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老人与海

老人独自划着小船在墨西哥湾暖流^①钓鱼。整整八十四天过去了,他还是一条鱼也没逮着。头四十天里,有个男孩一直跟着他。可是过了四十天,老人还没抓到一条鱼,孩子的父母就对孩子说,老人如今准是倒霉透顶了,这个男孩子于是听从了他们的吩咐,上了另外一条船。这条船在头一个礼拜就捕到了三条大鱼。看着老人每天回来时船总是空的,孩子感到很难过。他总是走到岸边,帮老人拿成卷的渔线,或者渔钩和渔叉,还有绕在桅杆上的帆。老人用面粉袋的布片在帆上打满了补丁,帆收拢后看上去就像是一面永远失败的旗子。

老人消瘦而憔悴,脖颈上布满了深深的皱纹。腮帮上有些黄褐斑,一直从他脸的两侧蔓延下去,这是老人长时间在热带海洋上捕鱼时受太阳反光照射所造成的。他的双手被绳索磨出了一条条深深的伤疤,那是老人在对付大鱼时留下的。但是这些伤疤中没有一块是新的,它们像是沙漠中枯裂的岩石。

老人身上的一切都显得很苍老,除了他那双眼睛。它们像海水一样蓝,总是透着股乐观向上、永不服输的劲头。

“桑地亚哥爷爷!”当他俩从小船停靠的地方爬上岸时,孩子大声对他说,“我又可以和你一起去打鱼了。我在那条船上已经赚了一点儿钱了。”

老人一直在教孩子捕鱼,孩子很喜欢他。



“不，”老人说，“你上了一条运气不错的船。跟他们在一起吧。”

“但是您还记得有一次，您八十七天都没钓到一条鱼，后来连着三个礼拜，我们天天都抓到大鱼吗？”

“我当然记得。”老人说，“我知道，你不是因为信不过我才离开的。”

“是爸爸叫我走的。我是他儿子，不能不听他的话。”

“我明白，”老人说，“孩子应该听大人的话。”

“他对您没什么信心。”

“是啊，”老人说，“可是我们有信心，不是吗？”

“对！”孩子说，“我请您到露台餐馆喝杯啤酒，然后我们一起把打鱼的东西拿回去，好吗？”

“好啊，”老人说，“咱俩还说什么呢。”

他们坐在餐馆的露台上，不少年轻的渔夫拿老人开玩笑，老人并不生气。另外一些上了些年纪的渔夫看着他，感到很难受。不过他们并没有流露出来，只是有分寸地谈论着海流，谈他们放渔线的深度，谈多日来的好天气和他们的所见所闻。当天捕到鱼的渔民们都已回来，他们把大马林鱼剖开，整片儿平放在两块木板上，每块木板的一头由两个人抬着，摇摇晃晃地把鱼送到鱼仓里，在那里等冷藏车来把它们运往哈瓦那的市场出售。捕到鲨鱼的人们已把它们送到海湾另一边的鲨鱼加工厂里。在那里，人们用滑轮车把鲨鱼吊起来，挖出肝脏，割掉鱼鳍，剥下鱼皮，把鱼肉切成条状，以备腌制。

刮东风的时候，人们总能够闻到从隔着海湾的鲨鱼加工厂飘来的一股鱼腥味；但今天只有淡淡的一丝气味，因为风转了方向，最后渐渐停了。现在露台餐馆这边阳光明媚，让人感觉很舒服。

“桑地亚哥爷爷！”孩子叫道。

“嗯。”老人应了一声。他正握着酒杯，想着好多年前的事儿。

“我去给您准备好明天用的沙丁鱼好吗？”

“不用了，你去打棒球吧。我还划得了船，罗吉立奥会帮我撒网的。”

“可我很想去。要是我不能和您一起钓鱼，也让我做点别的事吧。”

“你已经请我喝了啤酒了呀。”老人感谢道，“你都是个男子汉了。”

“您第一次带我上船时，我几岁呀？”

“五岁。还记得那次我捕的那条鱼吗？它又大又壮，差点把咱们的船撞个粉碎，你也差一点送了小命。”

“我记得鱼尾巴噼啪噼啪地拍打着，船上的座板都给打断了，船上的木棍也当当地响。我记得您怕我摔出去，还把我推倒在船头那堆湿漉漉的渔线上。我感到整条船都在摇晃，而您用棍子打鱼时发出的啪啪响声，就像在砍树。鱼血溅了我一身，弄得我浑身上下都是甜丝丝的血腥味儿。”

“是你自己记得那回事儿，还是我刚跟你说过？”

“从我们头一回一起出海到现在，我可什么事儿都记得清清楚楚。”

老人用他那双有着晒斑的眼睛看着孩子，眼里充满了信任和慈爱。

“要是你是我的孩子，我准会带你出去闯一闯。”他说，“可你是你爸妈的孩子，你还搭上了一条运气不错的船。”

“我去弄沙丁鱼来好吗？我知道上哪儿可以去弄四条鱼饵来。”



“我还有几条，今天用剩的。我把它们放在盒子里腌起来了。”

“那让我给您弄四条新鲜的来吧。”

“一条就够了。”老人说。他的希望和信心从没消失过。现在又像被微风吹过，更清晰了。

“两条。”孩子说。

“好吧，那就两条吧。”老人同意了，“你不是偷来的吧？”

“我会去偷，那样也省事了。”孩子说，“不过这些是买来的。”

“谢谢你啦。”老人说。他心地单纯，从来不会去想自己什么时候有了这样的谦卑。可是他知道这时自己很谦卑，也知道这并不丢脸，所以没觉得自己的自尊心受了什么伤害。

“看这海流，明天准是个好日子。”他说道。

“您打算上哪儿？”孩子问。

“去很远的地方，等风向变了我再回来。我想明天天不亮就出发。”

“那让我让船主也到很远的地方去打鱼，”孩子说，“这样，要是您钓到真正的大鱼，我们可以赶去帮您的忙。”

“他可不愿意到很远的地方去打鱼。”

“是啊，”孩子说，“不过我会看见一些他看不见的东西，比如说有只鸟儿在很远的海那边飞，我就知道那里有鲭鳅^②了，然后我会让他把船开到您那边。”

“他眼睛那么差吗？”

“简直都快瞎了。”

“这可怪了，”老人说，“他可从来没捕过海龟。捕龟才伤眼睛呢。”

“您不是在莫斯基托海岸^③抓了好多年海龟吗，您的眼睛不是还很好吗？”

“我跟他们可不一样，我是个怪老头。”

“不过要是现在您抓到一条真正的大鱼，还有力气对付它吗？”

“我想还有的。再说抓鱼光有力气可不行，还要有很多窍门呢。”

“我们把东西拿回去吧，”孩子说，“那样我就可以拿了渔网去抓沙丁鱼了。”

他们从船上拿起打鱼的工具。老人把桅杆扛上肩头，孩子提着木箱，木箱里盘放着编得很结实的褐色渔线、渔钩和带柄的渔叉。装鱼饵的盒子和木棒一起留在船尾下面。要是钓到大鱼，得先把它拖到船边，再用木棒把鱼砸昏。尽管谁也不会来偷老人的东西，不过老人想还是把桅杆和那些粗渔线带回家去好。一来时间长了，露水会伤了这些东西；二来，虽然老人确信当地人不会来偷他的东西，但他想，把渔钩和渔叉留在船上对别人来说总是不必要的诱惑。

他们一起顺着上坡路走到了老人的棚屋。棚屋的门敞开着，他们走了进去。老人把绕着帆的桅杆靠在墙上，孩子把木箱和其他东西搁在一旁。桅杆的长度差不多就是整间棚屋的高度。棚屋是用大椰子树的坚韧的树叶编织搭建而成的。屋里有一张床、一张桌子、一把椅子，还有搭在泥地上的一个烧木炭的土灶。

四面棕色的墙壁是用那种纤维特别结实的压平了的棕树叶叠盖而成的。墙上有一幅彩色的耶稣圣心图和另一幅科夫莱圣母图。这都是他妻子的遗物。原先墙上一直挂着一幅他妻子的上了色的照片，但他把它取下了，因为每次看到它总感觉自己太孤单了，它现在被放在了屋角的架子上，上面盖了一件干净衬衫。



“您今天吃什么呢？”孩子问道。

“有锅鱼煮黄米饭。要来点吗？”

“不，我回家去吃。要我给您生火吗？”

“不用了，一会儿我自己来。或者我就干脆吃冷的算了。”

“我把渔网拿去好吗？”

“当然可以。”

其实并没有什么渔网，孩子记得他们是什么时候把它卖掉的。但他们每天总要说一下这种谎话。其实也没有什么鱼煮黄米饭，这一点孩子也知道。

“八十五是个吉利的数字。”老人说，“你想不想我抓一条收拾干净了还有一千多磅重的鱼？”

“当然想喽。我拿渔网去捞沙丁鱼。您坐在门口晒晒太阳吧？”

“好。我有张昨天的报纸，我来看看棒球赛的消息吧。”

孩子不知道昨天的报纸是不是也是编出来的，但是老人真把它从床下取出来了。

“佩里科在酒店给我的。”他解释说。

“我抓了沙丁鱼就回来。我要把您的鱼跟我的一起用冰冷冻起来，明天早上我们就可以分着用了。等我回来了，您跟我讲讲棒球赛的事情。”

“扬基队^④不会输。”

“可是我怕克利夫兰印第安人队会赢。”

“相信扬基队吧，孩子。别忘了那个厉害的狄马吉奥。”

“可我觉得底特律老虎队和克利夫兰印第安人队都很厉害呀。”

“这样可不行，要不然连辛辛那提红队和芝加哥白短袜队，你都要害怕了。”

“您先看报吧，等我回来了给我讲讲。”

“你看我们要不要去买张尾数是八十五的彩票？明天是第八十五天了。”

“好啊，”孩子说，“不过您上次的纪录是八十七天，买张八十七的怎么样？”

“这种事儿可不会发生两次。你看你能弄到一张尾数是八十五的吗？”

“我可以订一张。”

“订一张，这可要两块半呢！我们向谁去借这笔钱呢？”

“没问题。我总能借到两块半的。”

“我想说不准我也借得到。不过我能不借就不借。记住，你先是借钱，接着就要讨饭啰。”

“穿得暖和点，老爷爷。”孩子说，“别忘了，现在可是九月了。”

“没错，正是大鱼上钩的时候。”老人说，“五月里倒是人人都能做个好渔夫。”

“我现在就去抓沙丁鱼。”孩子说。

孩子回来的时候，老人在椅子上睡熟了，太阳已经下山。孩子从床上掀起一条旧军毯，铺在椅背上，裹住老人的双肩。老人的两个肩膀挺奇怪的，虽然经历了这么多岁月，却依然很强壮，脖子也依然很有力。老人睡着的时候，脑袋向前耷拉着，皱纹也不大明显了。他的衬衫上打了太多的补丁，看上去就像他那张帆一样。这些补丁被太阳晒得褪成了深一块、浅一块的。老人的脸显得非常苍老，眼睛闭上了，脸上就显得毫无生气。报纸摊在膝盖上，靠他一条胳膊压着才没被晚风吹走。他光着脚。

孩子离开了小屋，没有叫醒老人。等他回来时，老人还熟睡着。



老人与海

“醒醒，老爷爷。”孩子把手放在老人的一个膝盖上叫醒他。

老人睁开眼睛，过了好一会儿神志才好像从老远的地方回来。随后他笑了。

“你拿了什么过来？”他问。

“晚饭，”孩子说，“我们来吃吧。”

“我还不太饿。”

“快点吃吧。您可不能光打鱼，不吃饭呀。”

“我倒真这样干过。”老人说着，站起身来，捡起报纸，把它折好。接着他开始叠毯子。

“把毯子裹在身上吧。”孩子说，“只要我在，我就决不会让您饿着肚子去打鱼。”

“那么我可要保佑你长命百岁了，不过你要先照顾好自己。”老人说，“我们吃什么？”

“黑豆饭、油炸香蕉，还有些炖菜。”

孩子用了个双层金属饭盒装着饭菜，从露台餐馆走着拿到这里。他口袋里还装了两副刀叉和汤匙，每一副都用餐巾纸包着。

“这是谁给你的？”

“马丁。那个老板。”

“我一定要谢谢他。”

“我已经谢过他啦，”孩子说，“你不用去谢他了。”

“那我要给他一块大鱼肚子上的肉，”老人说，“他这样帮我们可不止一次了吧？”

“我想是的。”

“这样的话，除了鱼肚子肉，我还得再送他些东西。他那样关心我们。”

“他还送了两瓶啤酒。”

“我最喜欢罐装的啤酒。”

“我知道。不过这是瓶装的，哈图伊牌啤酒，我还得把瓶子送回去。”

“你想得真周到，”老人说，“那我们开始吃吧？”

“我可一直在问您哪，”孩子温和但又略带埋怨地对他说，“不等您准备好，我可不愿意打开饭盒。”

“好，那现在我准备好啦，”老人说，“我只不过是要点时间洗洗手脸。”

您上哪儿去洗呢？孩子想。村里的水龙头要沿着小路走两条街。我该把水带到这儿让他用的，孩子想，还应该带块肥皂和一条好一点的毛巾来。我怎么这么粗心大意呢？我还应该再弄件衬衫和一件过冬的夹克衫，还要一双鞋子什么的，并且再给他弄条毯子来。

“你带来的炖菜真好吃。”老人夸道。

“给我讲讲棒球赛吧。”孩子请求道。

“就像我跟你说的，美国联赛^⑤总是扬基队的天下。”老人兴高采烈地说。

“但他们今天输了。”孩子告诉他。

“这算不了什么，那个了不起的狄马吉奥又恢复他的本色了。”

“他们队里还有别的好手哪。”

“那当然了。不过有了他就是不一样。在另一个联赛中，布鲁克林队和费城队打比赛，我相信布鲁克林队。不过话得说回来，我可没有忘记迪克·西斯勒和他在老公园^⑥里打出的那些好球。”

“这些好球别人可从来没有打出过。我见过的击球中，他打得最远。”



“你还记得他过去常来露台餐馆吗？我想和他一起出海钓鱼，可是那时我不敢开口问他。后来我让你去，可你也不敢。”

“我记得。我们可真是犯了个大错。他很可能就跟我们一起出海了。那样，我们就可以一辈子回忆这件事了。”

“我真想和那个了不起的狄马吉奥去钓鱼。”老人说，“人家说他父亲也是个打鱼的，说不准他当时也像我们现在这么穷，也许他会明白我们是怎么想的。”

“那个了不起的西斯勒的爸爸可没过过什么穷日子，他爸爸像我这么大的时候已经在联赛里打球了。”

“我像你这么大的时候，已经是个水手了，我跟了一条横帆船去了非洲。那时候经常见到傍晚时到海滩上休息的狮子呢。”

“我知道。您跟我谈起过。”

“我们来谈非洲还是谈棒球？”

“我看我们还是谈棒球吧，”孩子说，“跟我说说那个了不起的约翰·J. 麦格劳吧。”

“以前，他有时候也到露台餐馆来。可是他一喝了酒，就会发脾气，说话特别冲，很难相处。他老想着棒球，也老想着赌马。至少他口袋里总是装着赛马的名单，还一个劲地在电话里说着马匹的名字。”

“他真是个伟大的球队经理，”孩子说，“我爸爸认为他是最伟大的。”

“这是因为他来这儿的次数最多吧，”老人说，“要是多罗彻每年老是来这儿，你爸爸就会认为他是最伟大的经理了。”

“说真的，谁是最伟大的经理，卢克还是迈克·冈萨雷斯？”

“我想他们不相上下。”

“而最好的渔夫是您。”

“不。我可知道有不少比我强的。”

“才不是呢！”孩子说，“好渔夫是很多，有些也很了不起。不过，最棒的只有您。”

“谢谢你。你说得真让我高兴。我希望到时不要真来一条大鱼，叫我对付不了，那样你我就都讲错了。”

“没有那种鱼的，只要您还像您说得那样强壮。”

“我也许不像我想得那样强壮了，”老人说，“不过我倒知道不少钓鱼的窍门，而且我有决心。”

“现在您该去睡觉了，这样明早您才会有精神。我把这些餐具拿到露台餐馆去。”

“那么祝你晚安。早上我去叫醒你。”

“您是我的闹钟。”孩子说。

“我的闹钟就是我这把年纪，”老人说，“为什么老头儿醒得特别早？难道是想多拥有一点时间吗？”

“是这样的吗？”孩子说，“我只知道我们男孩子睡得沉，起得晚。”

“我记在心上了，”老人说，“我会准时去叫醒你的。”

“我可不愿让船主人来叫醒我。这样好像我不如他了。”

“我明白。”

“睡个好觉，老爷爷。”

孩子走出屋去。他们刚才吃饭的时候，桌上没点灯。老人脱了长裤，摸黑上了床。他把长裤卷起来做了个枕头，把那张报纸塞在里头。然后把自己裹在毯子里面，在铺着其他旧报纸的弹簧垫上睡下了。

一会儿他就睡着了。他梦见了少年时候见到的非洲，长长的金色海滩和白色海滩，白得都刺眼，还有高耸的海岬和褐色的大山。现在他每天晚上都回到那个海岸边。在梦里听着海浪拍打海岸发出的隆隆声，看见土著人驾着船，穿浪而行。睡着时他



闻到了甲板上柏油和用来填塞船缝的麻絮的味道，还闻到了早晨清风吹来的非洲泥土的芬芳。

通常他一闻到泥土的气味，就会醒过来，然后穿上衣服去叫醒那孩子。但是今天晚上泥土的气味来得很早，他在梦中知道时候还早，就继续把梦做下去。他看见了群岛的白色顶峰从海面上缓缓升起，接着又梦到了加那利群岛^①的各个港湾和船只抛锚停泊的地方。

现在老人不再梦见风暴，不再梦见女人，不再梦见什么国家大事，不再梦见大鱼，不再梦见打架，也不再梦见跟别人比手劲，更不再梦见他的妻子。如今他只梦到一些地方和海滩上的狮子。那些狮子在暮色中就像小猫一样戏耍着。他爱它们，如同爱那孩子一样。但他从没梦到过那孩子。他醒了过来，朝敞开的门外边看看月亮，展开长裤穿上。他在棚屋外面撒了尿，然后顺着小路往上走去叫醒孩子。清晨的寒风吹来，他冻得直哆嗦。但他知道哆嗦一阵后会感到暖和，再说过会儿他就要划船出海了。

孩子住的那间房子的门没有上锁。他推开门，光着脚悄悄地走了进去。孩子在外间的一张帆布床上熟睡着。靠着外面射进来的残余的月光，老人能清楚地看见他。他轻轻握住孩子的一只脚，直到孩子醒了过来。孩子转过脸看了一眼老人，老人点点头。孩子就从床边椅子上拿起他的长裤，坐在床沿上把裤子穿好。

老人走出门去，孩子就跟在他身后。看着孩子昏昏欲睡的样子，老人用胳膊搂住他的肩膀说：“真对不起。”

“没关系！”孩子说，“我可是男子汉了。”

他们顺着小路朝老人的棚屋走去。一路上黑灯瞎火的，他们看到有些光着脚的男人已出门了，肩上扛着他们船上的桅杆。

到了老人的棚屋后，孩子拿起装在篮子里的渔线圈，还有渔叉和渔钩，而老人则把绕着帆的桅杆扛在肩上。

“想喝咖啡吗？”孩子问。

“等我们把这些东西放到船里再喝吧。”

他们在一家专门给渔夫供应早餐的小餐馆里，喝着盛在炼乳罐头里的咖啡。

“您睡得好吗，老爷爷？”孩子问。他现在慢慢地醒了过来，虽然要他完全摆脱困倦还不太容易。

“睡得很好，马诺林。”老人说，“今天我觉得很有把握，我准能钓到大鱼。”

“我也一样，”孩子说，“现在我该去拿我们用的沙丁鱼了，还有您的新鲜鱼饵。他（指船主人）总是自己拿捕鱼的东西，从来都不要别人帮他拿。”

“我们可不一样，”老人说，“你五岁时我就让你帮忙拿东西了。”

“我记得。”孩子说，“我一会儿就回来。再喝杯咖啡吧。在这儿我们可以先欠着。”

他光着脚踩着珊瑚石铺成的小路，朝放鱼饵的冷藏库走去。

老人慢腾腾地喝着咖啡。这是他今天一整天的饮食，他知道应该把它喝了。好久以来，一直到现在，吃饭都让他感到厌烦，所以他出海钓鱼从不带午饭。他在小船的船头上放了一瓶水，而那就够他喝一整天的了。

孩子带着沙丁鱼和两份包在报纸里的鱼饵回来了。他们顺着小径朝小船走去，脚下是嵌着鹅卵石的沙滩。到了岸边，他们抬起小船，把它滑进了水里。

“祝您好运，老爷爷。”

“也祝你好运。”老人说。他把桨上的绳圈套在桨座的木桩



老人与海

上,身子朝前靠着,以抵消船桨在水中遇到的阻力。在黑暗中老人慢慢地划出海港。其他海滩上也有船只在出海,现在月亮已落到了山背后,他看不清他们,但老人听得到他们的桨落水和划动的声音。

偶尔从远处一条船上会传来说话声。但是除了桨声外,大多数船只都寂静无声。它们一出港口就分散开来,每一条船都驶向指望能捕到鱼的那片海面。老人知道自己要划到很远的地方,所以把陆地的气息远远地抛在后面,划进清晨清新的大海的气息中。他划过海里的某一片水域,看见水里果囊马尾藻闪出的磷光,渔夫们管这片水域叫“大井”,因为那儿水深突然达到七百英寻^⑧。海流撞击在海底深渊的峭壁上,激起了旋涡,各种鱼类都聚集在那儿。那儿还聚集着海虾和作鱼饵用的小鱼。在那些深不可测的水底洞穴里,有时还有成群的鱿鱼,它们在夜间浮到紧靠海面的地方,所有在那儿转悠的鱼类都拿它们当食物。

老人在黑暗中感觉到早晨的到来,他一边划一边听见飞鱼跳出水面时的颤抖声,还有它们在黑暗中跃到空中时挺直鱼鳍所发出的滋滋声。他非常喜欢飞鱼,把它们当作在海洋上最主要的朋友。他替鸟儿伤心,尤其是那些柔弱的黑色小燕鸥,它们总是在飞翔,在觅食,但几乎从没找到过,于是他想,鸟儿的生活过得比我们人类还要艰难,除了那些猛禽和又大又壮的鸟。既然海洋这样残暴,为什么还要让那些像海燕这样的鸟儿生来就那么柔弱纤巧?大海是善良美丽的,然而她也能变得那么残暴,坏脾气来得那么突然,使得这些在空中飞翔觅食的鸟儿,飞到高处又落到海面,发出微弱的哀鸣,柔弱得难以在海上生存。

他每想到大海,总是称她为 la mar,这是人们怀着爱意用西班牙语对大海的称呼。有时候,对大海怀着爱意的人们也会说她的坏话,不过他们说的时候总是把她当女性看待的。有些年

轻的渔夫,拿浮标当渔线上的浮子,用卖鲨鱼肝赚得的好多钱买了汽艇。他们都管海洋叫 el mar,这是把大海当作男性的说法。他们提起大海时,把他比作一个竞争者或是一个地方,甚至是一个敌人。可是老人总是把海洋看成是女的:海洋有的时候赐予人们莫大的恩惠,但有的时候又拒绝给予哪怕一丁点儿的施舍。如果她干出了任性或缺德的事儿来,那是因为她拿自己没办法。月亮会影响她,就如同月亮会左右一个女人的情绪那样,老人这样想。

他稳稳地划着,一点也不吃力,因为他把船很好地控制在平常的速度之内,而且除了水流偶尔有个旋涡,海面一直平静得像面镜子。他正借着水流划完三分之一的路程时,天渐渐亮了,他发现这会儿自己已经划得比预期的远了。

我在这海底的深渊上已忙活了一个礼拜了,可还是一无所获,他想。今天,我一定要找到那些鲣鱼和长鳍金枪鱼群的藏身之处,说不定还有条大鱼跟它们在一起呢。

不等天色大亮,他就放下了一个个鱼饵,让它们随着海流漂出去。第一个鱼饵下沉到四十英寻的深处,第二个在七十五英寻的深处,第三个和第四个分别在—百英寻和—百二十五英寻的蓝色海水中。每个鱼饵都是头朝下挂着的,渔钩的钩身穿在小鱼的身子里面,扎好并缝牢,渔钩所有的凸出部分、弯钩和尖端,都藏在由新鲜沙丁鱼做的鱼饵里。每条沙丁鱼都用渔钩穿过双眼,这样鱼的身子在凸出的钢钩上形成了半个环形。不管大鱼碰到渔钩的哪一部分,都是香喷喷、美滋滋的。

孩子给了老人两条新鲜的小金枪鱼,它们像铅垂一样挂在那两根放得最深的渔线上。在另外两根渔线上,他挂上了一条蓝色大鲑鱼和一条黄色金银鱼,虽然已被用过了,但样子还是挺好的,而且还有很棒的沙丁鱼给它们增添香味和吸引力。每根



渔线都像一枝大铅笔那么粗，一端被缠在一根青皮钓竿上。这样，只要鱼稍微在鱼饵上拉一下或碰一下，钓竿梢头就会朝下弯曲，而每根渔线有两盘四十英寻长的线圈，它们可以与其他备用的线圈牢牢地系在一起，这么一来，如果用得着的话，一条鱼可以拉出三百多英寻长的渔线。

现在老人紧盯着那三个伸出在小船一边的钓鱼竿头，看看有没有什么动静，一边轻轻地划着船，使渔线保持垂直，让鱼饵停留在适当的水底深处。天已经放亮了，太阳随时都会升起来。

太阳发生微弱的光线，从海那边升起，老人这时看得见其他的船只了。那些船船身低低地挨着水面，离海岸不远，和海流的方向垂直地散落着。接着太阳越发明亮了，耀眼的光芒照射在水面上，随后当太阳完全升起时，平坦如镜的海面把阳光反射到他眼睛里，让他感到剧烈的刺痛，他顾自划着，不朝太阳看了。他俯视水中，好像要把水底看穿似的注视着那几根一直下垂到蓝得发黑的深水里的渔线。他把渔线下垂得比任何人都直，这样，在湾流深处的每个不同的深度，都会有一个鱼饵刚好在他所希望的地方等待着游到那儿去觅食的鱼。别的渔夫就让渔线随着水流漂来漂去，有时候他们以为渔线在一百英寻的深处，但实际上渔线只不过在六十英寻的地方。

