

VALERIE FAYE THOMPSON CEARLEY
Exploring Connections In Ernest Hemingway's "A Day's Wait"
(Under the Direction of JAMES NAGEL)

Ernest Hemingway wrote "A Day's Wait" in the spring of 1933 for publication in a collection entitled Winner Take Nothing. Two previously unpublished letters aid the interpretation of the story by confirming its autobiographical nature. One letter was written by Hemingway in December of 1932 from a houseboat on which he and his editor were vacationing. The other corroborative letter was written in October of 1933 by Mary Pfeiffer to daughter Pauline Pfeiffer Hemingway, wife of Ernest Hemingway. Both letters unequivocally state that the events of the story occurred in Piggott, Arkansas in 1932.

Furthermore, the story is thematically, stylistically, and structurally consistent with Hemingway's other fiction.

INDEX WORDS: Ernest Hemingway, John Hemingway, "A Day's Wait," Winner Take Nothing, Piggott, Arkansas, Mary Pfeiffer, Pauline Pfeiffer

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"A DAY'S WAIT"

by

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I

INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway wrote “A Day’s Wait” in the spring of 1933 and included it in *Winner Take Nothing*, his collection of fourteen short stories to be published later that year. The book was met with universally poor reviews, some so scathing that Scribners editor Maxwell Perkins reluctantly and apologetically passed them on to Hemingway. The subject matter, particularly, drew ire from the critics. One *Kansas City Star* review denounced it as the usual Hemingway mélange of “liquor, blood, and sex.”¹ Most of these fourteen stories convinced critics that Hemingway was losing his edge as a writer. Ironically, a retrospective look shows that *Winner Take Nothing* was published at approximately the halfway point of Hemingway’s forty-year career as a writer of fiction.²

“A Day’s Wait,” like most of the other thirteen stories in the callutions, is not considered among Hemingway’s greatest short fiction. It is a conspicuously brief vignette about a young boy’s misunderstanding of the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit thermometers. “The Sketch” consists of fewer than a thousand words, with notable chasms. “The Story” has been perceived as a trivial narrative at best and uninteresting drivel at worst. In either case, it has hardly been touted as representative of the author’s best work.

Reaction to “A Day’s Wait” usually falls into one of two categories. The story is viewed as either a charming and sweet, but lightweight, departure from Hemingway’s usual hard-edged prose, or it is not categorized as an artistic narrative at all. Rather, the vignette is viewed simply as a straightforward, strictly journalistic, retelling of events,

more indicative of the reporter than the novelist. Even its physical placement in *Winner Take Nothing* is a metaphoric reminder of its status; it is almost “buried,” sandwiched between other poorly received stories.

A critical re-evaluation of these stories has recently emerged in contradistinction to the negative reception by critics in 1933. Essays, reviews, and commentary on the stories that compose *Winner Take Nothing* have been written against the backdrop of the whole of Hemingway’s short fiction. New analyses expose fresh, often unexpected connections that further validate the place of these stories in the Hemingway canon.

For “A Day’s Wait,” this new evaluation reveals previously unacknowledged historical authenticity and stylistic deftness. Hemingway’s trademark brevity, even more pronounced in this vignette, masks the depth of the story. Susan Beegel calls the story “very much neglected” and notes the scarcity and brevity of scholarship devoted to it.³ Joseph Flora calls “A Day’s Wait” one of the most “underprized” of Hemingway’s stories. Joseph DeFalco explores aspects of “initiation” in the vignette, and Sheldon Grebstein examines its structural elements. Bernard Oldsey says that the sketch is “unjustly overlooked.”⁴ In addition to analyzing the tale’s internal elements, critics have long speculated about the extent of the autobiographical elements of “A Day’s Wait.” Several contemporaneous private letters that were written between December of 1932 and November of 1933, one of which is unpublished, seem to further confirm the nonfictional nature of the episode. These letters, coupled with other extant documentation, further establish the autobiographical nature of the piece.

“A Day’s Wait” is the marriage of a nonfictional, historical event to a writer’s ability to shape it into a condensed narrative. The strands that compose its multiple layers interlace with other threads of Hemingway history and literature, establishing myriad connections that form a more complete tapestry of the work of one of the most important writers of the twentieth century.

II

THE ARKANSAS CONNECTION

The winter of 1932 was a difficult one for Ernest Hemingway. Fraught with several concurrent, calamitous events that ended with his being trapped by a blizzard in southern Arkansas in borrowed hunting clothes, it was hardly the holiday season he and Pauline had envisioned.

The previous summer and fall had been brighter, however. After leaving their two sons, Patrick and Gregory, with Pauline's parents in Piggott, Arkansas, the Hemingways successfully hunted big game in Wyoming as Ernest's surgical sharpshooting felled one big animal after another—bear, elk, and moose. After the Hemingways returned from this sportsman's paradise to their Key West home, circumstances deteriorated. First, Pauline left immediately for Piggott because the boys had developed whooping cough. Additionally, Hemingway was still stinging from the negative reviews of *Death in the Afternoon* that he had first encountered on his hunting trip. Hemingway's uncle Willoughby, a medical missionary in China, succumbed to influenza the same month, and the fourth anniversary of his father's death was near. Typical of Hemingway's own life and the characters he created, success and happiness were often diluted by the ever-present threat of disease, death, and loss.

Accompanied by nine-year-old "Bumby" (John, the son of Ernest and his first wife, Hadley), Ernest arrived in Piggott, Arkansas, just in time for Thanksgiving. Since 1913, Paul Pfeiffer had acquired thousands of acres of the rich Mississippi River bottomlands near Piggott, making the family the nouveau landowning gentry of northeast Arkansas. Throughout Ernest and Pauline's eight-year marriage, the

Hemingways visited the Pfeiffers an average of once a year, usually in the fall or winter. Hemingway called Piggott a “Christ-offal place” and its residents “yokels.”⁵

Piggott became more tolerable for Ernest, however, when a barn on the Pfeiffer property near the main house was remodeled into an apartment of sorts in which Hemingway could work and occasionally sleep. This barn-studio provided a retreat from the din that must have characterized a houseful of relatives thrown together for weeks at a time. Hemingway also diverted himself by hunting quail in the woods and river bottom around the Pfeiffer home with several hunting buddies and Hoolie, an Irish setter.⁶ For Hemingway, Arkansas’ only other redeeming grace was its phenomenal duck hunting: “Great flights of ducks commonly descended on Arkansas to feed in the rice fields, and Ernest had accumulated 2300 shotgun shells to deal with them.”⁷ Hemingway’s irascibility piqued soon after his Thanksgiving arrival in Piggott because Paramount Pictures repeatedly attempted to set up a world premiere of the movie *A Farewell to Arms* at the local theater. Hemingway, furious over ruinous revisions of the plot, rejected Paramount’s cajoling and refused to attend the December 21 premiere.

