

DAY FOUR

Summary From the marlin waking Santiago by jerking the line to Santiago's return to his shack 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 26 • The Old Man and the Sea 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 can't 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 28 • The Old Man and the Sea 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. The transformation that the fish undergoes upon its death anticipates the transformation that awaits Santiago in the novella's final pages. The old man's battle with the fish is marked by supreme pain and suffering, but he lives in a world in which extreme pain can be a source of triumph rather than defeat. The key to Santiago's triumph, as the end of the novel makes clear, is an almost martyrlike endurance, a quality that the old man knows and values. Santiago repeatedly reminds himself that physical pain does not matter to a man, and he urges himself to keep his head clear and to know how to suffer like a man. After the arrival of the mako shark, Santiago seems preoccupied with the notion of hope. Hope is shown to be a necessary component of endurance, so much so that the novella seems to suggest that endurance can be found wherever pain and hope meet. As Santiago sails on while the sharks continue to attack his catch, the narrator says that Santiago "was full of resolution but he had little hope"; later, the narrator comments, "He hit [the shark] without hope but with resolution." But without hope Santiago has reason neither to fight the sharks nor to return Day Four • 29 home. He soon realizes that it is silly not to hope, and he even goes so far as to consider it a sin. Ultimately, he overcomes the shark attack by bearing it. Poet Delmore Schwartz regards *The Old Man and the Sea* as a dramatic development in Hemingway's career because Santiago's "sober hope" strikes a sort of compromise between youthful naïveté and the jadedness of age. Before the novella, Hemingway had given the world heroes who lived either shrouded by illusions, such as Nick Adams in "Indian Camp," or crushed by disillusionment, such as Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*.