不过，他想，我总是把它们放在很精确的地方。只不过我的运气不好罢了。可是谁又说得准呢？说不定今天好运就来了。每一天可都是一个崭新的日子。走运当然是好，不过我宁愿做到一丝都不差。这样，运气来的时候，我就有备无患了。

两小时过去后，太阳也升得更高了，他朝东望时阳光已不那么刺眼了。眼前只有三条船，它们显得特别低矮，远远地停在靠岸的海面上。

我这一辈子，眼睛老是被早上的太阳刺痛，他想。不过幸好

我的眼睛还是好好的。傍晚时，我还可以直望着太阳，不会有眼前发黑的感觉。事实上西落的太阳光要厉害一点，只不过在早上它叫人觉得眼痛。

就在这时，他看见一只黑色的军舰鸟，展开着它那对又长又黑的翅膀在他前方的空中盘旋飞翔。它倏地斜着后掠的双翅俯冲，然后又盘旋起来。

“它一定是发现什么东西啦，”老人大声说道，“它可不是随便看看就罢了的。”

他慢慢地稳稳地朝鸟儿盘旋的地方划去。他并不匆忙，仍然让那些渔线保持上下笔直。不过他还是朝海流靠近了一点儿，这样，他依然在用正确的方式钓鱼，尽管他的速度要比他不打算利用鸟儿来指路时来得快。

军舰鸟在空中飞得更高了，又盘旋起来，双翅纹丝不动。它随即猛地俯冲下来，老人看见飞鱼从海里跃出，在海面上拼命地逃窜。

“鲛鳅，”老人大声喊道，“大鲛鳅。”

他把双桨从桨架上取下，从船头下面拿出一根细渔线。渔线上系着一段金属线，下面系着一只中号渔钩，他拿了一条沙丁鱼挂在上面。他把渔线从船边放到水里，将上端紧系在船尾一只拳头螺栓上。接着他在另一根渔线上安上了鱼饵，把它盘绕着搁在船头的阴影里。他重新划起船来，注视着那只此刻正在水面上低低飞掠的长翅黑鸟。

他看到那鸟儿又朝下冲了，为了俯冲，它的翅膀后掠，然后猛地展开，追赶着那些飞鱼，可是没有成功。老人看见那些大鲛鳅跟在那脱逃的鱼后面，把海面弄得起了微小的波澜。鲛鳅在飞掠的鱼下面破水而行，只等飞鱼一掉下，就飞快地潜入水里。这群鲛鳅真大啊，他想。它们散得这么开，飞鱼基本上没有脱逃



的机会。那只鸟也没有什么机会，飞鱼对它来说太大了，而且又飞得太快，它很难抓住它们。

老人看着飞鱼一次又一次地从水里蹿出来，还有那只鸟儿接二连三地失败。那群鲱鳅可能已经从我附近逃走啦，他想。它们逃得太快，游得太远啦。不过说不定我能逮住一条掉队的，说不准我要的大鱼就在它们周围转悠着。我的大鱼一定就在某个地方。

陆地上空的云朵这时像连绵的山峰般耸立着，海岸只剩下一条长长的绿色的线，背后是些青灰色的小山。海水此刻变成深蓝色了，深得简直发紫。他仔细俯看着海水，只见深蓝色的海水中闪现出点点红色的浮游生物，阳光在水中变幻出奇异的色彩。他注视着那几根渔线，看见它们一直朝下沉到水中看不见的地方。他很高兴看到这么多浮游生物，因为这说明附近有鱼。太阳此刻升得更高了，阳光在水中变幻出奇异的色彩，这说明天气晴朗，上空的云朵的形状也说明了这一点。可是那只鸟儿这时几乎看不见了，水面上也没什么东西，只有几簇被太阳晒得发白的黄色马尾藻和一只紧靠着船舷浮动的僧帽水母，它那胶质状的浮囊呈紫色，有一定的外形，闪现出彩虹般的颜色。它倾向一边，然后又竖直了身子。它像个大气泡般欢快地浮动着，那些拖在身后的厉害的紫色长触须隐在水中，长达一码。

“水母，”老人骂道，“你这坏蛋养的。”

他轻轻地荡着桨，低头朝水中望去，看见一些颜色跟那些拖在水中的触须一样的小鱼，它们在触须中间和浮囊浮动时所投下的一小片阴影中游来游去。它们天生就不受水母触须上的毒素影响。可是人就不一样了，当老人把一条鱼拉到船上时，有些触须就会缠在渔线上，紫色的黏液附在上面，触碰到的胳膊和手上就会出现伤痕和肿块，就像被有毒常春藤或有毒橡树弄伤

时一样。但是这水母的毒性发作得更快，痛起来像被鞭子抽似的。

这些闪着彩虹般颜色的大气泡特别好看，但它们正是海里最欺骗人的东西，老人最喜欢看到大海龟把它们吃掉。海龟一发现它们，就从正面向它们逼近，然后闭上眼睛，这样，身体就完全被自己的壳保护起来了，接着就把水母连同触须一起吃掉。老人喜欢看着海龟把它们吃掉，喜欢在风暴过后看到它们被冲到海滩上，更喜欢听到自己用长着老茧的硬脚掌踩在它们上面时发出啪的爆裂的声音。

他喜欢绿色的海龟和玳瑁，它们样子优雅，游泳速度很快，又可以卖个好价钱。他还对那些又大又笨的红海龟抱着不怀恶意的轻蔑，它们有着黄色的甲壳和奇特的交配方式，遇上僧帽水母就高兴地闭上眼睛把它们吃掉。

他出海捕海龟已经有些年头了，所以觉得海龟一点也不神秘。他替所有的海龟伤心，不管是那些小海龟，还是那些跟小船一样长、重达一吨的大海龟。大多数人对海龟都残酷无情，因为一只海龟被剖开杀死之后，它的心脏还要跳动好几个钟头。而老人想，我也有这样一颗心脏，我的手脚也跟它们的一样。他吃白色的海龟蛋来增加力气。整个五月他一直吃这种蛋，以便到九、十月份能身强力壮地对付那些真正的大鱼。

他还每天从一只大圆桶里舀起一杯鲨鱼肝油喝到肚子里。这些圆桶就在许多渔夫存放捕鱼工具的棚屋里。谁想喝了，就可以随便舀点喝喝。不过大多数渔夫厌恶这种鱼肝油的腥味。但转面一想，比起摸黑起早，喝这鱼肝油也就不怎么叫人难受了，再说它对防治一切伤风流感都非常有效，对眼睛也很有好处。

老人这时抬眼望去，看见那只鸟儿又在盘旋了。



“它找到鱼啦。”他喊道。这时没有一条飞鱼破水而出，也没有见到有小鱼四处逃窜。然而过了一会儿，老人看见一条小金枪鱼跃到空中，转了个身，头朝下钻进了水里。这条金枪鱼在阳光照射下闪出银白色的光，等它回到了水里，只见又有些金枪鱼一条接一条地跃出水面，跳向四面八方，跳得很远去追逐那些小鱼，搅得海水都翻腾了起来。它们绕着小鱼转，驱赶它们，好像在故意戏弄它们一样。

要是它们游得不这么快，我可以划到它们中间去，老人想。他看着这群鱼把水搅得泛出白色的泡沫，还看到那只鸟儿这时正俯冲下来，朝吓得蹿到水面上来的小鱼群掠去。

“这只鸟真是帮了大忙了。”老人自言自语道。就在这时，刚才在脚上绕了一圈的那根船尾的细渔线在他脚下绷紧了，于是他赶紧扔下双桨，紧紧抓住细渔线，动手往回拉。他感到那小金枪鱼在颤悠悠地拉着，有点儿分量。他越往回拉，渔线就抖得越厉害，他看见水里蓝色的鱼背和金色的鱼身，然后他利索地把渔线嗖的一提，鱼就稳稳地掉在了船中。金枪鱼躺在船尾，阳光下，它的身子看上去很结实，形状像一颗子弹，一双呆呆的大眼睛直瞪着。它用它那干净利落的尾巴快速地抖动着拍打着船板，发出砰砰的声音，渐渐地耗尽了力气。老人想早点结束它的痛苦，于是就猛击了一下它的头，然后一脚把它那还在颤抖的身子踢到了船尾阴凉处。

“长鳍金枪鱼，”他说出声来，“用来钓大鱼最合适不过了。估计它有十磅重。”

他已记不得是什么时候开始习惯在独自一人的时候大声地自言自语了。过去他一个人的时候老是唱歌，有时候在夜里唱，那是在小渔船或捕海龟的小艇上一人掌舵时的事。他大概是在那孩子离开了他之后才开始自言自语的。不过他已记不清了。

他跟孩子一块儿捕鱼时，倒不经常说话，一般只在有必要时才说。他们只在夜里说说话，或者碰到坏天气，被暴风雨困在海上的时候才会聊上几句。没有必要就不要在海上说话，这被认为是种好品德。老人一直是这么认为的，也始终保持着这种美德。可是这会儿他把心里想说的话大声地说了好几遍，因为反正也没有旁人会受到打扰。

“要是别人听到我在大声地自言自语，会当我发疯了。”他大声说，“不过既然我没发疯，我就不管了，我还是要说，说出来才痛快。那些有钱人在船上有个收音机对着他们说话，还可以听听棒球赛的消息。”

现在可不是想棒球赛的时候，他想。现在我应该只琢磨一件事，就是我生来要干的那件事。那群鱼周围很可能就有一条大鱼，我只逮住了一条失散的正在吃小鱼的金枪鱼。可是它们正向远处游去，而且游得那么快。怎么今天凡是在海面上露面的都游得那么快，都向着东北方向游？难道这一天就这样了？还是我没看出来这是某种天气的征兆？

眼下他已看不见海岸的那一道绿色了，只看得见那些青山的顶峰，上面仿佛积着白雪，以及山峰上空像是高耸的雪山般的云朵。海水的颜色深极了，阳光在海水中折射出五光十色。此刻太阳升到了头顶上空，那数不清的斑斑点点的浮游生物都看不见了，老人看得见的只是蓝色海水深处变幻而成的巨大的七色彩带，还有他那儿几根笔直垂到一英里深处的水中的渔线。

渔夫们把所有的这种鱼都叫作金枪鱼，只有在市场上卖的时候，或者拿来换鱼饵时，才分别用不同的名字把它们一一区分开来。这时它们又沉到海里去了。太阳此刻晒在人身上已经很烫了。老人感到脖颈上热辣辣的，划着划着，觉得汗水一滴滴地从背上往下淌。



我完全可以让小船自己漂着，他想。我就管自己睡觉，只要把渔线绕一圈在脚趾上，要是有什么动静我就醒过来了。不过今天已经是第八十五天了，我该一整天好好钓鱼。就在这时，他凝视着渔线，看见其中有一根悬在水面上的绿色钓竿猛地往水中一沉。

“来啦！”他有点激动地自语。他镇定地收起双桨，没有让船颠簸一下。他伸手去拉渔线，把它轻轻地夹在右手大拇指和食指之间。他感到渔线并没拉紧，也没什么重量，于是就轻轻地握着。接着它又动了一下。这回是试探性的一拉，拉得既不紧又不重，他就完全明白这是怎么回事了。在一百英寻的深处有条大马林鱼正在吃裹着钩刺和钩身的沙丁鱼，这个用手弯制的渔钩是从一条小金枪鱼的头部穿出来的。

老人轻巧地捏着渔线，用左手把它从竿子上轻轻地解下来。现在他可以让渔线穿过指间滑出去，而不会让鱼感到有一点点儿的拉力。

在这个月份到这么远的地方来找东西吃的，一定是条大鱼，他想。吃吧，鱼儿，吃吧，把这些鱼饵都吃下去。这些鱼饵多新鲜啊，而你呢，在这六百英尺的深处，又黑又冷，一定饿坏了吧。在黑暗里溜达一下，赶紧回来把它们吃了吧。

他感到渔线被轻巧地拉了一下，接着被猛烈地拉了一下，这一定是一条沙丁鱼的头很难从渔钩上咬下来。接着就没有一丝动静了。

“快点回来吧，”老人大声祈求道，“再转个弯吧，闻闻这些鱼饵，它们不是很鲜美吗？趁它们还新鲜，把它们吃了吧，还有那条金枪鱼。它们又结实，又爽口，又鲜美。别怕难为情，鱼儿，赶紧把它们吃了吧。”

他耐心地等待着，渔线还是夹在大拇指和食指之间，双眼一

动不动地盯着它和其他几根渔线，因为这鱼说不准已游到了上面一点或下面一点的地方。接着鱼儿又轻巧地拉了一下渔线。

“它会把鱼饵吃下去的，”老人安慰自己道，“老天保佑让它吞下去吧。”但它没有咬鱼饵，它游走了，老人又一次感觉不到任何动静了。

“它不可能游走的，”他猜测着不让自己灰心，“天也知道它是不可能游走的。它只不过在转身呢。也许它以前上过钩，好不容易才挣脱掉，现在它学聪明了。”