One morning in early December, as the Hemingways breakfasted in the main house, they saw flames shooting from the barn-studio. Only the quick response of the volunteer fire department saved the structure, but not before Hemingway’s typewriter, books, guns, clothes, and a few manuscripts were ruined. Although the boys were by then recovering from whooping cough, Pauline, her sister Virginia, and Bumby were sick with the flu.

Hemingway, eager to escape these domestic crises, met his editor, Maxwell Perkins, for a previously arranged duck-hunting trip in southern Arkansas. But there, too, he encountered one impediment after another. Suddenly devoid of his personal hunting clothes because of the fire, Hemingway borrowed clothes from the proprietor of

the houseboat he had rented, the *Walter Adams*. Their hunting plans were ruined by a freak blizzard that so devastated the area that ducks were found frozen on the frigid ponds. As soon as the weather allowed, he returned to Piggott to gather his family and travel back to Key West.

III

THE CORRESPONDENCE CONNECTION: THREE LETTERS

It seems clear that Ernest Hemingway's first written rendition of the awful winter of 1932 appeared shortly after those events in a choppy, hastily penned letter. Hemingway scribbled an apologetic four-page letter to his mother and siblings from the *Walter Adams*. In it, he delineated reasons for his delay in writing, even as those events continued to swirl about him:

Dear Mother, Sunny, and Les—

I've been delayed writing to you all by—

1—Pat and Greg coming down with whooping cough (Pauline had to leave Key West and stay on finishing house and all our Xmas plans were up in the air until we knew how they would come out) They are ok now.

2—Pauline, Jinny and Bumby all came down with flu—

3—Jinny's barn remodelled into studio and workroom and sleeping place for us burned with all my hunting clothes, some guns, all my new good clothes, books, etc etc etc on morning I had appointment to meet Max Perkins in Memphis to come here.

However want to thank Mother for the good letters and clippings—acknowledge [*sic*] Les's letter and Sun's. That was a fine story about our brother Claude. Just got the letter.

I had not suggested Les arriving for Xmas because believed you would all be Xmasing together—and I did not want to reduce the family circle. If Mother and Sun want to go to Detroit let Leicester come down to Piggott for that day. He will be very welcome.

Otherwise, even if you go to Detroit he could leave Saturday or Sunday—(Xmas is on Sunday) for St. Louis—get a train to St. Louis that arrives in time to get a train from there which leaves at either 12:30 or 1:30 for Piggott arriving at 8:15 at Piggott. (You can find time of train by calling information at the Chicago (Consolidated?) Central ticket office)—anyway best to take p.m. train from Chicago for St. Louis—spend morning there (feeding peanuts to the animals) and take noon train to Piggott arriving Piggott same night—

Due to necessity to get whoop cough convalescents south we will have to leave Piggott 3-4 days after Xmas. I was very disappointed with Les's vacation dates. Had hoped to have him get down here for some duck shooting before Xmas but it is just as well since shooting is nil—all lakes frozen—no food for ducks—they all leaving—worst duck shooting I've ever seen—

Enclose \$40.00 to cover his expenses down to Piggott—if 3 days after Xmas seems too short to him or if conditions do not clear up in Arkansas—at present whole country is covered under a solid sheet of frozen sleet—he is at liberty to use the money for anything he

wants. At any rate have Les wire me at Piggott Arkansas when and if he is arriving. I will be back at Piggott December 24.

Enclosed are some checks for Xmas. Will you please forward Ura's? As usual I haven't her address. Sorry not to send more but we are not rich this year.

Best luck and Merry Christmas to you all—
I know Bumby, Pauline, Pat and Greg would send Merry Xmas too if they were here— Love to all—
Ernest
Would you send check to Marce for her and children please? Haven't address⁸

This letter is the initial verbalization and documentation of a constellation of events that soon would be shaped into fictional prose.

Further biographical corroboration exists in another letter. On October 31, 1933, Mary Pfeiffer, reminiscing about the previous winter and “all its attendant casualties,” included an important comment in a letter to her daughter, Pauline Hemingway:

Ernest's book came last night. Have had time to read but one story as the other members of the household [*sic*] wanted to see it. I read A Day's Wait. He has made it a very touching little story which to be sure it was, and very true to facts, but things were happening so fast then that little thought could be given to an incident that was past. We had to grapple with present problems, plague and fire and cold and all the evils attendant thereon [*sic*]. But it is past, and we will forget it.⁹

Mary Pfeiffer would have been at the center of the previous winter's events. As Pauline's mother and the children's grandmother, she certainly would have been actively involved in their illnesses; she had cared for the boys during the Hemingways' hunting trip and had apprised their parents of the boys' whooping cough. Later, she would have at least have been aware of Pauline's and Bumby's illnesses. Of course, the barn fire would have directly affected Mrs. Pfeiffer, as the barn was just a few yards from the main house. Consequently, Mary Pfeiffer was a credible witness to the events affecting the Hemingways in the winter of 1932, and she unequivocally linked "A Day's Wait" to those events.

Additional information comes from the presumed protagonist of "A Day's Wait," John Hemingway. In an interview with Denis Brian, he commented that

except for the summers in the States I'd lived in France and went to school there until 1932, when I was nine. That was the year my father drove me to join Pauline, Patrick, and Gregory for Thanksgiving at the Pfeiffer family home in Piggott, Arkansas. Just before the trip I came down with influenza. I was certain I was going to die because I'd heard that my temperature was 102 and I'd learned in France that no one could live above a temperature of 44. Of course, I was relieved when my father explained the difference between centigrade and Fahrenheit, more than it being told as a family story and then reading about it later in my father's short story, "Father and Sons,"¹⁰ than actually remembering it, although I'm quite sure it was factual.¹¹

But perhaps the most compelling, comprehensive evidence for the autobiographical nature of "A Day's Wait" comes from the author himself. In addition to the letter

composed on the *Walter Adams* in southern Arkansas, Hemingway further established the literal basis for “A Day’s Wait” in a 1933 letter to Maxwell Perkins. In it, he responds to characterization of him as just a “reporter,” and he categorically defends his expertise in both imaginative and fictional writing:

I write some stories absolutely as they happen(i.e. Wine of Wyoming—the letter one [“One Reader Writes”], A Day’s Wait, and another [“After the Storm”] word for word as it happened to Bra,¹² The Mother of a Queen, Gambler, Nun, Radio; After The Storm (Chamberlain found that more imaginative than the others), others I invent completely—Killers, Hills Like White Elephants, The Undefeated, Fifty Grand, Sea Change, A Simple Enquiry. *Nobody* can tell which ones I make up completely.¹³

So at least three firsthand accounts, all written within a year of each other, attest to the historicity of the events of “A Day’s Wait”: Hemingway’s unpublished “houseboat” letter (December, 1932), Mary Pfeiffer’s letter to her daughter Pauline (October, 1933), and Hemingway’s letter to Maxwell Perkins (November, 1933).

