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Mermaids and Medical Aid: One Father's Fight Against a Growing Pandemic

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Ex-Lover Becomes Lover Once Again?

Lover, ex-lover, friend? Which ever it is, Clarence definitely wants to talk to Evelyn much more than he gives off. He wants her back. Clarence Clark, the writer of the letter, and Evelyn Birbky, the recipient, dated before World War II. Clarence lives in Sicily and wrote this letter on August 5, 1943, during WWII. He joined the 34th infantry. Through rhetorical and historical analysis, this short one page letter goes beyond the talk of almond trees and poor Sicily roads into a flirtatious attempt to win Evelyn back.

This letter Clarence writes to Evelyn uses different rhetorical techniques so Clarence could convey his current stance to Evelyn. Clarence and Evelyn’s relationship ends shortly before the war began. There is an underlying message throughout the letter that Clarence still has feelings for Evelyn. Throughout the letter, Clarence subtly explains why he has not had much contact or has not been that specific in his letters. For example, Clarence writes, “Well we can now say in our letters we are in Sicily”. This statement implies the mail service monitors the letters before sending them out. Through class discussion, I learned that in a previous letter, Clarence informed Evelyn that the military post center would censor their location in letters. In that specific letter, Clarence lived in Ireland. It is interesting that it took so long to be able to say where he stays.
Also, he writes, “Reckon our mail service will go from bad to worse now that we are here.” Clarence does not want Evelyn to think that he is avoiding her, so he informs Evelyn that the mail service is slowing down. Also, it lets her know that he has not forgotten about her if she does not get many letters all the time. He often makes excuses to Evelyn to ensure her that he still wants to be present in her life. At the end of this portion of the letter, Clarence expresses his excitement for Evelyn’s letter that he receives. Letting her know that he is happy to hear from her tells Evelyn that he still cares about her even if they are not dating anymore. Although the rest of the letter is not documented, the reader can assume Clarence is about to compliment Evelyn on her pictures, again showing he still has interest in her. Even while Clarence explains his experiences and nature of the part of Sicily he resides, he still writes in an attempt to win her over. Clarence writes, “They raise a plenty of grapes here too. Don’t seem to be any wine around which makes it tough for some of the boys.” By saying that not having wine is tough for some of the boys it excludes himself from that group of boys. He implies the contradiction between the maturity of himself for not needing wine and fellow maybe immature soldiers for missing wine. Although Clarence and Evelyn are no longer dating, the tone Clarence uses towards Evelyn shows respect and interest. The reader can tell that Clarence is excited and happy to write to Evelyn once again. Clarence effectively uses rhetorical devices to express his emotions toward his ex-girlfriend Evelyn during World War II.

The letter Clarence wrote to Evelyn gives the reader a sense of the historical background of what happened in Sicily during World War
II, specifically in August 1943. The letter dates August 5, 1943. The headline of the New York Times on this day read, “RUSSIANS ENTER OREL, NAZIS FLEE; RED ARMY ATTACKS AT BELGOROD; WARSHIPS AID ADVANCE IN SICILY”. Clarence, with the 34th Infantry, post up in Sicily during August of 1943. The day Clarence decided to write to Evelyn made the top news. Clarence comments on how much work he does lately, but mentions that the work load may slow up a little bit because he will soon have a little free time to “call our own”. In Sicily, during World War II, large amounts of work needed to be completed. Around this date, Nazi’s withdrew from Sicily. This fact explains why the workload would clear up. If the Nazi’s were leaving Sicily, the military would not have as much work to complete. Also, the work that did need completing would not have to be as constant as before. The people of Sicily would have a little more freedom than they did before. In addition to Nazi Germany beginning to leave from Sicily, many key battles were fought in the Pacific on this day. The Allies won many of them. In one battle, the Japanese left the battle scene because they were defeated at the Guadalcanal earlier. The battles ended with the Allies capturing the airfield at Munda on New Georgia.

During World War II, V-mail was the fastest mail service, which was still a very slow method. V-mail had to go through each letter before sending it off. They had to censor much of the material. So although the service came “quickly”, the content was limited. V-mail makes a
copy of the letter onto a different sheet of paper. The mail generally took weeks to send because it had to be sent to a central military post before finally being sent to the receiver. Sending mail took longer when the area was in battle mode. It was unsafe and difficult to get mail in and out of the post. This service decreased the amount of weight and space that the letters originally took up. The history of this letter creates an interesting picture of what life was like in Sicily and how a soldier reacts to the events.

Although the letter ends suspenseful, “You still look as…..”, the reader can hypothesize what Clarence will actually say on the next page. The tone of the whole letter suggests romantic interest in Evelyn even to the day of August 5th. It’s interesting that learning about the history between Evelyn and Clarence and the history of the time period changes the way the exact same set of words appear. Boring statements before having context became a way for Clarence to show interest in Evelyn.

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References:


