

Marzo 1, 1969

Dear Marge:

A period of skulking around in the bleak deep snows of merry New England and doing very little but play chamberlain to my ailing dog. He is okay, somewhat static and is very bright considering he must depend so much upon another. That, I would think, would be the only major pain he suffers and, being a dog rather than a human, this is not perhaps a pain at all. Although I must confess in bitter frankness that he occasionally wears a very weary expression on his noble face. But you know I love that dog and am too weak to let him go. Okay, okay, I suppose that is the ultimate cruelty but I see no moral need to shove this creature to his end as long as he is not suffering. Sometimes I wonder if I cling to him because he is exactly the age of our marriage. Who knows about these things.

Did I tell you that I have long since sent the album back to your sister with a letter of thanks and that I have a chit indicating it has been received. At least that is a weight off of my head, one that I am endlessly grateful to both you and Budge for. Now I am gathering together the pix that I owe you my lady.

Your Coeval among Hemingway fictional creations is now ending his annual trip to Africa and Europe, to Africa because that's where his young wife's family is, to Europe because that reminds Harold Loeb of his youth. We keep up our correspondence with the kind of regularity you might expect from someone so decrepit of discipline as yours truly. Harold is about 77 but oh so very sharp. However, as he once told me, he is so old now that even his rancors have about worn out. He tries valiantly to fan his bitterness against Hem but it is mostly a losing cause and he secretly recognizes that it is now one of his main interests in life, not the bitterness, the identification with that glorious period of American letters. He has just finished an intro to a collection of Broom magazine one of the littles of that period. It carried everybody but Hemingway, it seems, having gone out of business before Hem flowered. Harold is sad about that. He has asked me to save the reviews of Carlos Baker's book for him. He expects to get back toward the end of March and the book is not due until April but it may of course be seen earlier. My own growing feeling is (from the Atlantic) that Baker grew tired of Hemingway as he researched his life and that he eventually grew a little bit sour of his character. This would be easy to do, I can see that. The man seemed to be an absolute louse towards people in the last years of his life, but I think this was blackness spawned of sickness and in any case noone can ever take the poetry of this man away from me, and included in that poetry is that little number of which you were a starting point. And I do mean starting point. I daresay no artist could retain that status if he merely transposed life into fiction without altering it a good deal. It's the transmutation, rather than the transcription, I think, that distinguishes an artist from a journalist....Noone will consider my stuff with the coming of the second messiah, Carlos, this is considered his field, but I hope that when his book is out of the way some of my own work, much less monumental and much less knowing, but a bit deeper of some of the small parts, will gain some currency. Wish we could see you again soon. I really don't know what's to become of us. A kind of living death in this snowbound land. All my love.

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