If the events of the winter of 1932 provided Hemingway with the raw material that would reappear as “A Day’s Wait,” it is his artful distillation of those events that transforms the story from “straight reporting,” or a journal entry, to a narrative that microcosmically displays the depth of the father-son relationship *and* a personification of Hemingway’s trademark code hero. Perhaps that artistry is what prompted Mary Pfeiffer to remark that Hemingway has “made it a very touching little story.” She admits that she, herself, had failed to isolate the event from the other “plagues” that

befell the family that winter. By implication, she suggests that only an author's eye could capture an otherwise nondescript event and transform it into a fictional narrative.

IV THE VIGNETTE

“A Day’s Wait” reveals Hemingway’s predilection for weaving meager dialogue and narrative to signify the deep, underlying emotion and angst of the most mundane, unremarkable event. The story is about a nine-year-old boy, referred to only as Schatz (a German word meaning “treasure” and the Hemingways’ nickname for their son)¹⁴ and his childish misunderstanding of the difference between Fahrenheit and centigrade thermometers. When the father tells him that his fever is one hundred and two degrees, the boy recalls that French schoolmates had once told him that a fever of just forty-four degrees spelled certain death. For an entire day, the boy, alone in his room, stoically waits for his own inevitable death. Suspense is heightened by the parents’ absence and unawareness of the boy’s emotional turmoil.

The story begins “He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill” (129). Neither names nor any other information indicates relationships or establishes orientation. It is clear that the story is about an actively involved father and a vulnerable son. The presumed mother (only hinted at as a member of the “we” in the opening sentence) is a peripheral, nameless figure. The father shows concern for the boy, who seems to be his son, “looking like a very sick and miserable boy of nine years” (129). The father then performs a very natural gesture: “When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever” (129). He sends the boy to bed, and the narrative skips ahead to the doctor’s visit.

The doctor is portrayed in the story as credible and dependable: “He seemed to know all about influenza,” prescribed three separate medications, and even set a

numerical boundary on the fever's acceptable range. Hemingway respected influenza; both he and Pauline had lost close relatives to the illness, and Ernest was aware of its devastating effects in World War I, when it killed tens of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of thousands of civilians. The father meticulously records the boy's temperature and administers his medicine. At this point in the narrative, the father and doctor are in control and both understand that sleep and drugs offer the best chance for the boy's uneventful recovery.

In a further attempt to extend comfort, the father offers to read to the boy from Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates*, a Hemingway family favorite in which pirates and their exploits embodied a countercultural hero. Before leaving Key West for Piggott in November of 1932, Hemingway "asked Max Perkins to send him Howard Pyle's book on pirates since he had promised it to Bumby."¹⁵ Assuming Perkins complied with the request, the book would have been delivered to the Pfeiffer residence during the holidays of 1932.

Although the boy agrees to listen to the stories, he becomes increasingly "detached" from his surroundings (130). This is the first portent of impending crisis. Perhaps the boy is sicker than anyone realizes. He then responds to the father's inquiries with three subtle, mysterious responses. After the father records the temperature, the boy changes profoundly. He is pale, still, and unable to follow the pirate story. When asked how he feels, he replies that he feels the same "so far." The boy resists sleep, however, saying "I'd rather stay awake" (131). He intimates that something "is going to bother" his father.

A two-paragraph digression follows in which Schatz is left alone after receiving his medication at eleven o'clock, presumably to sleep. Attention shifts from the boy's situation to that of the *father* and his unproductive, accident-ridden foray into the icy outdoors. As the boy silently deals with his illness, it is now the *father* who must contend with the elements and his own fallibility:

I took the young Irish setter for a little walk up the road and along a frozen creek, but it was difficult to stand or walk on the glassy surface and the red dog slipped and slithered and I fell twice, hard, once dropping my gun and having it slide away over the ice (131).

The father recovers enough to flush quail, but even this endeavor is met with only moderate success:

We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush and I killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the covey lit in trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they Made difficult shooting and I killed two, missed five, and started back . . . (132).

Hemingway's outdoor excursion is an important interlude to the chronology in two ways. First, it must protect the narrative's veracity by providing a believable time frame. The outdoor events could have entailed several hours. Hemingway, intimately familiar with quail hunting on the Pfeiffer land, knew that anywhere from a few hours to an entire day could be spent completing all the events related in the two paragraphs. The title itself suggests a definite time span of *a day*; the father must be gone for the bulk of a day while his son copes with his own crisis.

The outdoor interlude may well have been "straight reporting" and the recording of events "exactly as they happened." Matilda Pfeiffer recalls the Hemingways' visits to Piggott and Ernest's avid interest in hunting: "What he liked was Karl [her husband and Pauline Hemingway's brother, Karl Pfeiffer] being such a good hunter and knowing

where to go and when to get the birds.”¹⁶ Hoolie, the Pfeiffers’ Irish setter that sometimes accompanied Hemingway and the Pfeiffers, may have been the “young Irish setter” Hemingway had in mind in “A Day’s Wait.”

The next section of the narrative begins with the unspecified, indefinite “they” who inform the father that the boy is refusing all visitors. The action shifts back to the boy, whose first concern is for his father: “You can’t come in,” he said. “You mustn’t get what I have” (132). Here, the usual father-son relationship is inverted; the son becomes the authority. He is still “detached,” however, and still fixates on the foot of the bed. This repetitive *staring*, accompanied by no other exposition by the author, builds suspense because the source of the boy’s fixed gaze is still unclear. It may be the fever itself, the stupor resulting from fever, or the medication. The child, well aware that his earlier temperature was a hundred and two, is “holding tight onto himself about something.” He continues staring “straight ahead” and questions whether a new dose of medication will “do any good” (133). The father once more attempts to read the pirate stories to his son. The boy unexpectedly blurts out, “About how long will it be before I die?” The question is not, “*Will I die?*” In the child’s mind, the answer to that has already been determined. The boy has assimilated that reality and is moving on to the next consideration. Here the father again takes command and flatly assures his son that he is *not* going to die and that something is “the matter” with him and that his talk is “silly.” In one final attempt to assuage his son’s fears, the father says that “people don’t die with a fever of one hundred and two.” But the boy persists and in just nineteen words explains the basis for his previous strange actions: “I know they do. At school in France the boys told me you can’t live with forty-four degrees.” A temperature of one hundred and two far exceeded that. Missing information must again be supplied. The narrator succinctly, coldly states that “the child had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o’clock in the morning,” blunt words that de-mystify the boy’s earlier detachment and staring.

