

HUMOR



Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961)

from *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)

"When did she marry Ashley?"

"During the war. Her own true love had just kicked off with the dysentery."

"You talk sort of bitter."

"Sorry. I didn't mean to. I was just trying to give you the facts."

"I don't believe she would marry anybody she didn't love."

"Well," I said. "She's done it twice."

"I don't believe it."

"Well," I said, "don't ask me a lot of fool questions if you don't like the answers."

"I didn't ask you that."

"You asked me what I knew about Brett Ashley."

"I didn't ask you to insult her."

"Oh, go to hell."

He stood up from the table his face white, and stood there white and angry behind the little plates of d'oeuvres.

"Sit down," I said. "Don't be a fool."

"You've got to take that back."

"Oh, cut out the prep-school stuff."

"Take it back."

"Sure. Anything. I never heard of Brett Ashley. How's that?"

"No. Not that. About me going to hell."

"Oh, don't go to hell," I said. "Stick around. We're just starting lunch."

“Here’s a taxidermist’s,” Bill said. “Want to buy anything? Nice stuffed dog?”
“Come on,” I said. “You’re pie-eyed.”
“Pretty nice stuffed dogs,” Bill said. “Certainly brighten up your flat.”
“Come on.”
“Just one stuffed dog. I can take ‘em or leave ‘em alone. But listen, Jake. Just one stuffed dog.”
“Come on.”
“Mean everything in the world to you after you bought it. Simple exchange of values. You give them money. They give you a stuffed dog.”
“We’ll get one on the way back.”
“All right. Have it your own way. Road to hell paved with unbought stuffed dogs. Not my fault.”
We went on.
“How’d you feel that way about dogs so sudden?”
“Always felt that way about dogs. Always been a great lover of stuffed animals”....
“Hullo!” Brett said. “Hullo!”
“This is Bill Gorton. Lady Ashley.”
Brett smiled at Bill. “I say I’m just back. Haven’t bathed even”....
“He’s all right,” I said. “He’s a taxidermist”....

“What’s all this about him and Brett, anyway? Did she ever have anything to do with him?”
He raised his chin up and pulled it from side to side.
“She went down to San Sebastian with him.”
“What a damn-fool thing to do. Why did she do that?”
“She wanted to get out of town and she can’t go anywhere alone. She said she thought it would be good for him.”
“What bloody-fool things people do. Why didn’t she go off with some of her own people? Or you?”—he slurred that over—“or me? Why not me?” He looked at his face carefully in the glass, put a big dab of lather on each cheek-bone. “It’s an honest face. It’s a face any woman would be safe with.”
“She’d never seen it.”
“She should have. All women should see it. It’s a face that ought to be thrown on every screen in the country. Every woman ought to be given a copy of this face as she leaves the altar. Mothers should tell their daughters about this face. My son”—he pointed the razor at me—“go west with this face and grow up with the country.”
He ducked down to the bowl, rinsed his face with cold water, put on some alcohol, and then looked at himself carefully in the glass, pulling down his long upper lip.
“My God!” he said, “isn’t it an awful face?”

“Yes. Bryan’s dead.” [William Jennings Bryan, creationist]
Bill laid down the egg he was peeling.
“Gentlemen,” he said, and unwrapped a drumstick from a piece of newspaper. “I reverse the order. For Bryan’s sake. As a tribute to the Great Commoner. First the chicken; then the egg.”
“Wonder what day God created the chicken?”
“Oh,” said Bill, sucking the drumstick, “how should we know? We should not question. Our stay on earth is not for long. Let us rejoice and give thanks.”
“Eat an egg.”
Bill gestured with the drumstick in one hand and the bottle of wine in the other.
“Let us rejoice in our blessings. Let us utilize the fowls of the air. Let us utilize the product of the vine. Will you utilize a little, brother?”
“After you, brother.”
Bill took a long drink.
“Utilize a little, brother,” he handed me the bottle. “Let us not doubt, brother. Let us not pry into the holy mysteries of the hencoop with simian fingers. Let us accept on faith and simply say—I want you to join with me in saying-- What shall we say, brother?” He pointed the drumstick at me and went on. “Let me tell you. We will say, and I for one am proud to say—and I want you to say with me, on your knees,

brother. Let no man be ashamed to kneel here in the great out-of-doors. Remember the woods were God's first temples. Let us kneel and say: 'Don't eat that, Lady—that's Mencken'.

"Here," I said. "Utilize a little of this."

We uncorked the other bottle.

"What's the matter?" I said. "Didn't you like Bryan?"

"I loved Bryan," said Bill. "We were like brothers."

"Where did you know him?"

"He and Mencken [atheist] and I all went to Holy Cross together."