

6/2/72

We've got some kind of ESP going, Pearlita!

Yesterday, working with materials requiring the deftness and humor on your touch that is rarely mine, I was wishing you could be here to edit it, and today your delayed letter of the 26th, a week in coming. But then yesterday I got no mail, today a flood.

I feel more confident knowing my feelings about your feelings when you wrote the piece were right. It may make it possible for me to be more helpful in the future.

Right now I am so overloaded with so much more than I can think of doing, all things that must be done, I think all I'll be able to do is return the piece with marginal or word markings instead of the paperclips. I'll try to get that done by Sunday's night mail so you can get it promptly. If you have any problems this way, return the page and I'll find time to expand.

Castro/China: If I recall what was in question, it is principle. I do not think that either China or Castro's Cuba would push dope in the U.S. All info from S.E. Asia, for example, is that only we and our friends are pressing it upon our troops. Friends, indeed!

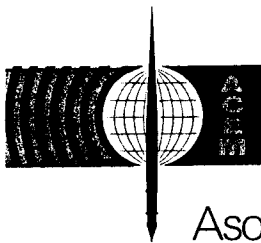
Striso: you merely confirm my original caution. Strange cat, if a cat.

Murner: as one of his victims, let me press fatherly advice on you. Play it too straight. He is a former FBI agent. Call him no more. This way you are honest, detached, can't have accusations made later, etc.

I've done a piece for that eminent journal of arcane letters, the National Enquirer, on the attempt on Wallace, which pays peanuts, but when you are hungry, peanuts are fine protein. I did another piece on dim prospect, from a strange threat against McGovern and Teddy, beginning with a challenge to me. They declined as too complicated for their readers, probably true. And I'm working on what I think I'll call the Double Double-Cross in Doublecrosstown, the newest Gervais switch in which he accuses the government of forcing him to frame Garrison and entrap the real badies. I'm waiting to hear from the mag. I'll try to do a simple piece, and I'm doing a long one with other things in mind: part of a later book; historical record; slight chance magazine interest. This is only partial answer to your question, "what are you working on?" It is only the more immediate.

6/3 Although I also am in the throes, got up early Best,
to get this in today's mail. Other things are on my mind
and I didn't time to reread. All I could do is try to recall what I had in mind when I
paper-clipped it. Perhaps in some cases I have not. In several places, in referring to you-
s as a woman, with Teresa calling her "wares", I think it could zing a bit more conversationally
and graphically. Esp. do I think the Gervais story is too brief, really inadequate. That
was quite a emotional business. I'd give colors, descriptions, places, distances, etc.
Details which take but a few words can help that part much. Short, punchy language. Hope
you can read the suggestions I've made. The doubts I expressed remain. Be careful not to
say some of the things on your own authority. Like China, Castro and drugs. They're do things
vs countries, not people. And the time is not "the 1950s" as you wrote. The change in policy
toward Castro came at the end of the Eisenhower administration. Relations cooled three weeks
before JFK took over, an unprecedented thing. Sorry I'm so more than usually rushed. Pershing
Gervais, who framed Garrison for the Teas, has confessed it and I'm into a too-long piece
not commissioned. Those incompetents don't even know what is happening or the darkside person-
ae and I'm actually telling them what is going on down there, from analysis, phone calls
and the checking nobody has done. Weird and improbable, but true and time-consuming. Great
story if anyone could go for it, and could it use the touch of the Pearl who can't our so!

Best,



HOTEL CONTINENTAL HILTON.
ROMA 39. MEXICO-6. D. F.
TELEFONOS: 46-40-11
Y 46-68-72

Asociación de Corresponsales Extranjeros en México

Alpes 966
Mexico 10, DF
May 26, 1972

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KATHERINE MANJARREZ

Dear Harold,

Thanks for taking the time to criticize my ms. Your feelings about it are so right. It was almost with annoyance that I tossed it off so lightly. Suddenly, it became necessary to hand it in and I did a one shot writing knowing it would of course have to be rewritten. I couldn't afford to keep RD waiting any longer. Seems there was a misunderstanding as to the date of submission, what with their moving, and other changes. I haven't heard from them yet, but I can see where I can tighten it up and keep it going at a fast pace at the same time. However, I don't want to go into too much detail as it is just a mag article.

That info re Castro re China, etc., took place in the fifties - so why are the dates not matchable? Striso's angry with me because I wouldn't accept his word, "proven" by letters from Ramparts that he was the one who gave them the first inkling of the case. Actually, the letters prove nothing but that he offered info which they requested he substantiate. I did tell him I would be glad to testify to the fact I got a copy of his ms. from them.

What's a research author? Good question. I suppose someone like you - which of course is too flattering for Turner, so when rewrite will just identify him by his books, or freelance articles, or in particular the one who allegedly investigated the Garrison case and wrote the Ramparts stories on it. That should fix him, good!

What are you working on? Is it going to be a book, or what? What do you think of the latest shooting? Plot? Interesting in edition of Time re the shooting, they write so casually is this just another case of a disturbed person killing a political figure as in the case of John F. Kennedy, etc.! Still whitewashing.

