

Nov. 11, 1967

Dear Marge:

Now, Ruth says, there is absolutely no reason for you not to come on over to Europe and visit us in Taormina.

The news about Sidney was somehow sudden; of course it is right this way, but I am not fooled for a minute that you were able to face up to it in purely an intellectual or rational ~~manipulative~~ way, as much as you wanted to, and I admire so much your seeming easyness about everything. The summing up of these events, the triggering backwards, the powerful force of the little things left behind, the entanglements with other lives, the sad planning, indeed the very messages of bereavement themselves, are colpas (as the Italians would put it) that only such a trim one as yourself could carry off with seeming calm.

You did not turn your back. You are square with the world. There are pitifully few of us that can say that.

My last letter was posted a few days ago with an indecisive address on it. Now, hear this, here is my presumably last Italian address before returning to that embattled land known as the United States:

D. St. John

Via Fazzello 25

* Taormina 98039 (Yes, they have just installed the zip code (il numero di codice) here in Italy.

We are still at Cascata but will sign our lease for the aforesaid villeta tonight and probably move in early next week. Goorr, all the stuff we must hoist from here to there, up 70 steps to the strada from Cascata and then, across town, up about 30 more from Fazzello. But it is a dream of a place; every window and door seems like one of those impossible House and Country ~~mansions~~ cover of some lavishly sensual home in southern California -- nearly ripened oranges peeking in here, rampant, damn well belligerent purple and red bouganvillea (sp) there; everywhere the most succulent growth imaginable and, the prime prize for me, in one corner an old fashioned honeysuckle vine with an aroma that sent me back more years than I care to remember. A fine stove (with an oven this time) and two classes of power, the cheaper one being called industriale. Our Italian padrona (Madame Rosa) is a beat but lively 67 and is full of unexpected charm. About her duaghter, she said: "She has a sickness for Americans." Taormina is one of the cleanest neatest towns in Italy, apart from its unrivaled beauty, so remember, Mexico and California are not the only places calling you. All our love,