

DayOne

(p 3 – 18)

From Santiago's return from the eighty-fourth consecutive day without catching a fish to his dreams of lions on the beach

Summary

He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy.

Santiago, an old fisherman, has gone eighty-four days without catching a fish. For the first forty days, a boy named Manolin had fished with him, but Manolin's parents, who call Santiago *salao*, or "the worst form of unlucky," forced Manolin to leave him in order to work in a more prosperous boat. The old man is -wrinkled, splotched, and scarred from handling heavy fish on cords, but his eyes, which are the color of the sea, remain "cheerful and undefeated."

Having made some money with the successful fishermen, the boy offers to return to Santiago's skiff, reminding him of their previous eighty-seven-day run of bad luck, which culminated in their catching big fish every day for three weeks. He talks with the old man as they haul in Santiago's fishing gear and laments that he was forced to obey his father, who lacks faith and, as a result, made him switch boats. The pair stops for a beer at a terrace café, where fishermen make fun of Santiago. The old man does not mind. Santiago and Manolin reminisce about the many years the two of them fished together, and the boy begs the old man to let him provide fresh bait fish for him. The old man accepts the gift with humility. Santiago announces his plans to go "far out" in the sea the following day.

Manolin and Santiago haul the gear to the old man's shack, which is furnished with nothing more than the barest necessities: a bed, a table and chair, and a place to cook. On the wall are two pictures: one of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and one of the Virgin of Cobre, the patroness of Cuba. The old man has taken down the photograph of his wife, which made him "too lonely." The two go through their usual dinner ritual, in which the boy asks Santiago what he is going to eat, and the old man replies, "yellow rice with fish," and then offers some to the boy. The boy declines, and his offer to start the old man's fire is rejected. In reality, there is no food. Excited to read the baseball scores, Santiago pulls out a newspaper, which he says was given to him by Perico at the bodega. Manolin goes to get the bait fish and returns with some dinner as well, a gift from Martin, the café owner. The old man is moved by Martin's thoughtfulness and promises to repay the kindness. Manolin and Santiago discuss baseball. Santiago is a huge admirer of "the great DiMaggio," whose father was a fisherman. After discussing with Santiago the greatest ballplayers and the greatest baseball managers, the boy declares that Santiago is the greatest fisherman: "There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you." Finally, the boy leaves, and the old man goes to sleep. He dreams his sweet, recurring dream, of lions playing on the white beaches of Africa, a scene he saw from his ship when he was a very young man.

Day Two

(p 18 – 44)

From Santiago waking Manolin at the start of the eighty-fifth day since Santiago has caught a fish to Santiago's promise to kill the marlin before the day ends

Summary

*The old man hit him on the head for kindness and kicked him,
his body still shuddering, under the shade of the stern.*

The next morning, before sunrise, the old man goes to Manolin's house to wake the boy. The two head back to Santiago's shack, carry the old man's gear to his boat, and drink coffee from condensed milk cans. Santiago has slept well and is confident about the day's prospects. He and Manolin part on the beach, wishing each other good luck.

The old man rows steadily away from shore, toward the deep waters of the Gulf Stream. He hears the leaps and whirs of the flying fish, which he considers to be his friends, and thinks with sympathy of the small, frail birds that try to catch them. He loves the sea, though at times it can be cruel. He thinks of the sea as a woman whose wild behavior is beyond her control. The old man drops his baited fishing lines to various measured depths and rows expertly to keep them from drifting with the current. Above all else, he is precise.

The sun comes up. Santiago continues to move away from shore, observing his world as he drifts along. He sees flying fish pursued by dolphins; a diving, circling seabird; Sargasso weed, a type of seaweed found in the Gulf Stream; the distasteful purple Portuguese man-of-war; and the small fish that swim among the jellyfish-like creature's filaments. Rowing farther and farther out, Santiago follows the seabird that is hunting for fish, using it as a guide. Soon, one of the old man's lines goes taut. He pulls up a ten-pound tuna, which, he says out loud, will make a lovely piece of bait. He wonders when he developed the habit of talking to himself but does not remember. He thinks that if the other fishermen heard him talking, they would think him crazy, although he knows he isn't. Eventually, the old man realizes that he has sailed so far out that he can no longer see the green of the shore.

When the projecting stick that marks the top of the hundred-fathom line dips sharply, Santiago is sure that the fish tugging on the line is of a considerable size, and he prays that it will take the bait. The marlin plays with the bait for a while, and when it does finally take the bait, it starts to move with it, pulling the boat. The old man gives a mighty pull, then another, but he gains nothing. The fish drags the skiff farther into the sea. No land at all is visible to Santiago now.

All day the fish pulls the boat as the old man braces the line with his back and holds it taut in his hands, ready to give more line if necessary. The struggle goes on all night, as the fish continues to pull the boat. The glow given off by the lights of Havana gradually fades, signifying that the boat is the farthest from shore it has been so far. Over and over, the old man wishes he had the boy with him. When he sees two porpoises playing in the water, Santiago begins to pity his quarry, to consider it a brother. He thinks back to the time that he caught one of a pair of marlin: the male fish let the female take the bait, then he stayed by the boat, as though in mourning. Although the memory makes him sad, Santiago's determination is unchecked: as the marlin swims out, the old man goes "beyond all people in the world" to find him.

The sun rises and the fish has not tired, though it is now swimming in shallower waters. The old man cannot increase the tension on the line, because if it is too taut it will break and the

fish will get away. Also, if the hook makes too big a cut in the fish, the fish may get away from it. Santiago hopes that the fish will jump, because its air sacs would fill and prevent the fish from going too deep into the water, which would make it easier to pull out. A yellow weed attaches to the line, helping to slow the fish. Santiago can do nothing but hold on. He pledges his love and respect to the fish, but he nevertheless promises that he will kill his opponent before the day ends.

Analysis

As Santiago sets out on the eighty-fifth day, the reader witnesses the qualities that earn him Manolin's praise and dedication. The old man is an expert seaman, able to read the sea, sky, and their respective creatures like books that tell him what he needs to know. The flying fish, for instance, signal the arrival of dolphins, while, in Santiago's experience, the magnificent tug on the line can mean only one thing: a marlin—a type of large game fish that weighs hundreds of pounds. Unlike the fishermen he passes on his way into the deep waters of the gulf, Santiago exercises an unparalleled precision when fishing. He keeps his lines perfectly straight instead of letting them drift as the other fishermen do, which means that he always knows exactly how deep they are. Santiago's focus, his strength and resolve in the face of tremendous obstacles, as well as the sheer artistry with which he executes his tasks, mark him as a hero.

Day Three

(p 44-68)

From Santiago's encounter with the weary warbler to his decision to rest after contemplating the night sky

Summary

I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers.

A small, tired warbler (a type of bird) lands on the stern of the skiff, flutters around Santiago's head, then perches on the taut fishing line that links the old man to the big fish. The old man suspects that it is the warbler's first trip, and that it knows nothing of the hawks that will meet the warbler as it nears land. Knowing that the warbler cannot understand him, the old man tells the bird to stay and rest up before heading toward shore. Just then the marlin surges, nearly pulling Santiago overboard, and the bird departs. Santiago notices that his hand is bleeding from where the line has cut it.

Aware that he will need to keep his strength, the old man makes himself eat the tuna he caught the day before, which he had expected to use as bait. While he cuts and eats the fish with his right hand, his already cut left hand cramps and tightens into a claw under the strain of taking all the fish's resistance. Santiago is angered and frustrated by the weakness of his own body, but the tuna, he hopes, will reinvigorate the hand. As he eats, he feels a brotherly desire to feed the marlin too.