Would appreciate the markings made in ms. as will rewrite soon.

Best to you and Lil,

Peace

5/20/72

Dear Pearl,

Got up too early, to catch up on mail and such work. I was away on an interesting trip the fruit of which includes something like 15 hours on in-jail interviews that must be converted from tape to affidavits. Before I could really begin to type up the notes I made, I got snowed under with such matters as getting on paper what was in my head only, trying to report what I'd produced to the lawyers, attending funerals, and then a commission for a pot-boiler that will not pay much but carries the promise of an adequate return for the time if the piece is not used. So, yesterday I churned out the 6,000 or so words, did not get them, we got them to the post office in time for the outgoing late night airmail, and too awake to go to sleep, I read your 10 piece, somewhat hastily.

While I like it, I also feel it needs a bit of work. Minor in all cases. Because you have already turned it in, there is no point in taking time for suggestions now. If you make a later submission, I have all the pieces marked. I'll devise a simple system for calling questions to my attention as she reads copy prior to typing. She places a paper clip in the margin at that point. This is what I did as I read "Bachman". I don't know how good a title it is for a mag piece, especially for the IB, but for a movie, should you be lucky enough, I think it is fine, as it probably is for a book. I tend to like short titles. They are easy to remember and to talk about, which is part of the way books attract attention and get sold.

So, we can always take these things up. I'll keep the piece in the envelope in which you mailed it, sans colorful stamps which I'll save for kids, which will keep the clips from getting mislaid.

I developed a feeling, as I was reading, that what you were pumping out wasn't the real you. You began the breezy Pearl that you are, but I think you tended toward being bored with the piece or yourself or its prospects as you got toward the end. I think it shows in the writing and connecting. In awkward constructions and ambiguities, in a few unclear things. Please realize I am writing from recollection after about four hours sleep and a fairly recent reading. This means I could have found unclear what is not, for example.

I like the way you started it. Like a denure Jack Spivack (who was before your time, chick), an old cock of the days when one could get anti-fascist writing published. The difference is that he had everyone blanching as he walked into their offices.

I am taking the time to make these general comments now because I want you to be thinking about the future form of this work as well as its content. I think it has the potential I have always found in it. So, a few general comments. Early in the Joel part you should, I think, make a disassociation between Pearl the writer and Joel the talker (really all those you quote except Velasquez), for too much is self-contradictory and inherently incredible. Readers and editors may get the idea that you succumbed to what you quote, as you do not. It is not entirely clarified when you say that you broke off with him because he wasn't coming clean. Here I note the feeling that you did not make maximum use of the dramatic rescue, downplayed and fuzzied it too much.

We all feel the need to solve. When you get into this, with Cuba more than with Samozza, I disagree with the content (Is this the Striso part?). With Cuba it is none. As of that time it simply wasn't a probability, if a possibility. I know something about that political situation. The events were years late to fit that kind of situation. With Samozza, while superficially more credible, and the writing is persuasive here, if the content is less so, I feel this is not an adequate explanation. It is for the 10 or 15 readers but it is not for any expected form of this material. Opposition to authoritarian dictatorship (and my knowledge of it goes back to before World War II and a bit of that era- for example, captured Italian Foreign Office files passed through my hands, and it is interesting when you expand, I'll tell you of it) has never been organized and

financed to the degree necessary for what you say. Here let me note two things that bubble up: it is inconsistent to postulate revenge in the beating of Middel. They'd have killed the rat, and you failed to identify Brujillo, in any way, not even his real name (which I recall as Rafael Leonides). And when you expand on this I can also help, reminding you of Johnny Abbes and Guido. And another bubble, the Brooklyn can't be in that area and things in contradiction to the early part. (One of the things that makes me feel you popped out toward the end. Was it the kids? The family urgencies? Or the story?)

I now see more clearly why I immediately encouraged you to do the book as a non-fiction novel. Perhaps I never told you this, but before I started another book, while I was beating up the roads to see from New York in the vain effort to contract with Middel, I reached the conclusion that the only way we could make any kind of deal with the CIA as assassination story was as a novel. I planned an introductory note explaining that Middle the form is that of a novel, everything in it comes from the official evidence. This was before Capote, and it comes from my feeling that there are some situations that can't solve. A professional assassination is one of these (I could solve things, but don't - too dangerous). Yours is this kind of material, for any longer treatment. For a magazine, no. Straight non-fiction.

There are minor things I recall that need changing, like the reference to Turner as a research author. What the hell is that? And any suggestion that that lazy, incompetent crook could do any work makes me chuckle to myself, which is not criticism. To give him credibility, I think you should refer to him as a former FBI agent, which is what he was. If it fits, it says he was a crook for the FBI. There is nothing in his subsequent career to dispute this self-d description, or to reflect any ethical changes in him. Another thing I recall is your reference to yourself, woman, and each case in which you refer to the name of a woman you are admiring. But these are minor and going into them now would make a redundancy. I think you will be going over this for the 1st or another day before you expand, and any of the later times will be better.

