his editor he was just finishing a "part about Madrid" (possibly the present chapter 18, where Madrid material is inserted as a flashback. Chapter 23 was finished on January 18, 1940, in Havana. By April 6 of 1940 he was into chapter 33 and thought briefly of THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY as a title. By April 22 he had settled on FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS, (as I have relayed to you before). He finished the book in July and on Sept. 10 he air-mailed the final 18 galley proofs from Sun Valley, Idaho, to New York. So you see in December of 1939 Hem was not half way through the book, and ~~three~~ months away from finishing it; but I gather from your letters he had the whole work pretty much in mind by the time he saw you and was pretty confident about it. It was not really like him, I think, to talk so much about something undone. As you know he was always afraid of talking something to death or of spooking it. Isn't it odd how our geniuses are so reassuringly full of superstition and mumbo jumbo in these highly intellectual matters. Another orientation: Hem had virtually broken up with Pauline then, was going with Martha and had already bought his Cuban place with Martha's help. He did not get his divorce from Pauline, however, until November of 1940, and he married Martha two weeks later. It is so wonderfully helpful to relate his visit with you to all this since it makes it so much easier to understand. The only thing I haven't cleared up yet is whether it was on this same trip, as his driver Tobey says, that Hemingway intended to see Harry Sylvester to bowl him out about hindering distribution of THE PANISH EARTH, which came out in 1938. But this is of secondary importance and I mention it only in case some allusions to this spanish fund raising project of Hemingway's comes to mind. Tobey said they drove all night after leaving your place and got to Key West in the morning, which checks out, I guess. I wonder now if knowing the date triggers you anymore about the visit, I mean the closeness to Christmas, which must have been big news in your house at that time. What is the weather like down there then - come to think of it, I was there at roughly the same time, wasn't I; coolish, as I recall, frost as far down as northern Miami, but Key West, for which Hem was headed, still very much sub-tropical.....Hem's stopping in to see you on a Friday has faint echoes. In THREE DAY BLOW he thought how he had you in reserve for Saturday nights, as I recall it and, as usual, he wasn't kidding; it wasn't a Saturday night and it was quite a few nights later, but at least you were not, as he implied, irrevocably out of his life, and even later, in 1961, over 40 years later, he was still talking about you (In that letter he wrote to Clive). So you see, Marge, noone can call you exactly forgettable. Would it be too much for me to ask you to obtain a copy of that Dec. 17, 1939 paper for me (and have them bill me or something)? Anyhow add another layer to my pile of thanks.

Also, I very much appreciate the Dilworth porch scene. It is an absolute gem exactly as it is. I treasure every one of these you may be sure and they are gradually adding up to something, I think special.

Enough for now.