While waiting for the cramp in his hand to ease, Santiago looks across the vast waters and thinks himself to be completely alone. A flight of ducks passes overhead, and he realizes that it is impossible for a man to be alone on the sea. The slant of the fishing line changes,

indicating to the old fisherman that the fish is approaching the surface. Suddenly, the fish leaps magnificently into the air, and Santiago sees that it is bigger than any he has ever witnessed; it is two feet longer than the skiff itself. Santiago declares it “great” and promises never to let the fish learn its own strength. The line races out until the fish slows to its earlier pace. By noon, the old man’s hand is uncramped, and though he claims he is not religious, he says ten Hail Marys and ten Our Fathers and promises that, if he catches the fish, he will make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre. In case his struggle with the marlin should continue for another night, Santiago baits another line in hopes of catching another meal.

The second day of Santiago’s struggle with the marlin wears on. The old man alternately questions and justifies seeking the death of such a noble opponent. As dusk approaches, Santiago’s thoughts turn to baseball. The great DiMaggio, thinks the old man, plays brilliantly despite the pain of a bone spur in his heel. Santiago is not actually sure what a bone spur is, but he is sure he would not be able to bear the pain of one himself. (A bone spur is an outgrowth that projects from the bone.) He wonders if DiMaggio would stay with the marlin. To boost his confidence, the old man recalls the great all-night arm wrestling match he won as a young man. Having beaten “the great negro from Cienfuegos [a town in Cuba],” Santiago earned the title *El Campeón*, or “The Champion.”

Just before nightfall, a dolphin takes the second bait Santiago had dropped. The old man hauls it in with one hand and clubs it dead. He saves the meat for the following day. Although Santiago boasts to the marlin that he feels prepared for their impending fight, he is really numb with pain. The stars come out. Santiago considers the stars his friends, as he does the great marlin. He considers himself lucky that his lot in life does not involve hunting anything so great as the stars or the moon. Again, he feels sorry for the marlin, though he is as determined as ever to kill it. The fish will feed many people, Santiago decides, though they are not worthy of the creature’s great dignity. By starlight, still bracing and handling the line, Santiago considers rigging the oars so that the fish will have to pull harder and eventually tire itself out. He fears this strategy would ultimately result in the loss of the fish. He decides to “rest,” which really just means putting down his hands and letting the line go across his back, instead of using his own strength to resist his opponent.

After “resting” for two hours, Santiago chastises himself for not sleeping, and he fears what could happen should his mind become “unclear.” He butchers the dolphin he caught earlier and finds two flying fish in its belly. In the chilling night, he eats half of a fillet of dolphin meat and one of the flying fish. While the marlin is quiet, the old man decides to sleep. He has several dreams: a school of porpoises leaps from and returns to the ocean; he is back in his hut during a storm; and he again dreams of the lions on the beach in Africa.

Analysis

The narrator tells us that Santiago does not mention the hawks that await the little warbler because he thinks the bird will learn about them “soon enough.” Hemingway tempers the grimness of Santiago’s observation with Santiago’s feeling of deep connection with the warbler. He suggests that the world, though designed to bring about death, is a vast, interconnected network of life. Additionally, the warbler’s feeling of exhaustion and its ultimate fate—destruction by predators—mirror Santiago’s own eventual exhaustion and the marlin’s ravishment by sharks.

The brotherhood between Santiago and the surrounding world extends beyond the warbler. The old man feels an intimate connection to the great fish, as well as to the sea and stars. Santiago constantly pledges his love, respect, and sentiment of brotherhood to the marlin. For this reason, the fish’s death is not portrayed as senselessly tragic. Santiago, and seemingly Hemingway, feel that since death *must* come in the world, it is preferable that it come at the hands of a worthy opponent. The old man’s magnificence—the honor and humility with which he executes his task—elevates his struggle to a rarified, even transcendent level.

Skills that involved great displays of strength captured Hemingway's imagination, and his fiction is filled with fishermen, big-game hunters, bullfighters, prizefighters, and soldiers. Hemingway's fiction presents a world peopled almost exclusively by men—men who live most successfully in the world through displays of skill. In Hemingway's world, mere survival is not enough. To elevate oneself above the masses, one must master the rules and rituals by which men are judged. Time and again, we see Santiago displaying the art and the rituals that make him a master of his trade. Only *his* lines do not drift carelessly in the current; only *he* braves waters so far from shore.

