

Nov. 4, 1973

Dear Marge:

How easy it is to write that. It hardly seems possible I have written it so seldom. But what may be the banal excuse, heard all too often I am sure by a mother over the years, is literally true in my case. There isn't a week that goes by that doesn't make me think of you in some way, either for yourself or for Hemingway or for Michigan or for far-away-places or simply for the paltry few unforgetables that I have known in my life. Now you know I didn't work all that up just to get off the hook or to make you feel good. It is simply true. And the imaginings that you have had, that I was somehow scared off by something you said about not feeling any pressure to write, do simply not apply in my case, albeit how much I would like to grab the excuse made available. It is true that out of sight is not out of mind but it is also true that the squeaky wheel gets the grease and all that kind of jazz. You go along, seemingly, writing as few letters as you can, or confronting life as infrequently as possible and a kind of reverse priority begins to assert itself and you find yourself neglecting the ones that can be counted on not to be fickle. Now isn't that a most marvelous piece of illogical nonsense, and yet it is of the stuff that lurks ineffably in the background silently handing out the signals that make us do things and leaving invisible the importances below.

(over)

Do you know that just three days ago I was in Weston, Conn. reluctantly helping Harold Loeb handle an interview with a yeasty young intellect from Yale. He was mostly interested in Harold's connection with the avante gard magazine of the very early twenties, BROOM. I helped Harold with some of the dates and facts in the absence of his alter brain, Barbara, his wife, and later I with the young man about my own interests in Hemingway. What was my favorite work? Probably THE SUN ALSO RISES and FAREWELL TO ARMS. I was about to mention the short stories when he said his own favorite was IN OUR TIME and that one of his favorite stories was "The End of something." Naturally I wanted to know why and to get his opinion of the meaning of the story. I was surprised to find that the young man was impressed with the flavor and inevitability of the story and that he had discovered the matching ends in the tale, the ends of romance and of the lumber industry and that he was impressed with Hemingway's skill in overlaying these two themes. I have to admit that he assumed a physical relationship between the two, but it was all very etherial to him, and he had formed a picture of the girl that he liked. I didn't elaborate for his benefit but I was terribly glad to have his views since this "trifling" story is usually neglected in deference to Macomber and Kilimanjaro etc. whereas as you know, it was and still is my idea of a nearly perfect story. I say this knowing all this talk has probably depressed you a little and that you insist on the revenge motif, and I must say the only reason I brought it all up was to illustrate my point that you are seldom very far away.

I am late now in this letter in getting around to your illness. I had no idea, of course, and I am concerned now that you had to endure all that misery for such a long time. Pain that is long lasting is hellish and leaves its mark and I can't help wondering if you are as pretty as you were that time a thousand years ago that I saw you in the hotel where the door, as I remember, was left slightly ajar in a most virtuous manner. At least you've found out what the trouble was and can now begin to regroup your forces and spirits.