接着他感到渔线又轻轻地动了一下，他再次高兴起来。

“它刚才不过是在转身，”他舒了口气说道，“它会把鱼饵吃下去的。”

感到这轻微的一拉，他很高兴，接着他感到鱼儿狠狠地一拉，重得叫人难以相信。这是鱼本身的重量造成的，他就松手让渔线向下滑，向下滑，一直向下滑，从那两卷备用渔线中的一卷上放出渔线。当渔线从老人的指间轻轻地滑下去的时候，他仍然能感到很大的重量，尽管他的拇指和食指施加的压力小得简直察觉不到。

“小乖乖，”他有点激动地说，“它正把鱼饵斜叼在嘴里，衔着它游呢。”

过会儿它就会掉过头来把饵吞下去的，他想。他没有把这句话说出来，因为他知道，一桩好事要是说破了，也许就不会发生了。他知道这条鱼有多大，他想象着它嘴里横衔着金枪鱼，在黑暗中游来游去的样子。这时他觉得鱼儿停止不动了，可是分量还是那么重。接着渔线上的拉力越来越大了，他就再放出了一点渔线。他加大了拇指和食指上的压力，可过了一会儿，渔线上的分量还在增加，一直传到海底深处。

“它开始咬饵啦。”他显得更加激动了，但竭力控制着自己。



“现在让我来给它美美地饱餐一顿。”

他让渔线在指间向下滑动，同时伸出左手，把两卷备用渔线的一端紧系在旁边那根渔线的两卷备用渔线上。如今他已经准备好了。现在他除了正在使用的那圈渔线，还有三个四十英寻长的渔线卷儿可供备用。

“再吃点儿吧，”他有点儿祈求地说道，“美美地把它吃下去。”

你把它吃了吧，这样渔钩的尖刺就可以扎进你的心脏，把你弄死，他想。然后乖乖地浮上来吧，让我把渔叉刺进你的身子。好吧，你准备好了吗？你享受美餐的时间也够长了吧？

“行了！”他大声地喊道，双手使劲猛拉渔线，往回收进了一码，然后连连猛拉，使出胳膊上的全部劲儿，转动着身体，挥动双臂，轮换着胳膊把渔线往回拉。

可是什么都不管用。那条鱼儿只顾自个儿慢慢地游开去，老人甚至没办法把它往上拉一英寸。他的渔线结实得很，是专门用来对付大鱼的。他把渔线套在背上猛拉，结果渔线给绷得太紧，上面竟蹦出水珠来。接着就听到渔线在水里渐渐地发出一阵阵的滋滋声，但老人依旧死死地拽着它，把自己的身子靠在座板上，上半身往后仰，就像拔河一样来对付鱼的拉力。奇怪的是小船竟慢慢地驶向西北方向了。

大鱼一刻不停地游着，鱼和船就在平静的海水中慢慢地前进。另外那几个鱼饵还在水里，不过现在也顾不上了。

“要是那孩子在这儿就好了，”老人说道，“他能看到我正被一条鱼拖着走，而我都成了一根系纤绳的缆柱了。我倒是可以把渔线系在船舷上。不过这样一来鱼儿会把它扯断的，这可不成。拼了这条老命我也得把它牵住，必要的时候我就把渔线放出去。谢天谢地，它还在朝前游，没有往下沉。”

要是它决意往下沉,那我该怎么办?我可不知道。如果它死死挣扎,死在海底了,那我又该怎么办?我可真没想过。可是我必须得做点什么。再说我能做的事儿多着呢。

他紧紧地拽住勒在脊背上的渔线,紧盯着它直往水中倾斜着滑下去,而小船不停地朝西北方向前进。

这样准会要了它的命,老人想。它不可能就这样一直游下去。然而过了四个钟头,那条大鱼还照样拖着小船,不停地向大海更远的地方游去,而老人依然紧紧地拽着勒在脊背上的渔线。“我是中午把它钓上钩的,可到现在我还没见到它。”

鱼儿上钩前,老人把草帽沿儿拉得很低,紧扣在头上,现在草帽勒得他的脑门很痛。他还渴得很,于是就跪下双膝,小心翼翼地做到不拉动渔线,然后尽量朝船头挪动,伸出一只手去够水瓶。他打开瓶盖,喝了一点儿,然后靠在船头上休息。他坐在已经从桅座上拔下的桅杆和帆布上,尽力不去想什么,只顾跟这条大鱼熬下去。

等他回头看背后时,发现已看不到丝毫陆地了。没关系,他想,我总能靠着哈瓦那的灯光回去的。太阳下山还有两个钟头,也许不到那会儿它就浮上来了。如果它不上来,那说不准会跟着月亮一起浮上来。如果它到那时还不浮上来,那也许就会到明天早上太阳出来的时候浮上来。我手脚没抽筋,又身强力壮,准能对付它。是它自己送上门来的,我绝不会轻易放过它。不过它的力气也真大,应该是条大得不得了鱼。它的嘴一定是死死地咬住了钢丝渔钩。唉,真想看看它的庐山真面目。哪怕就看一眼也好,那样我就知道我这对手长什么样儿了。

老人凭着观察天上的星斗,看出那鱼整整一夜都没有改变它的路线和方向。太阳下山后,天气转凉了,老人脊背、胳膊和衰老的腿上的汗水都干了,风吹来,感到凉飕飕的。白天,他曾



把盖在鱼饵盒子上的麻袋取下，摊开放在阳光下晒干。太阳下山后，他把麻袋系在脖子上，让它盖住后背，并且小心地把它塞在正横在肩上的渔线下面。有麻袋垫着渔线，他就可以靠在船头上，舒服多了。那个姿势实际上只能说是让人稍微好受一点儿，可他自己觉得已经很舒服了。

我拿它没辙，它也拿我没辙，他想。要是它总这样游下去，我俩就没什么法子了。

有一会儿他站起身来，越过船舷撒尿，然后抬眼看看星斗，再看看他的航向。渔线从他肩上一路斜钻进水里，在月光照射下，看起来就像是一道磷光。大鱼和小船此刻前行的速度放慢了。哈瓦那的灯光也不那么亮了，老人于是明白，海流准是在把他俩带向东方。要是我看不见哈瓦那耀眼的灯光，那我们一定是朝更东边的地方去了。因为要是这鱼的路线没有变的话，那我准会好几个钟头都看得到灯光。不知道今天的棒球大联赛结果怎么样了。干我这行的，要是有一台收音机就好了。我可不能开小差，我得时刻记着我在干什么。你可不能干出什么蠢事来，他这样命令自己。

然后他又说了一句：“要是那孩子在这儿就好了。可以帮我一把，也让他看看这种场面。”

谁都不该年纪一大把了还孤零零一个人，不过这也难免的。为了保持体力，我得记着趁金枪鱼还没坏就把它吃了。记住喽，哪怕你多么不想吃，也必须在早上把它吃了。记住了，他对自己说。

晚上，有两条鲱鳅游到小船边来，老人听见它们翻身和喷水的声音。他能分辨那雄鲱鳅发出的喧闹的喷水声和那雌鲱鳅发出的叹气般的喷水声。

“你们都是好样的。”他说，“你们嬉戏，打闹，又相亲相爱。”

你们是我们的好兄弟，就像飞鱼一样。”

接着他开始可怜起这条被他钓住的大鱼来了。它可真厉害，真奇怪，天晓得它有几岁了。我可从没钓到过这么强壮的鱼，也没见过行为这么古怪的鱼。也许它太聪明了，就是不跳出水面来。它完全可以跳出水来，或者来个猛冲，把我打垮。不过，或许它曾被钓牢过好几次，所以知道应该用这种办法来搏斗。它哪会知道它的对手只有一个人，而且是个糟老头。不过它真是一条大得不得了鱼，要是鱼肉鲜美，准能在市场上卖一大笔钱。它咬起饵来像条雄鱼，拉起渔线来也像雄鱼，与我搏斗也没一点儿惊慌。不知道它有什么打算，或许它就跟我一样豁出去了？

他想起有一回钓到了一对大马林鱼中的一条。雄鱼总是让雌的先吃，那条上了钩的正是雌鱼，它发了狂，惊慌而绝望地挣扎着，一会儿就筋疲力尽了。那条雄鱼一直待在它身边，在渔线下焦急地窜来窜去，陪着它在水面上一起打转。那条雄鱼离渔线很近，老人生怕它会用它的尾巴把渔线割断，因为它那尾巴就像大镰刀般锋利，大小和形状都和大镰刀差不多。老人用渔钩把雌鱼钩上来，用棍子砸它，一手握住那边缘如砂纸似的轻剑般的长嘴，然后连连朝它头顶打去，直打得它的颜色变成和镜子背面的红色差不多。然后他和孩子一起把它拖上船，而这时，雄鱼一直待在船舷边。接着，当老人忙着解下渔线、拿起渔叉的时候，雄鱼在船边高高地跳到空中，想要看看雌鱼在哪里，然后它掉了下去，钻进了深水里。它那淡紫色的翅膀，实际上是它的胸鳍，大大地舒展开来，于是它身上所有的淡紫色的宽条纹都露了出来。它很漂亮，老人记得很清楚，而且它一直待在那儿不走。

钓鱼打了这么多年，这是我所看到过的最让我伤心的一幕了，老人想。孩子也很伤心，于是我们就请求这条雌鱼原谅，然



后就马上把它杀了。

“要是孩子在这里就好了。”他又一次自言自语道，一边把身子靠在船头边缘已被磨圆的木板上，通过勒在肩上的渔线，承受着这条大鱼的力量，任由这条大鱼游到哪里就是哪里。

因为我骗了它一把，它不得不作出选择了，老人想。

它的决定就是待在黑暗的深水里，远远地避开一切圈套、罗网和诡计。我的决定就是去没有人去过的地方与它会面。这个地方绝对是没有人去过的。现在我俩给拴在一起了，从中午起我们就形影不离，而且我和它都没什么帮手。

也许我根本就不该是个渔夫，他想。但这正是我生来就该干的行当，谁让我生来就长在海边呢。我一定得记住，天亮后就那条金枪鱼吃了。

就在离天亮还有一会儿工夫的时候，有什么东西咬住了他身后渔线上的一个鱼饵。他听见鱼竿啪地折断了，那根渔线越过船舷向外一个劲地滑出去。他摸着黑拔出鞘中的刀子，身子往后靠，用左肩顶着大鱼所有的拉力，然后抵着木头的船舷，把那根渔线割断了。接着他又把另一根离他最近的渔线也割断了，摸黑把这两个没有放出去的渔线圈的断头接在一起。他一只手熟练地动着，一只脚踩住渔线圈，免得移动，然后牢牢地打了一个结。他现在有六卷备用渔线了：他刚才割断的那两根有鱼饵的渔线各有两卷备用渔线，加上被大鱼咬住鱼饵的那根上的两卷，它们都被牢牢地接在一起了。

等天亮了，我还要把那根放到水下四十英寻深处的渔线也割断，接到那些备用的渔线圈上。那样的话，我会丢掉两百英寻长的优质卡塔卢尼亚渔线，还有渔钩和导线。不过这些倒都是可以再准备的。要是别的什么鱼上了钩，我倒把这条大鱼给放走了，那就太不划算了。不晓得刚才咬饵的是什么鱼，很可能是

条大马林鱼,或者剑鱼,也可能是鲨鱼。我可没工夫来搭理它,只能尽快把它赶走。

他又一次大声叹息道:“要是那孩子在这儿就好了。”

可是孩子并不在这里,他想。你就只有自己一个人,你最好还是想个法子摸到最后那根渔线,不管天黑不黑,把它割断,再系上那两卷备用的渔线。

他按他想的做了。黑灯瞎火的还真有点儿麻烦。有一回,那条大鱼突然用力掀动了一下,把老人拖倒在船板上,他的脸朝下,眼睛下面不小心被小刀划了一道口子,鲜血马上从脸颊上流了下来,但幸好血还没流到下巴上就凝结起来干掉了。于是他挪动身子回到船头,靠在木船舷上休息。他调整好麻袋的位置,把渔线小心地挪到肩上的另一个地方,用肩膀把它固定住,小心地掂量着那鱼拖动的分量,然后伸手到水里试试小船航行的速度。

不知道这鱼刚才怎么就突然晃了一下,他纳闷道,难道是渔线在它高高隆起的脊背上滑了一下?当然,它的脊背痛得可比不上我的。不过不管它力气有多大,我想它总不可能一直把这小船拖下去吧。眼下凡是会给我惹麻烦的东西我都清除了,而且我还有好多备用的渔线,真是万事俱备了,我还能有什么要求呢。

“鱼啊,”他轻轻地说出声来,“就算搭上我这条老命,我也会奉陪到底的。”看来它也要跟我奉陪到底了,老人边想边等待着天亮。天亮前这会儿还真有点儿冷,他把身子紧贴着木船舷来取暖。它能撑多久,我就能撑多久,他想。当天边出现第一道曙光时,渔线伸展着,一直被拉到水里。小船依然平稳地移动着,当初升的太阳刚露出一丝边儿,阳光就直射到老人的右肩上。