Rules and rituals dominate the rest of the old man's life as well. When he is not thinking about fishing, his mind turns to religion or baseball. Because Santiago declares that he is not a religious man, his prayers to the Virgin of Cobre seem less an appeal to a supernatural divinity and more a habit that orders and provides a context for his daily experience. Similarly, Santiago's worship of Joe DiMaggio, and his constant comparisons between the baseball great and himself, suggest his preference for worlds in which men are measured by a clear set of standards. The great DiMaggio's reputation is secured by his superlative batting average as surely as Santiago's will be by an eighteen-foot marlin.

Even though Santiago doesn't consider himself a religious man, it is during his struggle with the marlin that the book becomes strongly suggestive of a Christian parable. As his struggle intensifies, Santiago begins to seem more and more Christ-like: through his pain, suffering, and eventual defeat, he will transcend his previous incarnation as a failed fisherman.

Hemingway achieves this effect by relying on the potent and, to many readers, familiar symbolism identified with Jesus Christ's life and death. The cuts on the old man's hands from the fishing line recall the stigmata—the crucifixion wounds of Jesus. Santiago's isolation, too, evokes that of Christ, who spent forty days alone in the wilderness. Having taken his boat out on the ocean farther than any other fisherman has ever gone, Santiago is beyond even the fringes of society.

Hemingway also unites the old man with marlin through Santiago's frequent expressions of his feeling of kinship. He thus suggests that the fate of one is the fate of the other. Although they are opponents, Santiago and the marlin are also partners, allies, and, in a sense, doubles. Thus, the following passage, which links the marlin to Christ, implicitly links Santiago to Christ as well:

"Christ, I did not know he was so big."

"I'll kill him though," [Santiago] said. "In all his greatness and his glory."

Santiago's expletive ("Christ") and the laudatory phrase "his greatness and his glory" link the fish's fate to Christ's. Because Santiago declares the marlin his "true brother," he implies that they share a common fate. When, later in the book, sharks attack the marlin's carcass, thereby attacking Santiago as well, the sense of alliance between the old man and the fish becomes even more explicit.

Day Four

(68 – 101)

From the marlin waking Santiago by jerking the line to Santiago's return to his shack

Summary

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty.

The marlin wakes Santiago by jerking the line. The fish jumps out of the water again and again, and Santiago is thrown into the bow of the skiff, facedown in his dolphin meat. The line feeds out fast, and the old man brakes against it with his back and hands. His left hand, especially, is badly cut. Santiago wishes that the boy were with him to wet the coils of the line, which would lessen the friction.

The old man wipes the crushed dolphin meat off his face, fearing that it will make him nauseated and he will lose his strength. Looking at his damaged hand, he reflects that “pain does not matter to a man.” He eats the second flying fish in hopes of building up his strength. As the sun rises, the marlin begins to circle. For hours the old man fights the circling fish for every inch of line, slowly pulling it in. He feels faint and dizzy and sees black spots before his eyes. The fish riots against the line, battering the boat with its spear. When it passes under the boat, Santiago cannot believe its size. As the marlin continues to circle, Santiago adds enough pressure to the line to bring the fish closer and closer to the skiff. The old man thinks that the fish is killing him, and admires him for it, saying, “I do not care who kills who.” Eventually, he pulls the fish onto its side by the boat and plunges his harpoon into it. The fish lurches out of the water, brilliantly and beautifully alive as it dies. When it falls back into the water, its blood stains the waves.

The old man pulls the skiff up alongside the fish and fastens the fish to the side of the boat. He thinks about how much money he will be able to make from such a big fish, and he imagines that DiMaggio would be proud of him. Santiago’s hands are so cut up that they resemble raw meat. With the mast up and the sail drawn, man, fish, and boat head for land. In his light-headed state, the old man finds himself wondering for a moment if he is bringing the fish in or vice versa. He shakes some shrimp from a patch of gulf weed and eats them raw. He watches the marlin carefully as the ship sails on. The old man’s wounds remind him that his battle with the marlin was real and not a dream.

