**The old man and the sea - Ernest Hemingway**

***General***

Title: The old man and the sea

Author: Ernest Hemingway

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***Contents***

*Summary*: For 84 days, the old fisherman Santiago has caught nothing. Alone, impoverished, and facing his own mortality, Santiago is now considered unlucky. So Manolin (Santiago's fishing partner until recently and the young man Santiago has taught since the age of five) has been constrained by his parents to fish in another, more productive boat. Every evening, though, when Santiago again returns empty-handed, Manolin helps carry home the old man's equipment, keeps him company, and brings him food.

On the morning of the 85th day, Santiago sets out before dawn on a three-day odyssey that takes him far out to sea. In search of an epic catch, he eventually does snag a marlin of epic proportions, enduring tremendous hardship to land the great fish. He straps the marlin along the length of his skiff and heads for home, hardly believing his own victory. Within an hour, a Mako shark attacks the marlin, tearing away a great hunk of its flesh and mutilating Santiago's prize. Santiago fights the Mako, enduring great suffering, and eventually kills it with his harpoon, which he loses in the struggle.

The great tear in the marlin's flesh releases the fish's blood and scent into the water, attracting packs of shovel-nosed sharks. With whatever equipment remains on board, Santiago repeatedly fights off the packs of these scavengers, enduring exhaustion and great physical pain, even tearing something in his chest. Eventually, the sharks pick the marlin clean. Defeated, Santiago reaches shore and beaches the skiff. Alone in the dark, he looks back at the marlin's skeleton in the reflection from a street light and then stumbles home to his shack, falling face down onto his cot in exhaustion.

The next morning, Manolin finds Santiago in his hut and cries over the old man's injuries. Manolin fetches coffee and hears from the other fisherman what he had already seen — that the marlin's skeleton lashed to the skiff is eighteen feet long, the greatest fish the village has known. Manolin sits with Santiago until he awakes and then gives the old man some coffee. The old man tells Manolin that he was beaten. But Manolin reassures him that the great fish didn't beat him and that they will fish together again, that luck doesn't matter, and that the old man still has much to teach him.

That afternoon, some tourists see the marlin's skeleton waiting to go out with the tide and ask a waiter what it is. Trying to explain what happened to the marlin, the waiter replies, "Eshark." But the tourists misunderstand and assume that's what the skeleton is. Back in his shack, with Manolin sitting beside him, Santiago sleeps again and dreams of the young lions he had seen along the coast of Africa when he was a young man.

*Setting:* In the beginning the story takes place in a fishing village near Havana on Cuba. When Santiago goes out to sea the story take place in the gulf stream of Mexico. There are no chapter breaks in the book, but the whole book covers five days. Day one is the start of the book until the old man falls asleep. The second day begins when the old man wakes up until sunrise of the next day. The third day begins at the sunrise until the old man dreams of the lions in his skiff. The fourth day begins when the old man wakes and ends when the old man gets back to his shack in the night. The fifth and final day begins when the boy sees Santiago in the morning and goes until the end of the book. The story speaks of Joe DiMaggio, of planes and radio’s, which means the story will have taken place between 1940 and 1950. The story is chronologically told.

*Title:* The story is about an old poor fisherman who goes out to sea every morning to catch fish. The man thought of the sea as *la mer,* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. And he did.

***Characters***

*Santiago:* the old man himself. He is gaunt and thin and deep with wrinkles in the back of his neck. Brown blotches of benevolent skin cancer on his cheeks. His hands have old deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the chords. Everything about him is old except his eyes which are the same colour as the sea and cheerful and undefeated. All his life he has been a fisherman and he is very experienced and wise. He loves the sea. In the book he fights the big marlin of eighteen feet. For the old man eating is an unpleasant but necessary activity. It is his means to strength. The strength he needs to catch the fish. There isn’t much development in the story. He gets new scars on his hands, but at the end of the book, when he has caught the fish, he goes to bed, dreaming once again of the lions. But his best days are behind him.

*Manolin:* a young man. He is a learner. Santiago teaches him how to fish. But because Santiago doesn’t have much luck, Manolin’s parents have commanded him to fish with fishermen with better luck. Manolin takes care of Santiago, he carries his fishing gear and he gives Santiago food and drinks. At the end of the story he gets the spear of the marlin.

*Marlin:* the marlin is the 5.5-meter-long fish that fights with Santiago. He is a strong and big fish, and Santiago has respect for him. The fish has a great fighting spirit, a big spear and has beautiful colour and stripes in the sun. He is so big that Santiago can’t get him in the boat, so he ‘swims’ alongside the boat. His carcass gets eaten by sharks when the old man reaches back to the coast.

***Form***

The story is narrative. The narrator sees what happens. He hears what the old man says and what he thinks. The story is told in short sentences. And there is a lot of monologue. For example, when the old man is talking to his own left hand. The story is mainly told by telling. There is not much to show anyway. Besides the fish their appearances it is just the sea and the water that the narrator can show. The narrator tells us what Santiago does and thinks and says.