The father's earlier instructive tone now switches to one of compassion and mercy as he addresses the boy as "you poor Schatz" and "poor old Schatz" (134). He explains that the difference between Fahrenheit and centigrade is analogous to the difference between miles and kilometers. The boy's gaze and "hold over himself" visibly relaxes, and he "cried very easily at things that were of no importance." The boy's emotional stability is restored as pent-up fear and anxiety evaporate. By crying about things of "no importance," the boy defuses his distressed mental state and returns to battling his physical illness.

The narrator's use of first person in the telling of the story establishes and sustains situational irony. The reader, therefore, does not understand the significance of subtle clues in the text until the resolution of the story. The narrator, and thus the reader, observes the boy "staring," "holding tight," and commenting "I can't keep from thinking" and "Do you think it will do any good?" The use of first person, therefore, personalizes the story and engages the reader in the narrator's own perplexities related to the boy's overreactive behavior.

The use of first person also allows legitimate gaps in the text, which in turn lower expectations that full and complete information will be provided. The narrator, of course, "knows" all of the information he seems so reticent to provide. The text becomes a sort of puzzle to be solved. The first lines set up this sense of incompleteness: "He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill." In those introductory lines, there is no setting, per se, no background, context, or hint as to time or place. Rather, more questions are raised than are explicitly answered in the text: Who is "he"? Where and when is the story taking place? Are the characters all members of the same family? In what context is the action occurring? These questions become peripheral, however, because the reader is allowed to view events only through the lens of the narrator, which focuses only upon exterior action. Self-analysis and commentary are noticeably absent. If any are to occur, they will do so only within the reader.

The externality of the story also provides a rhythm of polar extremes and opposite images. Adult knowledge is contrasted with childish, partial knowledge; indoor safety is contrasted with outdoor physical hazards. The boy's housebound status is contrasted with the father's freedom to venture outside. Additionally, opposite images enhance the core conflict of the story. The fire, along with the boy's fever and flushed appearance, contrast with the outdoor winter images of ice, cold, and barrenness.

The juxtaposition of sparse text and opposite imagery is a hallmark of Hemingway's short fiction. "Fathers and Sons," which may be considered a companion story to "A Day's Wait" because of its similar biographical and chronological basis, is the last story in the *Winner Take Nothing* collection.¹⁷ Nick Adams is driving across country, musing about his childhood, with his son asleep in the seat beside him. The boy suddenly awakens only towards the end of the story, after Nick's reminiscences about his recently deceased father. Nick's father, himself, was a study in contrasts. He was a man both "cruel and abused" (228). He was an expert marksman and fisherman, but his explanations about sex were laughable and far too inadequate for his son. The father's admonition to Nick to keep his "hands off people" (230) is countered by Nick's adolescent sexual experience with Trudy. Nick, who was quite verbose in his earlier cogitations about his father, answers the boy's inquisitive, innocent questions with a terse "I don't know" (242). His responses are stilted, noncommittal, and vague.

Another juxtaposition prevalent in much of Hemingway's short fiction is the pairing of one character's internal angst with another's foolish optimism. In "A Day's Wait," the boy's day is eternally long. The outcome has been determined. The last meaningful action he can extract from the situation is to spare his father, who seems optimistically unaware of his plight. Another example of this duality in the *Winner Take Nothing* collection is "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," in which the hurried, younger waiter has "youth, confidence, and a job" (22). The older waiter fears "a nothing that he [knows] too well" (22). He follows with the notorious parody of the

Lord's Prayer: "Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name . . ." (23). In *The Old Man and the Sea*,¹⁸ Santiago knows that his luck was "too good to last" (103). He is "not lucky anymore" (125). Manolin says to Santiago, however, that "the best fisherman is you" (23). Hemingway's protagonists often suffer and wrestle in solitude with an uninformed, or misinformed, counterpart. The contrast sharpens the protagonist's sense of conflict, forcing him either to verbalize it, as in Santiago's commentary, or silently acknowledge it, as in Schatz's private ruminations.

Winner Take Nothing is a montage of deviant themes that echo throughout Hemingway's fiction. It is far too simplistic to label the concoction a brew of "liquor, blood, and sex," as did the *Kansas City Star* critic. Rather, the collection is thematically an *inversion* of the norm, which itself functions according to its own criteria. Thus, a sort of "honor among thieves" code drives the actions of the fisherman who attempts to plunder a sunken wreck in "After the Storm" and the gambler Cayetano in "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio."

Psychosexual angst is another conspicuous theme in *Winner Take Nothing*, prevalent in at least half of the fourteen stories. The struggles and confusion of sexual identity govern the action of the adolescent in "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" and the homosexual bullfighter in "Mother of a Queen." Likewise, the lesbian in "The Sea Change" confounds her lover in conversational conundrums. But what alienated the critics was not so much the style, structure, and thematic content of the stories in *Winner Take Nothing*. Readers and critics of Hemingway's prose were accustomed to those aspects. Rather, it was the *concentration* of them that made the volume a "monotonous repetition" and an overspent emotional catharsis.

"A Day's Wait" seems incongruous in a volume that deals predominantly with what Edmund Wilson calls "contemporary decadence."¹⁹ Perhaps it was not through any conscious strategy that Hemingway included the sketch in this collection. Instead, the vignette was a true but forgettable incident that his author's eye had transformed into a compressed, artistic anecdote.

The presence of a gentle, innocent tale like “A Day’s Wait” in a book of hard-edged impressions of dysfunctional life may be explained in another way. The other stories in the collection develop what Earl Rovit terms the “game metaphor.”²⁰ He relates the following comment from *A Farewell to Arms* to the mock code used as an epigraph in *Winner Take Nothing*:²¹

You did not know what it was all about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you (310).

Another passage points up the ruthless hostility that eventually overtakes even the most courageous contender:

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you, too, but there will be no special hurry (239).

The boy’s crisis illustrates each component of this axiom. Schatz, in “A Day’s Wait,” at the mercy of his own misunderstanding, and the father, at the mercy of the uncooperative elements, each reflects this idea as do the central characters in the volume’s other thirteen stories.

THE ANTHOLOGICAL CONNECTION: "A DAY'S WAIT"
 WITHIN *WINNER TAKE NOTHING*

Winner Take Nothing was published in October of 1933. Of the collection's fourteen stories, eight were republished but six were new: "The Light of the World," "A Way You'll Never Be," "Fathers and Sons," "A Day's Wait," "One Reader Writes," and "Mother of a Queen."²² The collection's unusual, dissonant title suggests a victory that is compromised or adulterated. Hemingway often extracted well-known phrases from poems, prayers, and popular slogans for use as titles.