An hour later, a mako shark arrives, having smelled the marlin’s blood. Except for its jaws full of talonlike teeth, the shark is a beautiful fish. When the shark hits the marlin, the old man sinks his harpoon into the shark’s head. The shark lashes on the water and, eventually, sinks, taking the harpoon and the old man’s rope with it. The mako has taken nearly forty pounds of meat, so fresh blood from the marlin spills into the water, inevitably drawing more sharks to attack. Santiago realizes that his struggle with the marlin was for nothing; all will soon be lost. But, he muses, “a man can be destroyed but not defeated.”

Santiago tries to cheer himself by thinking that DiMaggio would be pleased by his performance, and he wonders again if his hands equal DiMaggio’s bone spurs as a handicap. He tries to be hopeful, thinking that it is silly, if not sinful, to stop hoping. He reminds himself that he didn’t kill the marlin simply for food, that he killed it out of pride and love. He wonders if it is a sin to kill something you love. The shark, on the other hand, he does not feel guilty about killing, because he did it in self-defense. He decides that “everything kills everything else in some way.”

Two hours later, a pair of shovel-nosed sharks arrives, and Santiago makes a noise likened to the sound a man might make as nails are driven through his hands. The sharks attack, and Santiago fights them with a knife that he had lashed to an oar as a makeshift weapon. He enjoyed killing the mako because it was a worthy opponent, a mighty and fearless predator, but he has nothing but disdain for the scavenging shovel-nosed sharks. The old man kills them both, but not before they take a good quarter of the marlin, including the best meat. Again, Santiago wishes that he hadn’t killed the marlin. He apologizes to the dead marlin for having gone out so far, saying it did neither of them any good.

Still hopeful that the whole ordeal had been a dream, Santiago cannot bear to look at the mutilated marlin. Another shovel-nosed shark arrives. The old man kills it, but he loses his knife in the process. Just before nightfall, two more sharks approach. The old man’s arsenal has been reduced to the club he uses to kill bait fish. He manages to club the sharks into

retreat, but not before they repeatedly maul the marlin. Stiff, sore, and weary, he hopes he does not have to fight anymore. He even dares to imagine making it home with the half-fish that remains. Again, he apologizes to the marlin carcass and attempts to console it by reminding the fish how many sharks he has killed. He wonders how many sharks the marlin killed when it was alive, and he pledges to fight the sharks until he dies. Although he hopes to be lucky, Santiago believes that he “violated [his] luck” when he sailed too far out. Around midnight, a pack of sharks arrives. Near-blind in the darkness, Santiago strikes out at the sounds of jaws and fins. Something snatches his club. He breaks off the boat’s tiller and makes a futile attempt to use it as a weapon. When the last shark tries to tear at the tough head of the marlin, the old man clubs the shark until the tiller splinters. He plunges the sharp edge into the shark’s flesh and the beast lets go. No meat is left on the marlin. The old man spits blood into the water, which frightens him for a moment. He settles in to steer the boat, numb and past all feeling. He asks himself what it was that defeated him and concludes, “Nothing . . . I went out too far.” When he reaches the harbor, all lights are out and no one is near. He notices the skeleton of the fish still tied to the skiff. He takes down the mast and begins to shoulder it up the hill to his shack. It is terrifically heavy, and he is forced to sit down five times before he reaches his home. Once there, the old man sleeps.

Analysis

*You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after.
If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?*

The fantastical final stage of the old man’s fight with the fish brings two thematic issues to the fore. The first concerns man’s place in nature, the second concerns nature itself. It is possible to interpret Santiago’s journey as a cautionary tale of sorts, a tragic lesson about what happens when man’s pride forces him beyond the boundaries of his rightful, human place in the world. This interpretation is undermined, however, by the fact that Santiago finds the place where he is most completely, honestly, and fully himself only by sailing out farther than he ever has before. Indeed, Santiago has not left his true place; he has *found* it, which suggests that man’s greatest potential can be found in his return to the natural world from which modern advancements have driven him.