***Theme and moral***

In the book a lot of themes come along. I think one can be summarised in the moral phrase ‘never give up’, or perhaps ‘keep hoping’.

* Perseverance: the old man keeps on going, he does never give up. He is determined to catch the fish, he says he will keep going until one of them dies. However, the fish has an equal determination and endurance as Santiago has. He has resolution.
  + ‘*"Fish," he said softly, aloud, "I’ll stay with you until I am dead." He’ll stay with me too, I suppose, the old man thought and he waited for it to be light.’*
* Isolation: the old man is lonely. His wife has passed away and he has a lot of bad luck. He only has the boy. He himself says a few times that he is isolated. On the sea when fighting the fish, he is all alone as well. Because he has bad luck he is forced into solitude, but he finds company in the creatures of the sea. He calls the fish his brothers.
  + *‘He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy’s parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally salao, which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week.’*
  + *‘He looked across the sea and knew how alone he was now. But he could see the prisms in the deep dark water and the line stretching ahead and the strange undulation of the calm. The clouds were building up now for the trade wind and he looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then blurring, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea.’*
  + *‘The fish is my friend too," he said aloud. "I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars.’ --* The man feels uneasy having to kill the fish, as it will push him further into isolation on the sea.
* Respect and reputation: He got respect for his physical strength when he won from the negro. But he doesn’t need respect of others to feel validated. He is also very noble. Santiago has a lot of respect for the fish he is fighting. He has respect for other people their skills, for example Joe DiMaggio and his baseball skills. The boy has respect for the old man. When reading the book, it came to my attention that the man is not at all arrogant, when he is fishing for the marlin he doesn’t feel superior. On the contrary, he keeps saying that the fish would easily be able to escape. The old man only has his tricks and intelligence.
  + *‘’Que va.’ the boy said. ‘There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you.’’ (Que va = no way)*
  + *‘For a long time after that everyone had called him The Champion and there had been a return match in the spring. But not much money was bet and he had won it quite easily since he had broken the confidence of the negro from Cienfuegos in the first match. After that he had a few matches and then no more. He decided that he could beat anyone if he wanted to badly enough and he decided that it was bad for his right hand for fishing. He had tried a few practice matches with his left hand. But his left hand had always been a traitor and would not do what he called on it to do and he did not trust it.’*
  + *‘You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.’*

***My opinion***

The book itself wasn’t that interesting. Of course, I started to root for the old man, I really did hope he would catch the fish. I wanted him to succeed after he had put so much time and effort and determination into catching the fish. Logically I felt bad for the man that after all they had been through the fish got eaten by so many sharks. The sharks in a way were the common enemy of the old man and the fish. Perhaps the author wanted to tell the reader that the journey matters more than the goal. I liked that the old man kept being so down to earth. He doesn’t place himself above anyone or anything. Because the book is just about the man fighting the fish on sea, the narrator tells the reader what the old man is thinking. The old man puts perspective on everything. I admire that.

At the end of the book, when the boy tells him he must rest and that they will fish together when he is back to full strength, the old man says to the boy that they must bring the things he missed when fighting the marlin. ‘*We must get a good killing lance and always have it on board.’* This might have something to do with experience. One learns through experience.

I find it more interesting to read analyses of the books afterwards. You learn a lot from analyses, things you yourself would never had noticed.

‘Ultimately taking people beyond themselves. Together, these images and allusions suggest a theme of transformation and a larger spiritual dimension possible in the human condition: Human beings can summon imaginative vision, as well as physical endurance, creating the capacity to withstand and even transcend hardships. The old man his image is his love for the young boy Manolin.’

‘Whether drawing his inspiration and confidence from religion, baseball, games of chance, memories of his own youth, his love for Manolin, or something else, Santiago knows how to keep alive in himself and others the hope, dreams, faith, absorption, and resolution essential to withstand suffering, transcend it, and ultimately transform one's self.’

‘Just as this realistic story tends toward allegory, Santiago and Manolin, as specific individuals, also can be seen as *archetypal* characters (universal representations inherited from the collective consciousness of our ancestors and the fundamental facts of human existence). Santiago is mentor, spiritual father, and the old man(*viejo*inSpanish) orold age; Manolin is pupil, son, and the boy (*chico* in Spanish) or youth. Many of their conversations have an element of ritual (such as the little fictions they engage in to preserve the old man's dignity — the food he says he has in his house, their talk of using the cast net they both know Santiago had to sell, their talk of borrowing some money for a lottery ticket, and so forth). Their conversations also have the rhythm and structure of a catechism or religious instruction. Manolin is Santiago's last and deepest human relationship; his replacement in the natural order; the one to whom he wishes to entrust his skill as a fisherman, the transforming power of his vision, and his memory.’

It is remarkable how a book of just a hundred pages can have so many deeper layers.

Although I wasn’t very impressed by the book, which tells the story of an old man and the sea, after reading analyses etc. I’m impressed by the amount of meaning a simple story like this can have. I recommend reading this book, IF you read the analyses afterwards as well.