The collection's unusual, dissonant title suggests a victory that is compromised or adulterated. Hemingway often extracted well-known phrases from poems, prayers, and popular slogans for use as titles. For this volume, Hemingway finally settled upon *Winner Take Nothing*, an invented clause extracted from the book's epigraph, written in Hemingway's imitative Elizabethan English:

Unlike all other forms of lutte or combat the conditions
 are that the winner shall take nothing; neither his ease,
 nor his pleasure, nor any notions of glory; nor, if he
 win far enough, shall there be any reward within himself.²³

The title Hemingway crafted obviously is an inversion of the "winner take all" aphorism. The entire epigraph is a reversal of the normal or usual progression and outcome of struggle. Rather, the inscription enigmatically suggests a type of combat that does not follow the prescribed rules, thus "unlike" all other forms. The author does

not specify what type of “combat” he is referring to that differs so much from other forms. It is certain only that there are no “winners,” in the usual sense.

Earl Rovit notes that a bitter angst is the unifying factor of these fourteen stories: *Winner Take Nothing* (1933) contains fourteen stories, and among them are some of the bitterest in the Hemingway canon: “A Natural History of the Dead,” “The Mother of a Queen,” “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen.” The famous “*nada*” prayer of “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” and “the opium of the people” speech of “The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio” are in this collection. The volume is also notable for its savage concern with homosexuality and castration. . . .²⁴

As a whole, the short stories that compose *Winner Take Nothing* explore the human psyche’s heroic resistance to loss and hopelessness. The stories are a departure from the “*normale*,” the ordinary, the wholesome.²⁵ Although the stories are characterized by a stoical acceptance of the human dilemma, their subject matter jolted Maxwell Perkins, who feared the response of the critics to the presentation of homosexuality, lesbianism, castration, divorce, and suicide.

The spate of disappointing reviews presaged by those of *Death in the Afternoon* continued for *Winner Take Nothing*. New York reviewers generally admired “Wine of Wyoming” and “After the Storm.” But the ennui and hopelessness of the “lost generation,” so prevalent in the collection, was becoming as passé as the 1920s: “New York critics wanted something different, something more compassionate in hard times.”²⁶ Hemingway’s deliberate, purposeful arrangement of these short pieces had made *Winner Take Nothing* an overdose of insistent, blaring nihilism.

Winner Take Nothing elicited only grudging praise for its individual stories from *The New York Times*, which commended the writing as “superlative” but then tempered

its praise: “The dialogue is admirable . . . [the] picture vivid, whole; the way of life is caught and conveyed without a hitch. It is not that the life they portray isn’t worth exploring. But Hemingway has explored it beyond its worth.”²⁷ Likewise, William Troy called the collection the “poorest and least interesting writing [Hemingway] has ever placed on public view.” He cited “monotonous repetitions” of overworked themes like “eating and drinking, travel, sport, coition” and cautioned that their normalization would wear thin with readers and seriously erode Hemingway’s literary status.²⁸ One dissenting voice was William Plomer, who thought Hemingway “the most interesting contemporary American short-story writer.” But he, too, noted the pervasive nihilism in the volume and attributed it to the post-war “spiritual dislocation” and to Hemingway’s “vitality.”²⁹

Hemingway himself recognized that the public might not embrace these stories; nevertheless, he was compelled to write and publish them because they fleshed out some of his prior, unwritten experiences. He had been particularly adamant that “Fathers and Sons” remain as the last story in the collection; significantly, he had made “fictional use, for the first time in Ernest’s career, of his father’s suicide.”³⁰ Regardless of the critical reviews, he judged the collection valuable.

Norman E. Stafford comments that “of the fourteen stories, only ‘A Clean, Well-Lighted Place’ and ‘Fathers and Sons’ have received critical acclaim.”³¹ Early in 1933, *Scribner’s Magazine* accepted three of these stories for spring publication: “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” “Homage to Switzerland,” and “Give Us a Prescription, Doctor” (later renamed “The Gambler, The Nun, and the Radio”). Hemingway described them as “safe” for publication in a family magazine like *Scribner’s*.³² T. S. Matthews, who scathingly denounced the subject matter in most of *Winner Take Nothing* and characterized them as “the kind of abnormalities that fascinate adolescence, recommended ‘A Day’s Wait’ to all enthusiasts of Booth Tarkington’s *Penrod and Sam*.”³³ Matthews’ commendation linking Hemingway to Tarkington as an author of “the realistic boy story” certainly has merit. This genre, the antecedent of which is *The*

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, was firmly entrenched in American literature by 1913; *Penrod and Sam* was published in 1916. Like Hemingway, Tarkington deftly weaves the boy Penrod's everyday adventures into believable episodes "through the abundant use of accurately observed detail which is episodic in arrangement rather than continuously narrative."³⁴ "A Day's Wait" is an isolated incident, unconnected to other events. This lack of contextualization magnifies the implications of each word in the text.

If "A Day's Wait" were a play, it would consist of fewer than ten scenes. A young boy becomes ill with influenza, hears that his temperature is one hundred and two, mistakenly relates it to the Celsius scale, and presumes for an entire day that he will die. During the day, his father embarks on a very short hunting expedition, returns to the house, and clears up the misunderstanding. The placement of the story at the halfway point in *Winner Take Nothing* provides a brief respite of Flora's "normale." Sandwiched between "Homage to Switzerland" and "A Natural History of the Dead," the gentle innocence of "A Day's Wait" softens the jaded harshness of both stories. "Homage to Switzerland" is a triptych about three men traveling separately in Switzerland, each of whom is experiencing a crisis in relationships.³⁵ "A Natural History of the Dead," comments Sheldon Grebstein, "parodies the propriety and objectivity of the field naturalist . . . (and, by association, the literary critic) by adopting the manner of sober decorum to describe the smell and posture of corpses on the battlefield."³⁶

Although "A Day's Wait" has itself garnered scant attention and critical review, Flora terms it the "gentlest of Hemingway's stories, and one of its most underprized."³⁷ Stafford characterizes it as "one of Hemingway's more poignant and charming brief short stories."³⁸ Peter Hays calls it "a charming, sentimental story" involving a "prototypical code hero."³⁹ The story stands in sharp contrast to its neighboring stories in *Winner Take Nothing* and seems to be most closely related to "Fathers and Sons." Seemingly added as afterthoughts to the collection, these two stories beg critical review

because of their departure from the content and structure of the other stories. Despite the obvious differences, “A Day’s Wait” nevertheless adheres to the Hemingway “grid” of short fiction and its concomitant elements: heroic ethos, omission, and thematic action occurring on different planes.