Now, on an agent and on Toni in particular: I am not an agent, she is. I know her from 1962, when it became clear that we'd have to liquidate the firm and that I should return to writing. She is a friend of a friend of mine. He knows agents with bigger bags, but he came to her because in some ways he must have had a better opinion of her, perhaps on integrity. She is not a major agent, can't tap some of the top accounts as usually an agent, but what is no disqualification. As of the time I knew her, I felt she could not. I was then interested in a book that every agent I've spoken to says would make a movie. She began with Crown, where there was interest, a handshake deal or worse. A larger agent would have started higher. This way or my not have seen better, for publishing is a very crooked business.

As a person I like Toni very much. But let me tell you this experience: when I first wrote her about the Warren Commission material and the Kennedy assassination, her reaction was little short of hysterical. Her reflection of the publishing attitude on the subject was precisely accurate, but she was not only not willing to fight it, but she returned everything I had sent her. I tell you this in case you find yourself in a real fight with the CIA or something like it. Yet I suggest that few, if any agents, would react differently. This is one reason I have been willing to use the few contacts I have for a less orthodox approach. But there is no doubt in my mind that I can't begin to do what she can, not even approximate it. And people are hung-up on me because of the associations of my work, which is commercially unpopular. I am a liability. There are a couple of movie people I can talk to. In fact, I did speak to one about three weeks ago, with this and a number of other things in mind. He is supposed to find some free time some weekend and come here. Maybe he will, but don't hold your breath until he does. All the other things I can do, the few that there are, must be done in New York, and while I have urgent need to go there in my own interests, I'm too broke to think of it. So, there is no choice, talk Toni. Or my other reasonably honest agent. Remember also that in this basically crooked business, placing a work is only a beginning. You then have to collect. Here an agent can be indispensable. I

wish we had a fraction of what we've been beaten out of. With Bell alone, and not counting their illegal backing out on a \$35,000 deal, of which I got only \$5,000, it must be between \$30 and 30,000. It has been in the hands of a lawyer for years. He has done nothing. Why do you think I was interested in (silent) Devine? And here I had an agent, a good one, yet he has not as of this day given me a copy of Bell's first semi-annual royalty statement on my second book. Infact, I think I have gotten but a single one of the perhaps 10 they should have provided. All he did was pick up my chips. So, even with a good agent, anticipate problems. There is a limit to how much they'll fight any publisher to whom they expect to return. Their income comes from repeats, not the commission on any one book or from any one author.

With such publications as ~~True~~ I would imagine Toni's connections are good and long-standing. If you got an advance from AD and they reject, then selling to True might be a profitable deal. However, if you have not yet made a deal with Toni, why not keep your options open and first see what happens at the Digest, meanwhile pondering the future.

If my friend Dave, with the movie connections, does come up (and he is much too busy to try to talk to him in Washington, where he has had to open a second office merely to find time to hide from his known one), I'll give him this piece to read. Meanwhile, whether for me, Toni or others, I think you should have a few precis on paper. And for them I hope you can become the breezy Pearl I found after you had unwound a bit. Swing yourself into the proper, light-hearted mood where you are so delightfully articulate and entertaining and let it go! This is one of the reasons I was hoping we could tape precis when I thought there might be a bit more enterprize in British circles, which turn out to be no less stuff than ours. Gordon would know and would be honest. He is great. And he works! But you soar with a responsive audience, and that is what I'd hoped to capture on tape.

It would surprise me if the AD is on the verge of collapse, but with LOOK going and LIFE in trouble, perhaps it is coming to them, too. I haven't kept up with magazine economics, which didn't make sense to me when the Post went under. I'm no navin (phon).

Do not take this as discouragement. I am saying no more than that I feel you didn't do with this what you could, not that it is not good. I do not think I exaggerate your capabilities, and I do think this doesn't reflect them.

Sorry for the typos I inflict, but no time to read. Good luck!

Best regards,

Jerry--this carbon is for your information, in case Pearl sent you a carbon of her piece. My feeling is that she was too overwhelmed by personal problems at the time she did it, or by the unfulfilled desire to come up with a solution, which depressed her spirit. When she lets go, she is a remarkable blithe spirit. This piece is not that. It may be a combination of these or other problems of which I have no knowledge. She has serious ones just being a mother. But this is not the gal who travels on a Mexican bus with her daughter singing from Fiddler On The Roof. Too bad. She really is great when she unwinds. Maybe I expected too much. I also feel that she may have been too influenced by undependable people, perhaps confused. I do not share her estimate of Striso, for example.

Alpes 966
Mexico 10,DF
May 16, 1972

Hear Harold:

Sending you the ms. I'm handing into Reader's Digest today. As you can see, I took off and figured to hell with their style. Whether they use it or not somehow isn't that important to me - as I think they're going down - they've never been up literarily speaking -

nevertheless, rechecked and they said I could definitely try to sell it elsewhere -

There is a woman in NY, Toni Strassman, an agent who could possibly sell it - but I don't want to spoil anything you might be able to do with it - i. e. would a sale in England preclude one in U. S. - await your advice.

Rushing,

Paul