“它在朝北走啊。”老人说。海流会一直把我们带向东边,他



想。但愿它会跟着海流拐个弯儿，这样我就知道它越来越疲惫了。

等太阳升得更高时，老人发现这鱼并没有越来越疲惫。倒是有一个有利的征兆，渔线的倾斜度说明它正一点一点地往上游。这倒不一定说它会跳出水面来，但说不准会这样。

“老天啊，让它跳起来吧，”老人祈求道，“我的渔线够长，可以对付它。”

或许我该把渔线稍微拉紧点儿，让它觉得痛，这样它就会跳起来了。既然是白天，就让它跳吧，这样它脊背上的两排液囊就会装满了空气，它也就不会沉到海底死掉了。

他试着拉紧渔线，可是从鱼上钩到现在，渔线已经紧绷得快断掉。他试着向后仰着身子来拉，但感到渔线硬邦邦的，知道不能再在渔线上加力了。我可千万不能猛拉。每次猛拉都会把渔钩划出的口子拉得更宽，等它真的跳起来时，也许就会把渔钩甩掉了。反正太阳出来了，我觉得好多了，这一回我用不着盯着太阳看了。

渔线上挂着黄色的海藻，可老人知道这只会给鱼增加一些拉力，所以很高兴。就是这种黄色的果囊马尾藻在晚上会发出很强的磷光。

“鱼啊，我爱你，也尊敬你。不过今天无论如何我都要把你杀死。”

但愿如此，他想。

一只小鸟从北边朝小船飞来。那是只鸣鸟，在水面上飞得很低。老人看出它非常疲惫。

鸟儿飞到船尾上，在那儿歇了一会儿。然后它绕着老人的头顶飞了一圈，落在那根渔线上，它感到更舒服了。“你多大了？”老人问鸟儿，“这是你第一次出门吗？”

老人说话的时候，小鸟望着他。它太疲惫了，连渔线都没仔细看一眼，就用细巧的双脚紧抓住渔线，在上面摇摇晃晃。“这渔线稳当得很，”老人对它说，“夜里没刮什么风啊，你怎么会这么疲惫呢。鸟儿都怎么啦？”

因为有老鹰飞到海上来追捕它们，他想。但是这话他没跟那小鸟说，反正小鸟听不懂他的话，而且它很快就会知道老鹰的厉害。

“好好歇会儿吧，小鸟，然后飞得远远的，去碰碰运气，就像所有的人或者鸟和鱼那样。”

过了一夜，老人的脊背变得很僵硬了，现在正痛得厉害，所以他一个劲地跟这小鸟说话，想以此来给自己鼓劲。

“小鸟啊，乐意的话就住在我家吧。真对不住，眼下我不能趁刮起的小风把帆拉起来带你回家。因为我现在正有个朋友要招待。”

就在这时，那渔线陡地一歪，把老人拖倒在船头上，要不是他眼疾手快，撑住了身子，放出一段渔线，他早就被拖到海里去了。

就在渔线被猛地一拽时，鸟儿飞走了，老人竟没注意。他用右手小心地摸摸渔线，发现手上被磨出了血。

“这么说这鱼给什么东西弄伤了。”他说着，一边把渔线往回拉，看能不能让鱼转过身来。拉到快绷断的时候，他握稳了渔线，然后身子朝后仰，来抵消渔线上的那股拉力。

“现在你觉得痛了吧，兄弟，不过老实说，我也跟你一样啊。”

他转身寻找那只小鸟，因为他很乐意有它来作伴，可是小鸟飞走了。

你怎么不多待会儿呢，老人想。你去的的地方不太平，到了岸上你才会平安。我怎么会让那条鱼那么一拉就划破了手呢？我



一定是越来越笨了。要不，也许是因为我只顾望着那只小鸟，想着它了。现在我得小心我自己的活，过会儿我就把那金枪鱼吃了，我可不能到时候没了力气。

“要是那孩子在就好了，另外手边要再来点儿盐。”他说道。

他把沉甸甸的渔线挪到了左肩上，然后小心翼翼地跪下，把手伸进海水里洗了洗，紧握着浸了一分多钟。他看着手上的血在水中逐渐漂开去，此时的海水随着船的移动正轻缓地拍打着他的双手。

“它游得慢多了。”

老人巴不得让他的手在这盐水中多浸一会儿，但生怕那鱼又陡地一转身，于是站起身来，打起精神，朝着太阳举起他那只手晒着。他手上的肉只不过被渔线勒了一下，割破了皮。然而这正是他手上最用得着的部位。他知道把这条鱼对付过去得靠这双手，他可不喜欢还没开始就把手给割破了。

这时他的手已经干了，“现在我该吃小金枪鱼了。我可以用钩子把它钩过来，然后在这儿舒舒服服地吃。”

他跪下来，把拖钩伸到艄板下，戳到了那条金枪鱼，然后慢慢地把它钩到身边来，生怕它被那几卷渔线缠上。他又用左肩背上渔线，左手和胳膊撑在座板上，右手从钩上取下金枪鱼，再把钩子放回原处。他用一个膝盖压住鱼身，然后用小刀把它从头到尾径直剖开，割下一条条呈楔形的深红色的鱼肉。他从脊骨边开始割，一直到肚子边，一共割下六条。老人把它们一一摊开在船头的木板上晒，在裤子上擦了擦刀子，然后他拎起鱼尾巴，把剩下的一副骨架子扔进了大海。

“我想我是吃不下一整条的。”他边说边用刀子把一条鱼肉切成两段。他感到那渔线一直紧拉着。突然他的左手抽起筋来，紧紧地握住了那条沉重的渔线，他厌恶地朝它看看。

“这算什么手嘛，让你抽筋去吧，最好变成一只鸡爪，不过这样对你可没什么好处。”

快点，他一边想一边望着斜向黑暗深水里的渔线。快把它吃了，这样手就有力气了。不能怪这只手不好，你跟这鱼都已经打了好几个钟头的持久战了。你能跟它拼到底的。快把金枪鱼吃了。

他拿起半条鱼肉，放在嘴里，慢慢地嚼。生鱼肉倒并不难吃。好好地嚼，把它嚼烂喽，他想，然后把汁水都咽下去。要是放上点儿酸橙或者柠檬或者盐什么的，那味道肯定不会差。

“手啊，你感觉怎么样了？”他问那只抽筋后又僵又硬的手，“为了你我再吃一点儿。”

他把另外半条鱼肉放进嘴里，细细地咀嚼，然后吐出鱼皮。

“觉得怎么样，手？或许现在还早了点，不要紧，咱慢慢来。”

他又拿起了一整条鱼肉，咀嚼起来。

这条鱼还真壮实，气血很旺盛，他想。幸亏我运气好，捉到的是它，而不是条鲱鳅。鲱鳅太甜了。这鱼一点儿也不甜，还鲜活着呢，挺有嚼头的。

但怎么说都没用，还得实际点，他想。要是我有点儿盐就好了。还不晓得太阳会把剩下的鱼肉给晒坏还是晒干，所以最好把它们都吃了，尽管我现在并不饿。那鱼现在游得又平静又安稳。我把这些鱼肉统统吃了，就可以做好对付它的准备了。

“耐心点吧，手，我这样吃东西可是为了你啊。”但愿我也能喂喂那条大鱼，他想。它可是我的好兄弟，但为了生计我不得不把它弄死，我还得保持体力来做这件事。他慢慢地一心一意地把那些楔形的条状鱼肉全都吃了。

他直起腰来，在裤子上擦了擦手。

“行了，手，你可以把渔线放掉了，让我只用右臂来对付它



吧，直到你不再捣乱。”他用左脚踩住刚才用左手拽着的粗渔线，身子朝后仰，用背部来承受那股拉力。

“老天帮帮我，快让这抽筋好起来吧，我不晓得这条鱼还会干出什么事儿来。”

不过它似乎很平静，而且在按着它的计划行动。可是它有什么计划呢？他想。我又有什麼办法来对付它呢？我必须随机应变，因为它个儿实在太大，现在也只能走一步看一步了。如果它跳出水来，我就可以把它干掉。但它老待在水里，看来眼下是没办法了。我就以静制动，跟它耗到底吧。

他在裤子上搓着那只抽筋的手，想使手指放松一下。可是手就是张不开来。也许晒晒太阳它就会张开了，他想。也许等那些韧性十足的生鱼肉消化后，它就能张开了。要是非得用这只手，那我就一定要把它张开，不惜任何代价。但眼下我可不想硬把它张开。让它自己慢慢松开，恢复原样吧。毕竟昨天晚上我用它把那么多渔线切断又连在一起，真是难为它了。

他眺望海面，才发现此刻他是多么孤单。但他看得见漆黑的海水深处的五光十色，还有面前伸展开去的渔线和那平静的海面上的细微的波纹。信风刮起，云块不断地集聚起来。他抬头望去，见到一群野鸭在水面上飞，在天空的衬托下，就像是一幅刻画得很清晰的浮雕作品，接着这幅画模糊起来，然后又清晰起来，于是他想，在海上是没有人会感到孤单的。

他想起有些人划着小船到了看不见陆地的地方，就会害怕起来，他觉得在天气突然变糟的那几个月里，是会这样。可是如今正是刮飓风的月份，而在没飓风的时候，这些月份正是一年天气最好的时候。

如果飓风要来了，而你在海上的话，总能在好几天前就看见天上有种种迹象。人们在岸上可看不见，因为他们不知道该看

些什么,他想。陆地上看到的也一定不一样,云的样子就不同。但是眼下可不会刮什么飓风。

他望望天空,看见一朵朵白色的积云,形状像一个个可爱的冰淇淋,而在高高的天空中,一团团卷云就像是画家在九月的高空背景上画的片片羽毛。

“清风对我可比对你有利啊,鱼兄。”

他的左手依然在抽筋,但他在慢慢地把它张开。

我真厌恶抽筋,他想。这是对自己身体的背叛。要是因为食物中毒而腹泻或者呕吐,那是在别人面前丢脸。但是抽筋,是丢自己的脸,尤其是一个人待着的时候。

要是那孩子在这儿,就可以给我揉揉胳膊,从上到下地揉。不过这手总会松开的,就是要点儿时间。

随后,他用右手摸摸渔线,感到上面的分量变了,这才看见渔线在水里的斜度也变了。接着,他把身体靠在渔线上,左手又重又快地往大腿上拍打,他看见倾斜的渔线在慢慢地向上升起。

“它上来啦,”他又焦急又兴奋地喊道,“快点,我的手,请快点好起来吧。”

渔线慢慢地稳稳地升起来,小船前面的海面鼓了起来,鱼终于出水了。它不停地展露出它的身躯,水从它背两边直泻下来。阳光下,这条大鱼亮闪闪的,它的头和背部呈深紫色,两侧的条纹在阳光下显得宽阔并带着淡紫色。它的长嘴像棒球棒那样长,逐渐变细,像一把轻剑。它整个身体都露出了水面,然后像潜水员一样又滑溜地钻进了水里。老人看见它那大镰刀般的尾巴没入水里,渔线开始飞快地往外溜出去。

“它比我这小船还长两英尺。”老人惊讶地说道。渔线飞快而平稳地朝水里钻去,看得出来这鱼并没有受到惊吓。老人设法用双手拉住渔线,用的力气刚好不会被鱼扯断渔线。他知道,



要是他没法稳稳地让这鱼慢下来，它就会把渔线全部拖走，并且绷断。

它可真是条大鱼，我一定得制伏它。我可绝对不能让它知道它有多大力气，我也不能让它知道它能把我打倒，不然它就可以轻易逃跑了。不过我要是它，眼下我就会使出所有的力气往前冲，直到把渔线绷断为止。还好谢天谢地，虽然它们比我们高尚、能干，但没有我们聪明，不然我们就杀不了它们了。

老人见过许多大鱼。他见过不少重量超过一千磅的，前半辈子也曾逮到过两条这么大的，不过都不是一个人逮牢的。现在单枪匹马，又看不见陆地，却跟一条比他曾见过和听说过的还要大的鱼紧紧拴在一起，糟糕的是他的左手还是像紧抓着的鹰爪那样抽着筋。

它会好的，它当然会松开来帮一下我的右手。有三样东西是我的兄弟：那条鱼和我的两只手。这手一定会好的。真可耻，它竟会抽筋。鱼又慢下来了，用它原来的速度游着。

弄不懂它怎么会跳起来，好像就是为了让让我看看它个儿有多大，把我吓住。反正现在我是知道了。但愿我也能让它看看我是个什么样的人，让它明白我不是好对付的。不过这样一来它会看到我这只抽筋的手。不行，我得让它以为我是个比看上去更厉害的人，我知道我能做到这一点。他又想，但愿我就是这条鱼，使出所有力量要对付的仅仅是我的意志和我的智慧。

他舒坦地靠在木船舷上，忍受着袭来的痛楚。那鱼稳稳地游着，小船穿过深色的海水缓缓前进。这时东边吹起了风，海上起了小浪，到中午的时候，老人的左手不再抽筋了。

“这对你可是个坏消息，鱼兄。”他说着把渔线从披在他肩上的麻袋上挪了一个位置。

他感到舒服了点，但还是很疼，虽然他根本不承认这是什么

痛苦。

“我可不信什么教，”他说，“但我愿意念十遍《天主经》和十遍《圣母经》，保佑我能逮住这条鱼，要是我逮牢它，我发誓一定去朝拜科布莱的圣母。我说话算话。”