In contrast, Sheridan Baker judges “A Day’s Wait” as straight journalism,” and Allen Shepherd labels its artistry “unimpressive.”⁴⁰ Indeed, “A Day’s Wait” may have forfeited its share of critical praise because it reads like the diary entry of a winter’s day gone awry. Yet much of Hemingway’s fiction is indiscernible from “straight reporting,” an ambiguity that Hemingway deliberately cultivated. Aside from both the support and detraction by critics, the story is remarkable in its brevity, consisting of only a scant one thousand words, and in its evocative, anecdotal quality.

VI
THE ICEBERG CONNECTION: OMISSION IN
“A DAY’S WAIT”

In *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway metaphorically describes his own writing:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water.(192)⁴¹

Hemingway repeats the metaphor in another statement: “I’ve seen the marlin mate and know about that. So I leave that out. . . . Knowledge is what makes the iceberg.”⁴²

Based on Hemingway’s self-revelatory commentary, the brevity of “A Day’s Wait” indeed belies its depth. Hemingway’s iceberg of knowledge sustains the narrative and dialogue and challenges the *reader* to supply the omissions. For Hemingway, the “dignity” of prose writing is an almost reluctant exposure that provides the reader with both assurance of the author’s knowledge and an invitation to probe further. A reading of “A Day’s Wait,” which can be accomplished in three or four minutes, evokes the sense that the episode has import, that it is a snapshot of the significant events of one day. Hemingway’s use of the pronoun “he” as the first word of the story suggests almost an “intrusion” into dynamic events whose historical context remains a mystery: “He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he

looked ill.” The identity of “he” is not revealed until after several exchanges of dialogue. The identity of the other half of the “we” of the first sentence is never revealed. The phrase “at school in France” is the only clue provided as to the boy’s prior experience. As in much of Hemingway’s fiction, time and setting must be inferred or intuited throughout “A Day’s Wait.” Hemingway’s withholding of details and information is part of a shared understanding between author and reader. As the reader navigates through this sparse landscape of words, he is rewarded with rich yield. If something is not written, it is because it is either not important, or it is so important that it is already understood.

VII
THE CODE CONNECTION: HEROIC STRUGGLE IN
“A DAY’S WAIT”

The portrayal of what Peter Hays calls a “prototypical code hero” includes elements that are intrinsic to any heroic struggle: introduction (initiation), dignified contention, and internal victory.⁴³ Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of facts do not mitigate the boy’s perception of his predicament; the struggle is nonetheless real to the boy, regardless of its accuracy. Part of Hemingway’s “iceberg” is the boy’s assimilation of the “facts.” The boy builds his reality on limited data: first, he has an unacceptably high fever; secondly, his stock of information dictates that a person *cannot live* with so high a fever; thirdly, he may choose how to deal with this inevitability. The child chooses the most selfless path and redirects his anguish into positive concern for his father. The boy gains victory over the enemy by acquiescing to the inevitable with a grace and manliness uncharacteristic of a nine-year-old. None of this internal tension is analyzed or explicitly shared. The narrative reveals only the barest tip of that inner struggle.

The boy’s *imagined* enemy is every bit as real to him as other protagonists’ enemies are to them. Hemingway’s soldiers, bullfighters, and fishermen accept the inevitability of defeat, but they find meaning in *how* the struggle is conducted. Santiago, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, says “but man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (103). In that sense, the boy’s initiation into the heroic code is successful. Like the old fisherman, he perseveres in performing valiantly

in the face of a predetermined outcome, controlling only his inner attitudes toward his loss.

The counterparts to the fictional piratical adventures in the Howard Pyle book that the boy was unable to follow are now being waged both on the sickbed and outdoors in the raw winter elements. The boy and the father, separate from each other, engage in primal, “life-and-death” activities: battling illness, hunting, and the simple act of walking. The father’s and boy’s struggles mirror each other as the father’s external physical contest dramatizes the boy’s quiet, inner struggle. As the boy contends with his quiet realization, he assumes an almost paternal stance toward his father. The father, in turn, is reduced to a dependent, childlike state, struggling with his dog to maintain footing as they “slipped,” “slithered,” and “fell” on ice-glazed surfaces. The father even temporarily loses his shotgun as it skids away from him on the ice. The father is weaponless and unable to maintain enough balance to walk. He is only mildly successful in his hunting expedition, missing many more quail than he actually kills. The man returns to the house consoled only by his discovery of “a covey close to the house” to which he can return at another time.

The father’s return to the house after his unsuccessful expedition and the boy’s calm, acquiescent state provide the drama’s denouement. Both characters have fought their battles individually but with utmost courage and dignity. Each is unaware of the other’s struggle during the day. The boy is fixated on the *time* of death, and the father resumes his fatherly stance when the son’s mistaken notions need correcting. The boy accepts his father’s superior knowledge with a relieved “Oh.” The father’s estimation of his son rises as he instantly understands the mental torture the child must have endured that day. With implied admiration, the words in the text seem to spill over themselves:

You poor Schatz, I said. Poor old Schatz. It’s like miles and kilometers. You aren’t going to die. That’s a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind, it’s ninety-eight. (134)

The boy does not speak again in the narrative, but his actions complete the cycle of his stress response. The “hold” over the boy “relaxes, ” and his crying seems disproportionate to trivial events.

VIII

CRITICAL CONNECTIONS: A RECONSIDERATION

Immediate critical reaction to “A Day’s Wait” quickly differentiated it from most of the other stories in *Winner Take Nothing*. The vignette seems to be part of a pair, the corresponding half of which is “Fathers and Sons.” Scholars have long debated whether both accounts should be included in the canon of tales chiefly concerned with Nick Adams, Hemingway’s fictional alter ego. Baker, Waldhorn, Grebstein, and Flora note many similarities between this narrative and other Nick Adams stories. In this instance, however, Nick is narrator-father whose son is now faced with the initiation-contention-victory cycle. Flora maintains that words and phrases echo from Nick’s earlier life: Schatz, like the Arditi lieutenant in “In Another Country,” is “detached”; like Nick in “Now I Lay Me,” the boy resists sleep.⁴⁴ Other critics choose not to include “A Day’s Wait” among the Nick Adams stories because they think that the action centers on the boy rather than on Nick. Yet in many ways, the story *is* about the man, whose limited narrative viewpoint resurrects the very same struggles in the boy that historically have always been Nick’s.

There has been a resurgence of scholarship surrounding “A Day’s Wait” since the nineteen eighties. Perhaps the vignette initially was overshadowed by its companion stories. *Winner Take Nothing* was, after all, published at a time when the public was satiated with tales of hopelessness, angst, and despair.

