

One Reader Writes, Ernest Hemingway

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SHE SAT AT THE TABLE IN HER BEDROOM with a newspaper folded open before her and only stopping to look out of the window at the snow which was falling and melting on the roof as it fell. She wrote this letter, writing it steadily with no necessity to cross out or rewrite anything.

Roanoke, Virginia  
February 6, 1933

Dear Doctor—

May I write you for some very important advice—I have a decision to make and don't know just whom to trust most I dare not ask my parents—and so I come to you—and only because I need not see you, can I confide in you even. Now here is the situation—I married a man in U. S. service in 1929 and that same year he was sent to China, Shanghai—he staid three years—and came home—he was discharged from the service some few months ago—and went to his mother's home in Helena, Arkansas. He wrote for me to come home—I went, and found he is taking a course of injections and I naturally ask, and found he is being treated for I don't know how to spell the word but it sound like this "sifilus"—Do you know what I mean—now tell me will it ever be safe for me to live with him again—I did not come in close contact with him at any time since his return from China. He assures me he will be OK after this doctor finishes with him—Do you think it right—I often heard my Father say one could well wish themselves dead if once they became a victim of that malady—I believe my Father but want to believe my Husband most—Please, please tell me what to do—I have a daughter born while her Father was in China—Thanking you and trusting wholly in your advice I am and signed her name.

Maybe he can tell me what's right to do, she said to herself. Maybe he can tell me. In the picture in the paper he looks like he'd know. He looks smart, all right. Every day he tells somebody what to do. He ought to know. I want to do whatever is right. It's such a long time though. It's a long time. And it's been a long time. My Christ, it's been a long time. He had to go wherever they sent him, I know, but I don't know what he had to get it for. Oh, I wish to Christ he wouldn't have got it. I don't care what he did to get it. But I wish to Christ he hadn't ever got it. It does seem like he didn't have to have got it. I don't know what to do. I wish to Christ he hadn't got any kind of malady. I don't know why he had to get a malady.

The End