他机械地做起祷告来。有时他太倦了，背不出祷告词，于是就念得飞快，这样祷告词就能顺利地自己蹦出来。《圣母经》要比《天主经》好念，他想。

“万福的玛利亚，主与你同在。妇女之中你最有福，你的儿子耶稣也有福。圣母玛利亚，现在也好，将来我们临死的时候也好，都请你为我们这些有罪的人祈祷吧。阿门。”念完他又补了一句：“万福的童贞圣母，保佑我，让这鱼快快死去，尽管它现在还是那么了不起。”

念完了祈祷文，他觉得舒坦多了，但疼痛还是丝毫未减，也许还更厉害了点儿。于是他背靠在船头的木舷上，机械地活动起他左手的手指来。

尽管有微风柔和地吹来，但此刻太阳已经晒得让人觉得很热了。

“我还是把那根船尾外的细渔线重新装好鱼饵，要是那鱼打算在这里再过上一夜，我就要再吃点东西了，再说，水瓶里的水也不多了。我看这儿除了鲱鳅，也逮不到什么别的东西。但要是趁新鲜把它吃了，味道也不差。真想今天晚上有条飞鱼跳到船上来。可惜我没有灯光来引诱它。飞鱼生吃，那味道是没得说的，而且也用不着把它切成小块。眼下我得保存所有的体力。天晓得，这条鱼怎么这么大。”

“不管它多么了不起，多么神气，我还是会把它宰了的。”

虽然它这么大，我这么小，看起来很不公平，不过我会让它知道人有多少能耐，人能忍受多少磨难。



“我跟那孩子说过的，我是个怪老头儿，现在是我证实这话的时候了。”

他已经证实过上千回了，这算不了什么。现在他要再证实一回。每一回都是重新开始，他这样做的时候，从来不去想过去。

但愿它睡着，这样我也能打个盹，梦见我的狮子，他想。为什么我的梦里几乎只剩下狮子了呢？别想了，糟老头儿，他对自己说。靠着木头闭会儿眼睛吧，什么都不要想。它在忙活着，你就越少忙活越好。

时间已是下午，小船依旧缓慢而稳稳地移动着。不过这会儿东风给船增加了一份阻力，老人随着不大的海浪缓缓漂流，渔线勒在他背上的疼痛也变得稍微轻松和缓和了点儿。

下午，渔线有一次又上来了。不过那鱼只是游到了稍微高一点的水面上。太阳晒在老人的左胳膊、左肩和脊背上。他知道这鱼游向东北方了。

他见过这鱼一回，现在就能想象出它在水里游的样子了。它那翅膀般的紫色胸鳍大大地张开着，竖直的大尾巴像大镰刀一般在黝黑的海水里舞动着。不知道在那么深的海里它能看得见多少东西，老人想。它的眼睛真大。马的眼睛要小得多，但在黑暗里看得见东西。以前我在黑暗处也能看得清清楚楚，当然不是在乌漆墨黑的地方，不过也差不多能跟猫一样看东西了。

晒了会儿太阳，再加上手指不断地活动，老人那抽筋的左手终于完全松开了，他就开始让它多承担点儿力，并耸耸背上的肌肉来减轻点渔线带来的疼痛。

“要是你不累的话，鱼兄，那你真是不可思议啦。”

这时他感到非常疲惫，他知道夜色就要降临，所以竭力想些别的事儿。他想到棒球的两大联赛，他知道纽约扬基队正在迎

战底特律老虎队。

今天已经是联赛的第二天了，可我不知道比赛结果，他想。但我一定要有信心，一定要对得起那个了不起的狄马吉奥。他脚后跟长了骨刺，疼得要命，还能把一切做得十全十美。骨刺是什么东西？他问自己。我们可没这玩意儿。它有斗鸡脚上装的铁刺扎进人的脚后跟那样痛吗？我想我是受不了这种痛的，也不能像斗鸡那样，瞎了一只眼睛或两只后还在那儿斗。人跟伟大的鸟兽相比，还真算不上什么。我还是宁愿做那只待在黑暗里的深水里的动物。

“除非有鲨鱼来，要是有鲨鱼来，愿老天保佑它，也保佑我。”

你相信那了不起的狄马吉奥会像我一样这么长久地守着一一条鱼吗？他想。我相信他会，而且会更长久，因为他年轻力壮。再说他父亲也当过渔夫。不过骨刺会不会让他痛得受不了？

“我说不上来，”他说出声来，“我可从来没长过什么骨刺。”

太阳下山的时候，为了给自己鼓劲，他想起那回在卡萨布兰卡的一家酒店里，跟那个码头上力气最大的从西恩富戈斯[®]来的大个子黑人比手劲的经历。整整一天一夜，他俩把胳膊肘靠在桌上画的一道粉笔线两侧，他们的前臂向上伸得直直的，双手握得紧紧的。双方都拼了命地想将对方的手压倒桌面上。好多人在赌他俩的输赢，在煤油灯下看得见有人进进出出。他打量着黑人的胳膊和手，还有那黑人的脸。头八小时过后，他们不得不每四个小时换一名裁判员，好让裁判员轮流睡觉。他和黑人手上的指甲缝里都渗出血来，他俩直视着对方的眼睛，看着对方的手和胳膊，打赌的人在屋里走出走进，坐在靠墙的高椅子上观望。四壁是木制的，被漆成明亮的蓝色，几盏灯把他们的影子投射在墙上。黑人的影子特别大，微风吹动挂灯，他的影子在墙上摇曳着。



一整夜，赌注的赔率来回地变换着，有人把朗姆酒送到黑人嘴边，还替他点上香烟。黑人喝了朗姆酒后，就拼了命地拿出所有的力气，还真一度把老人（他当时还不是个老人，而是“冠军”桑地亚哥）的手扳下去将近三英寸。但老人又把手扳回来，恢复到势均力敌的局面。他当时确信自己能把这个好样的、杰出的黑人运动员打败。天亮时，打赌的人们要求当和局算了，但裁判员摇头不同意。老人咬紧牙关，使出浑身的力气，硬是把黑人的手一点点地往下扳，直到压在桌面上。这场比赛是在一个礼拜天的早上开始的，直到礼拜一早上才结束。好多打赌的人要求和局，因为他们得上码头去干活，把麻袋装的蔗糖装上船，或者上哈瓦那煤行去运煤。要不然人人都会要求比赛分出个胜负的。但最终他把比赛结束了，而且还赶在了大伙出工之前。

此后好一阵子，人人都管他叫“冠军”。第二年春天又举行了一场比赛，但这次人们赌注不大。他很容易就赢得了比赛，因为他在第一场比赛中就已经打垮了那个西恩富戈斯来的黑人的自信心。此后，他又比赛过几次，再后来就没了比过了。他想他要真想打败谁就一定能做到。他还觉得扳手腕对他用来钓鱼的右手很不好。他曾尝试用左手参加了几次练习赛，但他的左手总是背叛他，不按他的吩咐行动，他也就不信任它了。

一会儿太阳就会把手晒干的，他想。它不会再抽筋了，除非夜里太冷。还不晓得今天晚上会怎么样。

一架飞机在他头上飞过，正循着航线飞向迈阿密，他看见它的影子惊起了成群成群的飞鱼。

“有这么多的飞鱼，这里应该有鲱鳅。”他说着就靠着渔线往后仰，看能不能把那鱼拉过来一点儿。但是不行，渔线照样紧绷着，上面抖动着水珠，都快绷断了。船缓缓地前进，他紧盯着飞机，直到看不见为止。

坐在飞机里一定感觉很怪，不晓得从那么高的地方朝下望，海是什么样子。要是飞得不高，他们一定能看到这条鱼。我倒想在两百英寻的高度慢慢地飞，从空中看看这条鱼。以前在捕龟船上，我站在桅顶横杆那样的高度也能看到不少东西。从那上面朝下望，鲱鳅看上去更绿，可以看清它们身上的条纹和紫色斑点，还可以看到它们一整群都在游水。说也奇怪，怎么凡是在深暗的水流中游得很快的鱼都有紫色的脊背，一般还有紫色条纹或斑点。鲱鳅在水里看上去当然是绿色的，但事实上它们是金黄色的。不过当它们饿得慌，想吃东西的时候，身子两侧就会出现紫色条纹，像大马林鱼那样。到底是因为生气了，还是游得太快，才让这些条纹显露出来的呢？

就在天黑之前，老人和船经过了很大一片马尾藻。在风浪很小的海面上，马尾藻起伏摇曳着，仿佛海洋正同什么东西在一条黄色的毯子下亲热。这时候，他那根细渔线给一条鲱鳅咬住了。它跃出水面，在最后一线阳光中像金子般耀眼。它在空中弯起身子，疯狂地挣扎着，惊慌失措地一次次地跃出水面，就像在做杂技表演。而老人却不慌不忙地挪动身子，回到船尾蹲下，用右手和胳膊拽住那根粗渔线，然后用左手把鲱鳅往回拉，每收回一段渔线，就用他光着的左脚踩牢。等到这条带紫色斑点的金光闪闪的鱼给拉到了船尾边，拼命地左右乱窜时，老人才探出身去，把它拎到船尾上。它的嘴被渔钩钩住后，抽搐地一张一合，并使劲地用它那又长又扁的身体、尾巴和脑袋拍打着船底，直到它的金光闪闪的脑袋被老人用木棍打了一下后，才抖了一下，不动了。

老人把渔钩从鱼嘴里取出来，重新穿上一条沙丁鱼，把它扔进了海里。然后他慢慢地挪到船头，洗了下左手，在裤腿上擦干。接着他又把那根沉重的渔线从右手换到左手，在水里一边



洗着右手一边望着太阳沉到海那边，还望着那根斜入水中的粗渔线。

“它可一点儿都没变。”他说。但注视着海水被手阻挡时的流速，发觉船走得明显慢多了。

“我来把这两支桨交叉绑在船尾，这样在夜里它就会慢下来。它能熬夜，我也能。”

最好过会儿就把这鲷鳅剖开，让鲜血留在肉里，他想。不过可以等会儿再弄，眼下先把桨绑起来，在水里拖着，增加阻力。最好先让鱼安静点，不要在太阳下山时惊动它。怎么说，太阳下山对所有的鱼来讲都是难熬的。

他举起手来让风吹干，然后拽住渔线，身体贴在木船舷上，尽量放松，任由自己被拉向前去，以便使船承受的拉力和他自己承受的一样大，或者更大些。

我是越来越晓得该怎么做了，至少这一点是这样。再说，它上钩后还没吃过什么东西，而且它身体这么大，需要吃很多的食物。我可是已经把这条金枪鱼都吃了。明天我还要吃那条鲷鳅。他管它叫“黄金鱼”。或许我该一边清理一边吃它。它比那条金枪鱼要难吃。不过话说回来，有什么事是容易的呢。

“你觉得怎么样，鱼兄？我感觉很好，左手也已经好起来了，我还有够一夜和一个白天吃的东西。你呢？好好拖着这条船吧。”

其实他并非真的感觉很好，因为渔线勒在背上的疼痛几乎超出了能忍受的极限，转而变成了一种让他不放心的麻木。不过，他想，比这更糟的事儿我也碰到过。一只手被割破了一点，另一只手的抽筋也已经好了，两条腿还都很管用。再说，眼下吃的方面我也比它有优势。

到了九月，太阳一下山，天暗得特别快，现在天已经黑了。

他背靠在船头已磨损的木板上，尽量休息个够。第一批星星已经出来了，他不知道猎户座[®]的名字，也不知道其中的一颗星星叫 Rigel，但看到它，就知道其他星星马上都会出来，一会儿他就会见到所有这些遥远的朋友了。

“这条鱼也是我的朋友，”他高兴地说，“我还从没看见过或听说过这样的鱼，不过为了生计，怎么说我也必须把它弄死。真高兴，我们不用去弄死那些星星。”

想想看，要是有一天人为了生计得把月亮弄死，那该多糟，月亮可会逃。不过再想想，要是人为了生计不得不去弄死太阳，那又会怎么样？哦，真不敢想，人还不被烤得跟焦炭一样。我们生来还算幸运的，他想。

接着他替这条没东西吃的大鱼伤心起来，但伤心归伤心，要杀死它的决心他倒是一点都没有减弱。把它杀了，该够多少人吃啊，他想。但话又说回来了，他们配得上吃它吗？不配，当然不配。就凭它的举止风度和它高贵的尊严，谁都不配吃它。

我可不懂这些玩意儿，可是我们不用去弄死太阳、月亮或星星，这倒是绝顶的好事。在海上过日子，要弄死我们自己真正的兄弟，已经够我们受的了。

现在，我该考虑考虑要不要加大力气拖住这条鱼，他想。这样有它的好处，也有它的坏处。要是鱼使劲挣脱，我的渔线就会被白白拖走好多，也许连鱼也会白白丢掉。小船轻便当然会延长我们双方的痛苦，但这也是我的安全所在。这鱼能游得这么快，是他的本领到现在还没真正使出来，要是使出来，那我可就完蛋了。不管怎么样，我得把这鲱鳅杀了，免得坏了吃不来，我得吃点长长力气。