But despite its occasional mention, or even publication, in an anthology, the story may not have received its due. As Susan Beegel asserts, “A short story is most obviously neglected when the criticism it has received has been insignificant in quantity

or quality.”⁴⁵ To prove her point, in her introduction to *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction*, Beegel lists all of the available critical literature related to “A Day’s Wait.” A mere handful of critics have evaluated its merit as either a story that stands alone or for its connectedness to Hemingway’s other fiction.

IX CONCLUSION

The near-disastrous winter of 1932 may have yielded little for Ernest Hemingway besides the raw material for a short story. The trail of correspondence among family members seems to suggest that the basis for the story was a factual event that was overshadowed by other serious, threatening events. The barn fire in Piggott, Arkansas, could have been far worse. Although it destroyed some of Hemingway's belongings and manuscripts, it was an event that Hemingway never fictionalized or publicly discussed.

Whooping cough and influenza could be rapidly fatal; Hemingway's uncle Willoughby's death that month from influenza was reminder enough. Undoubtedly Hemingway was aware of its devastating effects on soldiers a few years earlier. But Hemingway never fictionalized these episodes.

It was precisely at this juncture of overwhelming events that Hemingway looked for an escape and found it in an equally brutal winter setting. Yet the author never recreated those events by shaping them into what could have been riveting stories. Instead, his only allusion to them is found in an unassuming little story, the simplicity and mundaneness of which are the very qualities that lend the ring of truth to its thousand words. Enough biographical substantiation exists to place it on the list of Hemingway's pure autobiographical stories, including the author's categorical designation of it as a story written "exactly" as it happened.

"A Day's Wait" is much more than a gentle, charming story. Its brevity may camouflage its multiple layers of undiscovered connections. The canon of

Hemingway's fiction supports each word and phrase, providing a basis for interpretation. Moreover, "A Day's Wait" is a fusion of both biographical and literary elements that creates a cathartic retelling of an otherwise forgettable incident. The story is a neglected microcosm of Hemingway's craft. Ernest Hemingway isolated a trivial, but touching event from the crisis-filled winter of 1932 and artistically shaped it into "A Day's Wait." The story should be ranked among Hemingway's best.

NOTES

1. H. R. Stoneback, “‘Mais Je Reste Catholique’: Communion, Betrayal, and Aridity in ‘Wine of Wyoming,’” in *Hemingway’s Neglected Short Fiction*, ed. Susan Beegel (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 210.

2. Jeffrey Meyers has identified “five distinct phases” of Hemingway’s career. Each period of productivity and subsequent praise was followed by low productivity and adverse criticism. According to Meyers, *Winner Take Nothing* was among other poorly-received novels of the 1930s: *Death in the Afternoon*, *Green Hills of Africa*, and *To Have and Have Not*. See Jeffrey Meyers, introduction to *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982), 9.

3. Susan F. Beegel, introduction to *Hemingway’s Neglected Short Fiction*. ed. Susan Beegel (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989).

4. Linda Gajdusek, “Making Connections in ‘A Day’s Wait,’” in *Hemingway’s Neglected Short Fiction*, ed. Susan F. Beegel ” (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 293.

5. Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 194. Jerry Dean, “Piggott not Hemingway’s idea of utopia,” [*sic*] *Arkansas Gazette*, (July 11, 1989), Arkansas resident Bea Janes is quoted in article: “[Hemingway] called us all ‘yokels’.” Janes was a resident of Piggott and an acquaintance of the Pfeiffer family during the 1930s.

6. Mrs. Matilda Pfeiffer, interview by author, tape recording, Piggott, Arkansas, 30 March 2000. Tape in my possession.

7. See Baker, *A Life Story*, 235.

8. Ernest Hemingway to Grace, Madelaine, and Leicester Hemingway, 1932, Private Collection, Ernest Mainland, Petoskey, Michigan. Hemingway's letter is transcribed as written, with his spellings and informal punctuation. This letter is reproduced here for the first time.

9. Mary Pfeiffer to Pauline Hemingway, October 31 1933, Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston.

10. John Hemingway was mistaken about the title, which was "A Day's Wait," not "Fathers and Sons," which chronicles the thermometer incident.

11. Denis Brian, *The True Gen* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), 87.

12. For further information on Bra (Captain Eddie) Saunders, Hemingway's professional fishing guide in Key West, see Baker, *A Life Story*.

13. Carlos Baker, ed, *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), 400.

14. Smith, 304. The word is a German term of endearment.

15. Smith, 303.

16. Mrs. Matilda Pfeiffer, interview by author, tape recording, Piggott, Arkansas, March 30, 2000.

17. Quoted in Flora, 13

18. Ernest Hemingway. *The Old Man and the Sea* (New York: Scribners, 1952).

19. Jeffrey Meyers, ed, *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982), 303.

20. Rovit,

21. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

22. For further composition history of *Winner Take Nothing*, see Lawrence H. Martin, Jr., "Crazy in Sheridan: Hemingway's 'Wine of Wyoming' Reconsidered," *New Critical Approaches to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Jackson J. Benson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 360-61.

23. Ernest Hemingway, *Winner Take Nothing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930). All references to "A Day's Wait" refer to this edition and will be given parenthetically within the text. See Michael Reynolds' comment on this epigraph in *Hemingway: The 1930s* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co. 1997), 135.

24. Earl Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Twayne, 1963), 70.

25. For a more detailed examination of this point, see Joseph M. Flora, *Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 46.

26. Reynolds, 153.

27. Reynolds, 153.

28. William Troy, "Nation" November 15, 1933 printed in *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. Ed. Jeffrey Meyers 1982

29. William Plomer, "Now and Then," printed in *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage* p.185.

30. Baker, *A Life Story*, 241.

31. Norman E. Stafford, "'A Day's Wait' in Piggott, Arkansas," (Arkansas Review July 30, 1999): 139.

32. Baker, *A Life Story*, 238.

33. Baker, *A Life Story*, 246.3

34. James Woodress, *Booth Tarkington* (Lippincott: Philadelphia, 1955), 178.

35. Reynolds, 88.

36. Sheldon Grebstein, *Hemingway's Craft* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 177.

37. Flora, 44.

38. Stafford, 139.

39. Quoted in Paul Smith, "A Day's Wait," in *A Reader's Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, edited by James Nagel (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1989), 303.

40. Quoted in *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917-1961*, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner's, 1981), 400.

41. Quoted in Flora, 13. See Flora's treatment of this extract from *Death in the Afternoon*.

42. Dobie Langenkamp, "Lessons from Papa," Tulsa World (April 2, 2000), sec. G, p. 4.

43. Kenneth G. Johnston, "'The Undefeated': The Moment of Truth," in *Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction*, ed. Joseph M. Flora (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 175.

