

Nov. 21, 1967

Dear Marge (Do you know that I did not tumble until recently to the meaning of Lucy: Luce: light. No wonder old Hem liked that after Italy; he was pretty immersed in Italian at that time, I take it. Recently a Hem collector friend of mine from Detroit wrote asking who might a "Ruth" be that Hem would have written a four-page letter to from Italy, and I was able to presume that to be a Ruth Allan, an Oak Park, Ill. classmate of his and friend of Marcelline, who subsequently married a Harold Sampson of Oak Park. Sampson came up to the lake once when Hem was about 14 (and you a tadpole). Somehow the Hem family got the letter back, apparently, and my friend has a chance to buy it. As he says, it is up to the collectors to collect these things before the owners lose or burn them up, and you can imagine whom that made me think of. Of course the Ruth Allan, if that was the one, came before your summer together in 1919. Sampson had written me that Hem didn't go out with girls much if at all in Oak Park but that he had shown an interest in his sister's blonde girl friend. Sampson, I might add, is a bit of a klunk who disapproves of everything about Hemingway and says seriously that any biography is entirely uncalled for. Well, now, how do you like this for a parenthesis?)

I was so glad to have your letter of Nov. 12, and so sorry to hear about Joy Sr., your friend, about who, you had written me from North Carolina (or was it Mexico?) This miserable business of cancer which acts as the sad exit for so many lives..... Ruth and I were also galvanized by your statement that there was a slim possibility of your coming here, and now want to say something that will relieve you of at least one of your quiver full of excuses. We will be here for six months no less, overstaying our sojourn of one year with the plan now being for a return about the middle of May, so you see you should have no trouble getting here ere that. In taormina everything caters to the foreigner and all we have to do to extend our police permit is to present ourselves at the Questura (horrid word) ten days (March 17) before the expiration of our permit (March 27). This seems to be the one place we have found in Italy where very special considerations are given to the stranieri. The club here in all its luxury and usefulness is provided by courtesy of the town, and we have just received an engraved invitation from the mayor, sindaco, to attend an American Thanksgiving celebration on Dec. 23. Also, we are making the rounds of being invited by the doyens of the town in the fashion of teas at noon and comparis at four, etc. It is all very nice and I can understand what they mean about lotus eaters falling under an hypnotic spell. Mt. Etna watches over everything, throbbing cherry red at night as seen from our casa and always there is the shimmering skirt of the sea for protection from the realities of the world..... Danny is okay. Ruth is fine and happy now that she can do everything within walking distance of our house. Our car is parked outside in the street that is so narrow a coat of paint makes the difference between safety and disaster. Lots of love,