现在我要再歇一个钟头，等鱼稳下来，再回船尾去弄那条鲱鳅，也好再想想什么对策。在这段时间里，我还可以看看它有什



么行动,有没有什么变化。那两把桨倒是个好计策,不过也该想想是不是安全。这鱼还是很厉害,我那渔钩挂在它的嘴角,它却把嘴闭得紧紧的。渔钩的折磨倒算不上什么,不过它的饥饿再加上我在暗处、它在明处才是它天大的麻烦。歇着吧,老头,让它去干它的事,你就等着下个任务吧。

他觉得自己歇了差不多两个钟头了,于是就打起精神。月亮这会儿还没升起来,还要有会儿工夫,他没法判断时间。实际上他也并没有真正休息,只能说是多少歇了一会儿。肩上还是承受着鱼的拉力,不过他已经把左手放在了船头的舷上,而逐渐地让小船本身来承担鱼的拉力。

要是能把渔线拴在船头,那事情就简单多了。可是鱼只要稍微歪一歪,就会把渔线绷断,那我就前功尽弃了。所以我必须用自己的身子来抵牢这渔线的拉力,随时准备用双手把渔线放出去。

“不过你还没睡觉呢,老头儿。你已经熬了半个白天和一个晚上了,现在又是一个白天,可你一直都没睡。你得想个法子,趁鱼安静老实的时候眯会儿眼睛。要是不睡,你的脑子会糊涂起来的。”

我的脑子够清醒的了,太清醒啦。我那些星星老兄那么亮,我就像它们那样清醒。不过怎么说我还是得睡会儿。它们要睡觉,月亮和太阳都要睡觉,连海洋有时候也要睡觉。海洋睡觉了,那些日子就没什么大风大浪了,她会平静地像一面镜子。

我一定得记着睡会儿,就是逼也要逼自己睡,再想点简单可靠的办法把那些渔线安排妥当。好,现在回到船尾去收拾那条鲛。要是一定要睡的话,得把船桨收起来,不然拖在水里太危险啦。

不睡觉我倒是也撑得过去,不过这也太危险啦。他小心翼

翼地爬回船尾，以免惊动那条鱼。说不准它正半睡半醒呢，他
想。不过我可不想让它休息，我得让它拖着，一直拖到它拖不动
为止。

回到船尾，他转了个身，用左手拽住紧勒在肩上的渔线，用
右手从刀鞘中拔出刀子。这会儿星星很亮，那条鲱鳅他看得一
清二楚。在星光下，他把刀刃插进它的头部，从艄板下把它拉出
来，然后用一只脚踩住鱼身，从尾巴沿肚子向上，倏地一刀，直剖
到它的嘴巴为止。接着他放下刀子，用右手掏干净内脏，把鳃也
去掉。他觉得鱼胃在手里沉甸甸、滑溜溜的，就把它剖开。原来
里面藏着两条小飞鱼，而且还很新鲜、坚实，于是他把它们并排
放着，把内脏和鱼鳃扔进水里。它们沉下去时，在水中拖出一道
磷光。鲱鳅冷冰冰的，在星光照射下灰白得像麻风病患者惨白
的脸。老人用右脚踩住鱼头，剥下鱼身上一边的皮，然后把鱼翻
过来，剥掉另一边的皮，最后把鱼身两边的肉从头到尾割下来。

他把鱼骨架悄悄地丢到船外，看看它在水里有没有打转，但
只看到它慢慢下沉时发出的磷光。接着他转过身来，把两条飞
鱼夹在那两片鱼肉中间，把刀子插进刀鞘，然后慢慢地挪回到船
头。他的背因为承受着渔线上的分量都弯了起来，他用右手拿
刚弄好的鱼肉。

回到船头，他把两片鱼肉摊开在船板上，飞鱼搁在旁边。然
后他把勒在肩上的渔线挪了个位置，又用左手拽住了渔线，手搁
在船舷上。然后他探身出去，在水里洗了洗飞鱼，并留意着水流
冲在他手上的速度。刚才剥过鱼皮的手现在发出了磷光。他仔
细看着水流冲他的手，发现水流并不那么有力了。为把粘在手
上的鱼皮抹掉，他侧手在船帮上蹭了蹭，一点点的磷质便浮散开
去，朝船尾慢慢漂去。

“它越来越累了，要不就是在休息。”老人猜想道，“现在我来



把这鲛鳅全吃了，然后再休息一下，睡一会儿。”

伴着这些星星和越来越冷的夜晚，他吃了半片鱼肉，还吃了一条去了内脏、切掉了脑袋的飞鱼。“鲛鳅煮熟了吃味道多鲜美啊，可生吃就跟吃药似的。以后要是不带点盐或酸橙，我绝对不划船出海。”

我真没脑子，要是白天我泼点海水到船头上，等它晒干了不就有盐了吗？不过话得说回来，我到太阳快落山时才钓到这条鲛鳅的，但毕竟还是没做好准备。唉，算了，你看我不是把它全嚼碎吃下去了嘛，而且还没吐。

东边的天空云朵越积越多，他认识的星星一颗颗地不见了。眼下风已经停了，而他仿佛正乘着小船进入了一个云朵盛开的大峡谷。

“三四天内会有坏天气，”他估计道，“不过今天晚上和明天还不要紧。现在来安排一下，老头子，睡它一会儿，趁这鱼还安稳的时候睡会儿吧。”

他用右手紧握住渔线，然后用大腿抵牢右手，把全身的重量压在船头的木板上。接着他把勒在肩上的渔线往下挪了一点儿，然后用左手撑住它。

只要渔线能紧撑着，我的右手就能握住它，他想。要是我睡着的时候它松了，往外滑出去，我的左手会把我弄醒的。这样右手会很吃重，但它吃惯了苦，没事的。哪怕只睡上个二十分钟或者半个钟头，也是好的。他把整个身子朝前倾，夹住渔线，把全身的重量靠在右手上，然后入睡了。

他没有梦见狮子，却梦见了一大群鲛鳅，前后有八到十英里长。这时正是它们交配的季节，它们会高高地跳到半空中，然后掉回到它们跳出时在水里形成的水涡里。

接着他梦见他在村子里，躺在自己的床上，天正刮着北风，

他感到很冷，他的右臂麻木了，因为他的头枕在右臂上，而不是枕头上。

接着他便又梦到了那道长长的黄色海滩，看见狮子群的第一头狮子在傍晚时分来到海滩上，接着其他狮子也来了。他把下巴靠在船头的木板上，而小船就抛了锚停靠在那里，海面上的晚风吹来，他等待着看有没有更多的狮子来，心里感到很开心。

月亮升起已经有好一会儿了，而他还一直睡着，幸好大鱼还平稳地向前游着，而小船驶入了通向云彩峡谷的隧道里。

他突然惊醒过来，因为他的右拳猛地朝他的脸砸去，渔线火辣辣地从他右手里溜出去。他的左手已没了知觉，于是就用右手拼命地拉住渔线，就像踩急刹车一样，但渔线还是一个劲儿地往外溜。幸好他的左手终于抓住了渔线，他仰着身子使劲地把渔线往后拉，这样一来渔线像火烤般地勒着他的脊背和左手，他的左手承受了全部的拉力，被勒得很痛，就像刀割一样。他回头望望那些渔线圈，它们正在滑溜地放出渔线，就好像哪个家伙疯了似的拼命往嘴里吮面条。正在这时，鱼跳了起来，海面像是地震般地开了个大大的口子，然后它像一块巨大的石头嘭地掉了下去。接着大鱼又跳起来，然后又掉下去，反复了好几次。船走得极快，而渔线仍然飞也似的向外溜，老人一会儿把渔线拉得很紧，一会儿放松一点，好几次渔线都差一点被拉断。他被拉倒在船头上，脸庞紧紧地贴在了那切成片的鲑鱼肉上，没法动弹。

我等着的事儿终于来了，那就让我来对付它吧，他想。

我要让它为拖出去的渔线付出代价，对，一定要让它付出代价，他暗下决心。

他看不到那鱼跳起来，只听见海面的迸裂声和鱼掉下时发出的沉重的水花飞溅声。溜得飞快的渔线把他的手割得很痛，但他知道这事迟早会发生，所以就设法让渔线勒在起老茧的地



方,不让他滑到掌心或者勒在手指头上。

要是那孩子在这儿,他就会用水把这些渔线圈都弄湿,这样我就会好受些,他想。是啊,要是孩子在就好了,要是孩子在就好了。

渔线一个劲地向外溜着、溜着、溜着,不过这时已经慢起来了,他正在让鱼一英寸一英寸地往外拉。现在他从木船板上仰起头来,脸不再贴在那片被他脸颊压成烂泥样的鱼肉上了。他还是在放出渔线,但明显是越来越慢了。他跪了起来,然后慢慢地站起身来,接着一步一步地挪到可以用脚碰得到但眼睛看不到的一卷卷的渔线所在的地方。渔线还有很多,现在这鱼不得不在水里拖着所有这些摩擦力很大的新渔线了。

太好了,他心里暗自高兴。到这会儿它已经跳了不止十二次了,脊背上的那些液囊都装满了空气,这下它可没法沉到深水里了,也不会死在那里了,不然我可捞不上来。过会儿它就会打起圆圈来,那时我一定得想办法对付它。想不通它怎么会突然跳起来,难道是饿得慌,要起来拼命了?还是在夜里被什么东西吓了一跳?也有可能它突然感到害怕了。但不像啊,它那么沉着健壮,似乎是毫无畏惧、信心十足啊。这真奇怪。

“你自己最好也是毫无畏惧并信心十足的,老头子,”他鼓励自己道,“你是把它暂时制住了,不过你没法收回渔线。还好,过会儿它就得打转。”

老人这时用他的左手和肩膀拽住渔线。他弯下身去,用右手舀了一瓢水洗掉粘在脸上被压烂的鳃肉。他怕这肉会让他恶心,弄得他呕吐,丧失了力气。脸弄干净了之后,他把右手在船舷外的水里洗了洗,然后让它泡在盐水里,这时日出前的第一线曙光已经来临。它差不多是朝正东方向走的,他想。这说明它累了,正随着水流走呢。过会儿它就要打转了。那时我们的

活才真正开始。等他觉得右手在水里泡的时间够长了,就把它收了回来,对着它看了看。

“还好,疼痛对一条汉子来说,算不上什么。”

他小心地拽着渔线,不让它嵌进新割破的任何一道伤口。他挪了挪身子,以便能把左手伸进小船另一边的海水里。

“你这没用的东西,这么点事儿,你都差点儿让我丢脸,”他对着他的左手埋怨道,“有会儿工夫,我还真以为你不行了呢。”

为什么我生来没有两只好手呢?他想。可能是我自己的错,没有好好地训练它。不过老天可以作证它的学习机会其实够多了。不管怎么说,今天夜里它干得还不赖,它仅仅抽了一次筋。它要是再抽筋,那就干脆让这渔线把它勒断算了。

他想到这里,知道自己的脑子开始有点犯糊涂了,于是想起应该再吃一点鲱鳅。但是我不能,他对自己说。情愿头重脚轻,我也不能因为呕吐丧失了我的力气。再说,我要是真吃了下去,还不知道胃吃不吃得消。唉,现在我一闭眼就想起刚才鱼肉贴在脸上的熊样,真是狼狈。不过我要把它留着以防万一,臭了再扔掉也不迟。不过现在想靠营养来增强力气,已经太晚了。你真蠢,他埋怨自己。赶紧把另外一条飞鱼吃了吧。

飞鱼就放在那儿,已经洗干净,可以吃了。他用左手把它捡起来,吞到了嘴巴里,细细地咀嚼着鱼骨头,一边嚼一边咽,连尾巴也吞了下去。

它几乎比任何鱼都更有营养,他想。至少能给我所需要的那种力气。如今我是竭尽所能了,他想。让这鱼打起转来吧,让我来好好会会它。

从这次他出海到现在,已经是第三次出太阳了,这时鱼开始打起转来。

光从渔线的斜度看,他还判断不出鱼在打转,这还为时过



早。他只是感觉渔线上的拉力微微地减少了一些，于是他就开始用右手轻轻地往回拉。渔线还是像往常那样绷得死死的，可是说也奇怪，拉到快断掉的时候，却渐渐可以往回收了。他把渔线从肩膀和头上卸下来，然后开始稳稳地往回收渔线。他的双手一来一回，很有节奏地大幅度地拉着，全身和双腿的力气都用在了上面，两条老腿和肩膀跟着双手配合地转动着。

“这圈子还真大，不过它总算在打转了。”

接着渔线就收不回来了，他紧紧拉着，竟看见水珠儿在阳光的照射下从渔线上迸出来。接着渔线就开始往外溜，老人跪下来，很不情愿地让它又渐渐地退回到深暗的水中。

“它正绕到圈子的外圈去了。”他明白过来。我一定要拼了老命拉紧，他想。拉紧了，它兜的圈子就会一次比一次小。也许一个钟头我就能看见它。眼下我一定得稳住，过会儿我就来收拾它。

但这鱼就只顾自个儿慢慢地打着转，两小时后，老人汗流浃背，累得骨头都快散了架。还好这时圈子已经小得多了，而且根据渔线的斜度，他判断出鱼在一边游一边不断地上升。

一个小时里，老人一直眼冒金星。汗水流到他的眼睛里，渗到眼睛上方和脑门上的伤口里，让他痛得不得了。他倒不怕眼冒金星，这么拼命地拉渔线，感到头晕目眩是很正常的事。但有两次他感到天旋地转，差一点就跌倒，这才让他担心。