44. Flora,

45. Beegel, intro.

APPENDIX

235 -

THE HOUSE BOAT
WALTER ADAMS
JANUARY, 1935
WATSON, ARKANSAS

LT 70.12
1000000

Dear Mother, Sunny and Leo:

writing to you all by - I have been delayed

with relaying mail. Pauline had to leave
key had to stay on Sunday home and all our
mess up in the air of mail we have been
would come out - they are O.K. now

come down with Pauline, Sunny and Bubby all

and problems and sleeping. I have been
studied and I have been reading books, clothes, songs, guns,

all in my hand. I had a good time in Memphis because
had a good time in Memphis because

However, I want to thank Mother for
the good letters and clipping. I had a
letter and Sunny. That was a fine story about our

Pauline, Claude, and I. I had the letter. I had
Sunny. I had the letter. I had the letter. I had the letter.

Xmas because I believe you would all be Xmas together

and I can not wait to see the family circle x
of Mother and Sam want to go to Detroit let
Secretary come down to Piggott for that day.

He will be very welcome & Ho
otherwise, even if you go to Detroit he
could leave Saturday or Sunday (Kians is on
Sunday) by St. Louis - Get a train to
St. Louis that arrives in time to get a train
from there which leaves at either 12:30
or 1:30 for Piggott arriving at 5:15 at Piggott

You can find time of train by calling
information at the Chicago Central Hotel office -
anyway best to take him from Chicago
for St. Louis - find morning train (beating
plans to the airport) and take noon train to
Piggott leaving Piggott same night -

Due to necessity to get help camp considered
I wish there were time to leave Piggott 3-4
days after Xmas & it was very desultory with
less vacation & delay. Had time to have him get down

236 -

THE HOUSE BOAT
WALTER ADAMS
CAPTAIN, OWNER
WATSON, ARKANSAS

CT
70.22
Revenue

Wife returned from (2) dentist school last
week for some duck shooting before Xmas
as week since shooting is over - all
lakes frozen - no food for ducks - with
leaving - won't duck shooting be over soon -
enclose \$40.00 to cover his expenses down to

Piggott - if 3 days after Xmas seems too
short to him or if conditions do not clear up
in Arkansas - at present whole country is covered under
a solid sheet of frozen water - he is
at liberty to use the money for anything he
wants & already has left me at
Piggott Arkansas when he is arriving - some he
but all Piggott enclosed are some checks for Xmas -

Will you please forward Ma's? as usual
haven't her address - Sorry not to send
more but we are not rich this year.

MP
 Pigott, Arkansas, October 31. (33)

Dear Pauline,

And so you are to journey to Africa in the near future. What part please? Just Africa is pretty indefinite. I have been looking at it on the map. Have also purchased a globe. The better to keep you located. Sometimes when I go to see where you are, you have run completely off the map.

Sunday I recieved a fine letter from your husband. I would rather get a letter like that occasionally than a less interesting one more often.

When Ernest gets you to africa you will not be running away from him so much like he says you always are. I hope you are providing yourselves with competent weapons with which to meet the wild animals. An elephant in the St. Louis Zoo want crazy recently and they had no way of killing him. No gun had force enough to put a bullet thru his hide. I don't know how they did finally kill him. I think they made a gun.

Last week i made a shopping trip to St. Louis. Was gone four days. Not liking to shop i had postponed it just as long as i could. I found it pretty strenuous getting thru traffic with your life emangered every moment you are on the street. Street car service has been completely changed and everything in every store had been moved to a different place. All that together with considerable fixxwixnt night life and calling upon old neighbors and friends and finding them all much older than you imagined they could be.

I called upon Dells and found only Dorothy and Virginia at home. Inquired about Cousins and they said mary was living in the old home taking care of her brother and sister who were both crazy. They live next door to Dells you remember and Dorothy said that in all that time she had never once seen Elizabeth. I thought i should go in and see Mary. I knocked and was let in. I supposed that it was Mary that was letting me in. She closed the door and informed me that she was Elizabeth and Mary was not at home. I did not tarry long as I was carrying no weapons.

The movies in the city are getting just too wild and sexy for any self-respecting woman to attend-but it seems we all attend just the same. I saw Footlight Parade and was dizzy for some time after i came out. There were many beautiful spectacular scenes intermingled with the scenes you should'nt see. We're getting dangerously near to pagan Rome at the time of its fall.

Aunt Vera is coming along quite as well as could be expected I think. She is I know much stronger than when she came and she eats and sleeps well but she will never tell me that she is better when I ask her she says she doesn't know whether she is better or not. Nerves are very difficult to doctor. We will keep her here until well away in January, then I think she will go to Julia in Houston.

I wish Virginia would make some effort to find out the cause of her periodical attacks. Sometimes I think it is her gall-bladder they are removing them right and left over here now and declaring the operations very successful.

How about the appeal to get Patrick for the month of December as it meeting with any favors. You doubtless both have a pretty vivid remembrance of your last visit with all its attendant casualties, but I really think the hoodoo is broken. Things have gone along pretty smoothly in the House on the Hill for the last nine months.

Ernest's book came last night. Have had time to read but one story as the other members of the household wanted to see it.

I read A Day's Wait. He has made it a very touching little story which to be sure it was, and very true to facts, but things were happening so fast then that little thought could be given to an incident that was past. We had to grapple with present problems, plague and fire and cold and all the evils attendant thereon. But it is past, we will forget it.

The weather is ideal here now and the forests a pageant of glory. I greatly enjoyed the ride to St. Louis. If you go by train you travel by day now. I never knew the scenery was so beautiful.

The cotton season is at its height here now and everyone is very busy. The government's entering into it has made much more work, but your father is enjoying it all. He thrives on problems that he can wrestle with. I avoid them whenever I can. Your children should be very happy mediums.

Earl is having a heck of a time with his oil-burner. It worked beautifully for a time and then stopped dead. They have been working two weeks on it and haven't found the difficulty yet. They hope to locate it today. Roy is here from Memphis. We are congratulating ourselves that we waited to put in oil until it had been tried out. We put in a furnace in which we can install oil-burner later.

I imagine Paris is very alluring these autumn days with all fall styles on display. Too bad the dollar is dancing around so making you not know where you are at. Roosevelt is trying everything to find some way to boost commodity prices, but between experimenting and opposition he is having a hectic time. Give my love to Ernest and tell him many thanks for the good letter. Always, your Mother

Am enclosing some items that I think will be of interest to Virginia. Clara sent me the clippings. You can trust madeline to stare a speestacular wedding.

EW