

June 25, 1968

Dear Marge:

Plunk.

I'm here.

Is America the better for it?

I doubt I am.

But, to repeat one of our mutual friend's basic axioms, nothing goes on forever, nothing should be done too long, neither skiing, nor friendship, nor love, nor marriage, nor, finally, life itself.

So Taormina had to go, and I guess it was just in time, probably. It was lovely in its own peculiar way, but it wasn't real, I didn't work, it was hard to keep track of time; it was out of the mainstream. And so, it was really great to get back, despite my spurious moans to old friends up here. Ruth is the one who is hurting. She would go back to Taormina tomorrow, I think. She loved the little life under the glass bell, the little rituals, the seeing the same sure persons in the same sure places, the escape from chronology. But, being a woman, she is facing the bleakness of the North Country, and will probably get down to cases quicker than I.

We sailed on the Queen Anna Marie on May 27, had a fairly miserable crossing, no sun, constant queeziness, etc, and we found ourselves practically the only goy and shicksa aboard. Our boat was loaded with American pilgrims to Israel and while they were a marvelous group, too much of anything can be taxing. It is not anti-semitism, on my part. I would be equally disconsolate with a marination in angels or in self-duplicates for that matter. I was well enroute; Ruth was usually half sick; Danny, up there on the blowy topmost deck next to the often used foghorn, was not the most joyous of passengers and it was a sight to see this decrepit old character trying to walk against the 50 mile gale that was the norm on that deck. But we all survived, paid the blackmail necessary to get by customs and stevedores and drove off the dock in New York in our own little Volks, complete with Roma license. We put up in a motel near Ridgefield, stayed there for a week, paying duty calls, seeing my mother, 95, in a nursing home, and spent two rather enjoyable days with Harold Loeb and Barbara. Yes, we are back being friends again after I got a nice letter from a mutual editor friend. Harold has a lovely Shangra La of a place on a lake and the Mallards would come up to eye us as we ate.

We finally decided to face life and drove home to Franconia. Everything okay. The tenant had just left. Only trouble is he had forgotten one thing: his furniture. So we must put up with two or three of everything for another month, but he is a nice guy and hadn't broken too many things and he had even planted some tomatoes for me and filled the fuel oil and left his mower for me to use. I am now planted again in a corner of our living room. This is the capitol of the world and now things are filed and people have a decent chance of getting a letter....No antique shop this year. But I must get to work on my manifold notes and try to put a book together, even if I, like those others, haven't got it right. I'm sure you are right about that but I suspect my wrongness will not be as jolting as most. The distortion you feel may come from a human failing I myself am prey to. One tries to make one man out of Hem and of course he was many men. When others seem to distort they are not really. Perhaps it is just that they knew another kind of Hemingway. It is not a simplex business, is it, fixing something or someone in space. Well,

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