

Aprile 15, 1967

Cara Lucia:

I don't have enough l'Italiano to attempt one like yours, which was molto bene, and so I will limit myself to spraying a little Italian throuought my letter, which is a bit sneaky, but much easier and less of a commitment. I was so glad to get your two letters. We get a manila envelope each week from Franconia through the forwarding courtesy of the post office there but it turns out to be rather impersonal despite their first class status. Of course I am glad I managed to convey some of this Roman bit to you; such a compliment from such a writer - and I really mean it. Do not kid me further with your literary self-effacement; when you're clicking, which is most of the time, maybe all, she reads true as our friend would say. I am particularly grateful for your added thoughts of Horton Bay, the "horsing around"; this is that old "scenery" of yours that I like so much and I think when it is all pinned together, God willing, there may be a mood or an evocativeness there some place. I must confess quickly to you though that I have been goofing off badly on the literary front. We have been here almost three weeks adesso (come Monday) and my letter(s) to you are virtually all the writing I have done. It is hard to determine what is happening; whether it be a legitimate need for orientation, the language, getting settled, getting lost, buying a car, finding the super markets, making our place liveable in the little ways, reading, listening, watching the Italian TV, looking out the window down at a little terrazzo three floors below where a stout little lady keeps an immaculate Roman garden, the feature of which for me is a little hen tied by one leg to a little table. I can just hear the little clucking sounds up at my window. Once the sounds were a little louder and upon looking out I found the fat little lady hugging the little hen for having laid an egg. It is not a chicken yard; it is all too proper for that; the poor little hen can dirty up only a very small little circle around the table in this gem-like garden; I find myself checking up on the hen each morning; thus develop the nutty little importances of life. As for Danny, I'm afraid I know what that man said. I am simply too involved with that boy. It is probably unhealthy, but I can't help it. And the said part is that Danny seems to be failing. As you may know the curse of the shepherd is subluxation (or some such word) in which a kind of paralysis develops in the rear quarters; the rear legs seem to get progressively weaker, and as Danny makes his way through the thick green grass of the little park below, he seems to waver and almost go sideways sometimes. He is forever slipping on the many smooth floors of Rome and his back legs collapse and he looks at us in embarrassment. There is really nothing we can do because of the congenital nature of the business. He is really not old, for his undici years. His head is as beautiful as ever, his eyes are bright, his ears sharp, and he still wants to play, catch a toy; he remembers what he could do and liked to do and he tends to forget his present status; we try to play little symbolic catching games with him... The orgiastic enchantment with Rome is over I guess as all things become over and now we seek to make our way out of the disenchanting part, which also will be over soon, suppongo. They won't let us have a banking account here until we have been here six months, by which time we will have finished half our stay. I don't get it. Perhaps Americans left the country in the past with insufficent funds in their accounts. I don't know. For another thing; we're not sure, but we may have been stuck with an inferior Volks-Wagen. I always tell myself never, never buy second hand, but the flesh she is weak.

A few Hemingway oddments: I think I told you Ruth and our friend Marianne Palladino are working with Caresse Crosby in an attempt to persuade her to allow Franconia College free usage of her castle in The Abruzzi, Castle Sinibaldi. We went out there some time ago and it is really a magnificent thing, a gray huddle mass of battlements crouched atop a hill, incredibly like the mind picture we all have. Mrs. Crosby has wired the place and made it quite liveable, if you don't mind a bit of claminess, which I guess is par for the castle course. She has a marvelous old Italian man who looks after it with his daughter. He fashioned a sedan chair, partly from a wheelbarrow, and this is used to carry Mrs. Crosby up the long horse run of cobblestones into the castle. (Mrs. Crosby is about 76 and has a heart condition and she looks a bit waddy and has very thick glasses and speaks with a partly broken, husky voice, but her mind is needle sharp and she dresses in what I am told is chic Hattie Carnegie. Her prime characteristic in the old days was what she describes in her biography, THE PASSIONATE YEARS, as a very lovely bosom, and there is ample residual evidence of same now. ) Hem had promised her an original when she paid his and Hadley's ship fare home one time, but he never delivered and finally squared his debt by letting her publish THE TORRENTS OF SPRING in Europe. But she forgave him, she tells me now. Once she told him that he, Hem, was the only writer of hers that had not been romantically linked with her (and this is a euphemism on my part). "Sue them, sue them," Hem said, Caresse recalls in a way that makes me believe the memory is genuine. Well I run out of space; there is more to come. Love