

Wed - Feb - 14th - '68

Dear Don,

It was good to see your letter in the box. I told myself that you probably weren't even aware of an earthquake, but the news and pictures had me imagining you and Ruth under piles of rubble, and no one would ever tell me. Perhaps you better list me among your next of kin.

I don't mind if you tell R. Loeb about me. Since I never read THE SUN ALSO RISES and probably never will, Ernest's characterization isn't in my mind. Since I read only that one story about me, I am not haunted by that either. I still don't want to read Hemingway. Ernest, the person, is all I want to remember. I don't know how to explain it, but all my upset feeling left after the dreadful nightmare I wrote you about, when I woke up in hysterics (practically) of tears. I feel nothing at all, except the pleasure of good memories. I feel certain that if you could trace all the seeming turning on friends, you would find the basis a real or imagined feeling of having been rejected or criticised. I know it was the case with my mother, the Dilworths, his own mother and in places, his father, and very definitely with me. As I didn't mean it, so probably they didn't, beyond the small disagreements that everyone has to accept. When Ernest wrote me about the story and said, "Everything understood is always everything forgiven", I believe that goes for what he wrote about all his friends. The moment he felt someone wasn't with him 100 %, he threw them out. Later, when he found that I wasn't thinking badly of him, his whole attitude changed. I don't believe the stories ever touched me at all. The psychological damage was done by the "erased slate" bit, when I was such a vulnerable kid, and didn't know the score. By the time I read the story, I was happily married with a child and lived in a different world. No one knew Hemingway. Sidney laughed about it, and even my mother took it in stride. Friends in Petoskey were upset, or pleased, or curious, but I seldom saw anyone who would discuss it.

Strange how Hemingway things pop up. Last Sunday, in church, the minister used a quote to prove that H. was a forerunner of the present day leaning toward pornography. He used the quote in which E. said that good or right things were the things you felt good after, and wrong things were what you felt bad after. I felt that I would like to stand up and say that he had it all wrong, that Hemingway would have felt good or bad in the right places.

Am reading another Watt's book that pleases me. The Wisdom of Insecurity. It explains to me why I prefer to be potted, without possessions to own me. The potted plant is about to go home for two weeks, do some business, get my apt ready to sub-let and get back as quickly as possible to this constructive spot of confusion. The plans we have in mind don't seem to include Fla. for about a year.

Yes, I believe you and G. will "Dig" each other. After she read your letter she said, "Don St John is a LOVE."

Whenever I read bad things in the paper I try to think that it may be only a picture someone wants to paint for some political reason. I read the National Observer once a week and skip the daily news.

Interesting personal things continue to happen to me, but I have a real good detached feeling, as tho I am someone outside, observing. Will perhaps someday have a chance to relate.

I will leave here Feb. 22nd. and return March 7th. I should always qualify a statement of my plans as my colored yard man used to with, "God willing". God so often doesn't will my plans.

Georgie observed that Ernest may have spotted Loeb's antisemiticism as his vulnerable spot, and so used it against him. Ernest knew how to pick vulnerable spots.

Hard to realize that you have been in Italy nearly a year. Danny won't know English. He must also be a potted plant.

Love from our circle to yours. Roger pounces on your stamps.

Love,

Marg

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