At one point, Santiago embraces his unity with the marlin, thinking, “You are killing me, fish . . . But you have a right to . . . brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.” This realization speaks to the novella’s theory of the natural world. As Santiago’s exhausting and near-endless battle with the marlin shows, his is a world in which life and death go hand in loving hand. Everything in the world must die, and according to Santiago, only a brotherhood between men—or creatures—can alleviate the grimness of that fact. The death of the marlin serves as a beautiful case in point, for as the fish dies it is not only transformed into something larger than itself, it is also charged with life: “Then the fish came alive, with his death in him.” In Hemingway’s conception of the natural world, beauty is deadly, age is strength, and death is the greatest instance of vitality.

Day Five

(p 102 – 105)

From Manolin bringing the old man coffee to the old man's return to sleep to dream, once again, about the lions

Summary

Early the next morning, Manolin comes to the old man's shack, and the sight of his friend's ravaged hands brings him to tears. He goes to fetch coffee. Fishermen have gathered around Santiago's boat and measured the carcass at eighteen feet. Manolin waits for the old man to wake up, keeping his coffee warm for him so it is ready right away. When the old man wakes, he and Manolin talk warmly. Santiago says that the sharks beat him, and Manolin insists that he will work with the old man again, regardless of what his parents say. He reveals that there had been a search for Santiago involving the coast guard and planes. Santiago is happy to have someone to talk to, and after he and Manolin make plans, the old man sleeps again. Manolin leaves to find food and the newspapers for the old man, and to tell Pedrico that the marlin's head is his. That afternoon two tourists at the terrace café mistake the great skeleton for that of a shark. Manolin continues to watch over the old man as he sleeps and dreams of the lions.

Given the depth of Santiago's tragedy—most likely Santiago will never have the opportunity to catch another such fish in his lifetime—*The Old Man and the Sea* ends on a rather optimistic note. Santiago is reunited with Manolin, who desperately wants to complete his training. All of the old man's noble qualities and, more important, the lessons he draws from his experience, will be passed on to the boy, which means the fisherman's life will continue on, in some form, even after his death. The promise of triumph and regeneration is supported by the closing image of the book. For the third time, Santiago returns to his dream of the lions at play on the African beaches. As an image that recalls the old man's youth, the lions suggest the circularity of life. They also suggest the harmony—the lions are, after all, playing—that exists between the opposing forces of nature.

The hope that Santiago clings to at the novella's close is not the hope that comes from naïveté. It is, rather, a hope that comes from experience, of something new emerging from something old, as a phoenix rises out of the ashes. The novella states as much when Santiago reflects that “a man can be destroyed but not defeated.” The destruction of the marlin is not a defeat for Santiago; rather, it leads to his redemption. Indeed, the fishermen who once mocked him now stand in awe of him. The decimation of the marlin, of course, is a significant loss. The sharks strip Santiago of his greater glory as surely as they strip the great fish of its flesh. But to view the shark attack as precipitating only loss is to see but half the picture. When Santiago says, “Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive,” he is pointing, once again, to the vast, necessary, and ever-shifting tension that exists between loss and gain, triumph and defeat, life and death.

In the final pages of the novella, Hemingway employs a number of images that link Santiago to Christ, the model of transcendence, who turned loss into gain, defeat into triumph, and even death into new life. Hemingway unabashedly paints the old man as a crucified martyr: as soon as the sharks arrive, the narrator comments that the noise Santiago made resembled the noise one would make “feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood.” The narrator's description of Santiago's return to town also recalls the crucifixion. As the old man struggles up the hill with his mast across his shoulders, the reader cannot help but recall Christ's march toward Calvary. Even the position in which he collapses on his bed—he sleeps facedown on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up—brings to mind the image of Christ suffering on the cross.