**A Very Short Story**

by Ernest Hemingway (1924)

One hot evening in Padua they carried him up onto the roof and he could look out over the top

of the town. There were chimney swifts in the sky. After a while it got dark and the searchlights

came out. The others went down and took the bottles with them. He and Luz could hear them

below on the balcony. Luz sat on the bed. She was cool and fresh in the hot night.

Luz stayed on night duty for three months. They were glad to let her. When they operated on

him she prepared him for the operating table; and they had a joke about friend or enema. He

went under the anaesthetic holding tight on to himself so he would not blab about anything

during the silly, talky time. After he got on crutches he used to take the temperatures so Luz

would not have to get up from the bed. There were only a few patients, and they all knew about

it. They all liked Luz. As he walked back along the halls he thought of Luz in his bed.

Before he went back to the front they went into the Duomo and prayed. It was dim and quiet,

and there were other people praying. They wanted to get married, but there was not enough

time for the banns, and neither of them had birth certificates. They felt as though they were

married, but they wanted everyone to know about it, and to make it so they could not lose it.

Luz wrote him many letters that he never got until after the armistice. Fifteen came in a bunch

to the front and he sorted them by the dates and read them all straight through. They were all

about the hospital, and how much she loved him and how it was impossible to get along

without him and how terrible it was missing him at night.

After the armistice they agreed he should go home to get a job so they might be married. Luz

would not come home until he had a good job and could come to New York to meet her. It was

understood he would not drink, and he did not want to see his friends or anyone in the States.

Only to get a job and be married. On the train from Padua to Milan they quarreled about her not

being willing to come home at once. When they had to say good-bye, in the station at Milan,

they kissed good-bye, but were not finished with the quarrel. He felt sick about saying good-

bye like that.

He went to America on a boat from Genoa. Luz went back to Pordonone to open a hospital. It

was lonely and rainy there, and there was a battalion of arditi quartered in the town. Living in

the muddy, rainy town in the winter, the major of the battalion made love to Luz, and she had

never known Italians before, and finally wrote to the States that theirs had only been a boy and

girl affair. She was sorry, and she knew he would probably not be able to understand, but might

some day forgive her, and be grateful to her, and she expected, absolutely unexpectedly, to be

married in the spring. She loved him as always, but she realized now it was only a boy and girl

love. She hoped he would have a great career, and believed in him absolutely. She knew it was

for the best.

The major did not marry her in the spring, or any other time. Luz never got an answer to the

letter to Chicago about it. A short time after he contracted gonorrhea from a sales girl in a loop

department store while riding in a taxicab through Lincoln Park.