“我可不能让自己垮下去，就这样死在一条鱼的手里。”他说，“我都把它顺利地钓到手了，老天一定会保佑我熬过去的。我要念一百遍《天主经》和一百遍《圣母经》，不过眼下还不能念。”

就算已经念过了吧，他想，我过会儿再补起。

就在这时，他觉得双手拽住的渔线突然给拉了一下，又好像

是什么东西撞了一下，来势很猛，又强劲又沉重。

它在用它的长嘴撞铁丝导线呢，他猜想着。这是免不了的，它必须得这么干。但这样一来也许会让它跳起来，我可是情愿它继续打转。它要呼吸空气倒必须跳出水面来，但每跳一次，渔钩就会把伤口拉得更大一点。这可不好，它会把渔钩甩掉。

“别跳啦，鱼啊，”他央求道，“求你别跳啦。”

大鱼又撞了铁丝导线好几次，每次它一甩头，老人就放出一些渔线。

我必须得让它的疼痛在一个地方，他想，我的痛倒不要紧，我能控制，但它的疼痛能让它发疯。

过了会儿，鱼不再撞击铁丝了，又慢慢地打起转来。这时老人开始不停地收进渔线。但是他又感到头晕了。他用左手舀了点海水，洒在脑门上，然后又洒了点在脖颈上，并揉了揉。

“幸好我没抽筋，”他庆幸地说道，“过会儿它就会蹿出来，我得熬住。你非熬下去不可，退缩的念头你想都不要想。”

他靠着船头跪下，暂时又把渔线挎在背上。眼下我要趁它朝外兜圈子的时候歇一下，等它兜回来我再站起来对付它，他这样做了决定。

他真巴不得在船头歇一下，让鱼自个儿兜个圈子，不用收回一点渔线。但等到渔线一松动，老人就明白过来，鱼已经掉头朝小船游过来了。他马上站起来，又开始做起先前收回渔线的那种左右胳膊转动、交替拉拽的动作，快得就像梭子在飞舞。

我还从来没有这样疲惫过，他想，老天助我，现在刮起信风来了，我正好靠它把这鱼拖过来。这风来得太及时了，我正需要它。

“等它向外兜下个圈子的时候，我要歇一下，现在我好多了，再兜个两三圈，我就能逮牢它了。”



他把草帽推到后脑勺上，可就在这时，大鱼突然一个转身，他被渔线一拉，一屁股坐在了船头上。

现在你忙你的吧，鱼兄，他想。你转身时我再来对付你。

这会儿浪大了不少，不过吹的还是晴天的微风，他还得靠它回去呢。

“我只要朝西南划就成。人在海上是绝不会迷路的，何况这是个长长的岛屿。”

鱼兜到第三圈的时候，他才看见它。

起先看见的是一个黑乎乎的影子，它从船底下经过花了很长时间，他简直不能相信它有那么长。

“不可能，”他说，“它不可能那么大。”

但它就有那么大。一圈兜完，它浮出水面，离老人只有三十码远，他看见它的尾巴露出在水面上。这尾巴竖起来比一把大镰刀的刀刃还高，现出极淡的浅紫色，竖在深蓝色的海面上。它向后倾斜着在水面游，老人看见它庞大的身躯和周身的紫色条纹。它的脊鳍朝下耷拉着，而它巨大的胸鳍却张得大大的。

大鱼兜完这圈回来时，老人才看清它的眼睛和绕着它游的两条灰色的小鱼。有时候小鱼贴在它身上，有时候又倏地游开去，有时候又会在它的阴影里自由自在地游着。它们每条都有三英尺多长，游得快时像鳗鱼一般，猛烈地甩动着身子。

老人这时在冒汗，不过不光是太阳晒的，还有别的原因。每回这条大鱼沉着、平静地转回来时，他总是赶紧收回一点渔线，所以他心里有数，再兜上两个圈子，就有机会把渔叉扎进鱼身了。

可我必须得把它拉得近点，再近点，越近越好。我可千万不能扎它的脑袋，我得一出手就扎进它的心脏。

“要冷静，要有力，老头儿。”他要求自己。

又兜了一圈，鱼的脊背终于露出来了，但离小船还是太远了一点。再兜了一圈，还是太远，不过这次露出水面更高了些。老人深信，再收回一些渔线，就可以把它拉到船边来了。

他早就把渔叉准备好了，连在叉上的那卷细绳子放在一只圆筐内，一端紧系在船头的缆柱上。

这时大鱼正兜了一个圈子回来，看上去既沉着又美丽，只有它的大尾巴在摆动。老人竭尽全力想把它拉得再近些。有那么一会儿，鱼的身子朝他这边倾斜了一下，但它马上竖起了身子，又兜起圈子来。

“我把它拉动了，”老人惊讶地说，“我刚才竟然把它拉动了。”

他又感到头晕，可他稳牢自己，竭尽全力拽住了那条大鱼。我竟把它拉动了，他想。也许这回我能把它拉过来。拉呀，我的手；站稳了，我的腿儿；熬下去吧，我的头；为了我，你要撑牢，你可从没晕倒过。他这样鼓励着自己，并狠下决心，这一回一定要把那条鱼拉过来。

但是，等他使尽浑身力气，动起手来全力拉时，那鱼却侧过一半身子，然后竖直地游了开去。

“鱼啊鱼，你反正是死路一条，难道你非得把我也害死吗？”老人有点痛苦地说。

照这样下去我将一事无成，他想。他的嘴巴干得说不出话来，但此刻他也顾不上伸手去拿水来喝了。这一回我必须把它拉到船边来，他又下了次决心。它再多兜几圈，我就不行了。不，他马上否定自己，你行的，你在说什么傻话，你永远行的，你忘记了你是冠军吗？

下一圈时，他差一点就把它拉了过来，可是这鱼真不是盏省油的灯，又竖起了身子，慢慢地游走了。



你是真要把我害死呀，鱼啊，老人都有点哀叹了。不过你有权利这样做。我还没见过谁比你更庞大、更美丽、更沉着和更高贵的呢。老弟，来，整死我。我可不在乎谁整死谁。

现在你脑子又糊涂了，他骂自己。你必须保持清醒，知道吗？头脑保持清醒。要像个男人一样去忍受痛苦，或者学学人家鱼兄，他想。

“清醒过来吧，脑袋，”他用轻得连自己都听不到的声音说，“清醒过来吧。”

鱼又兜了两圈，还是老样子。

我弄不懂，老人想。每一回他都觉得自己快要垮了。我真弄不懂为什么。但我还是要试一下。

他又试了一次，等他把鱼拉得快转过来时，他感到自己就要垮了。那鱼竖直了身子，好像在嘲笑他一样，又晃晃悠悠地游了开去，大尾巴还在海面上摇摆着。

我就不信这个邪，我还要再试一下，老人对自己许诺着，尽管这时他的双手已经软弱无力，眼睛也发花了，只看得见在眼前闪烁的黑影。

他又试了一下，还是同样情形。原来如此，他好像悟到了什么似的，我还没动手就感到要垮下来了，是我自己没集中精神，不行，我还要再试一下。

他忍住一切痛楚，拿出剩余的一点力气和早已丧失殆尽的自傲，来对付这条大鱼的痛苦挣扎。说也奇怪，这会儿大鱼游到了他的身边，并继续斯文地游着，它的嘴几乎碰到了小船的船壳板。它开始在船边游过去，身子又长、又高、又宽，银色的底子上点缀着紫色的条纹，这条纹在水里显得无穷无尽。

老人扔下渔线，用脚踩牢，然后赶紧把渔叉举得尽可能地高，使出全身的力气，再加上刚才鼓起的勇气，狠狠地往鱼身的

一边直扎下去，那位置就在大胸鳍后面一点儿的地方，这胸鳍高高地竖立着，刚好到老人胸膛的高度。他感觉那铁叉扎了进去，就赶紧把身子靠了上去，让渔叉扎得更深一点，再用全身的重量把它压下去。

于是那鱼翻腾起来，尽管死到临头了，它仍从水里高高跳起，把它那惊人的长度、宽度和它的力量与美丽展露得一览无余。它仿佛悬在了空中，就停在老人的头顶上方。接着，它轰地一声掉进水里，浪花溅了老人一身，也溅了一船。

老人感到头晕、恶心，看不大清楚东西，但他还是凭感觉放松了渔叉上的绳子，让它从他那划破了皮的双手慢慢地溜出去。等他的眼睛好使了，他看到那鱼已经仰天躺着了，银色的肚皮朝上。渔叉的柄斜露在鱼的肩部外面，蓝色的海水被它心脏里流出的鲜血染红了。起初，这摊血黑乎乎的，如同一英里多深的蓝色海水中的一块礁石，然后它像云彩般扩散开来。那鱼是银色的，一动不动地随着波浪浮动着。

老人仔细地看，见到的只是一个个片断的影像。他把渔叉上的绳子在船头的系缆柱上绕了两圈，然后把头搁在双手上。

“让我的脑子保持清醒吧，”他靠在船头的木板上说，“我是个疲倦的糟老头儿。可是我杀死了这条鱼，它是我的兄弟。现在我得去干剩下的辛苦活了。”

现在我得准备好套索和绳子，把它绑在船边，他想。即使我有两个人，把船装满了水来把它拉上船，然后把水舀掉，这条小船也绝对容不下它。我得做好一切准备，把它拖过来，再把它好好绑牢，然后我就可以竖起桅杆，扬起船帆，驾船回家了。

他动手把鱼拖到船边，这样就可以用一根绳子穿过它的鳃，然后从嘴里把绳拉出来，再把它头紧紧地绑在船头。我要看看它、碰碰它、摸摸它，他想。它是我的战利品、我的财产，他得



意地想。不过我想摸它倒不是为了这个。我想刚才在我第二次握着渔叉的柄扎进去的时候我已经碰到了它的心脏。现在我得把它拖过来，绑牢，用一根绳子套牢它的尾巴，再用另一根拴牢它的腰，把它绑在这小船上。

“说干就干，老头儿，”他说完喝了一小口水，“仗已经打完，剩下的就是好多苦力活了。”

他抬头望望天空，然后看看船外的鱼。他仔细看了一下太阳，有些高兴地在心里说了一句，才刚过晌午嘛。这时信风刮起来了。这些渔线现在都没用了，等我回了家，就和那孩子把它们再接起来。

“过来吧，鱼。”他召唤道，好像这鱼还活着，能听懂他的话似的。可是这鱼没过来，而是躺在海面上摇摆着，老人只得把小船划到它的身边。

等他靠拢了，并把鱼的头靠在船头边时，他简直不能相信它竟有那么大。他定了定神，从系缆柱上解下渔叉柄上的绳子，穿进鱼鳃，然后把它从鱼嘴里拉出来，再在它那剑似的长上颚上绕了一圈，然后穿过另一个鱼鳃，在剑嘴上也绕了一圈，把那两股绳子打了个结，然后紧系在船头的系缆柱上。接着他割下一截绳子，走到船尾套住鱼尾巴。这时鱼已经从原来的紫银两色变成了纯银色，而条纹和尾巴已显出同样的淡紫色。这些条纹比张开了五指的人的手还要宽，而它的眼睛看上去就像潜望镜中的反射镜，惨白得毫无生气。

“唉，要弄死它也只有靠这个办法了。”老人说。他喝了水，觉得好多了，头脑也觉得清醒了，知道自己不会垮了。看样子它可不止一千五百磅，他估算着，说不准还要重得多。要是去掉头尾和内脏什么的，肉应该有三分之二的重量，照三毛钱一磅来算，那该是多少？

“我得拿枝铅笔来算算，我的脑子还不够清醒。不过，我想那个了不起的狄马吉奥今天也会替我感到骄傲。我倒没长骨刺，不过两只手和背真是痛得要命。”不晓得骨刺是什么玩意儿，他想。说不准我们都长着那东西，只是自己不晓得罢了。

他把鱼牢牢地系在船头、船尾和中央的座板上。它真大，简直就像在船边又绑了一只要大得多的船。他割了一段渔线，把鱼的下颌和它的长上颚扎在一起，这样它的嘴就不会张开了，而船也就可以顺畅地行驶了。然后他竖起桅杆，装上那根当渔钩用的棍子和下桁，扬起打满补丁的帆，船就开始移动了。他半躺在船尾，向着西南方向前进了。

他用不着指南针来告诉他哪里是西南方，他只消感觉一下信风和帆的动向就能知道前进的方向。我还是放根细渔线到水里，上面系个勺形象饵的东西，或许能骗些鱼儿，钓上来吃吃，也可以润润嘴。但他找不到勺子，而且沙丁鱼也都烂掉了。他只好趁船经过那片黄色的马尾藻时用渔钩钩上来一簇海藻，然后把它抖了抖，里面的虾米就乖乖地都掉在了船板上。他粗粗地看了一下，差不多有一打以上，活蹦乱跳的，就像沙蚤一般。老人用拇指和食指掐去了它们的头，然后连壳带尾嚼着吃了下去。它们小得可怜，不过他知道它们营养丰富，而且味道还很不错。

瓶里还有两口水，老人吃了虾以后，就喝了半口。小船折腾了这么久，已经有了很多破损，所以现在看起来它行驶得已经算很不错了。他把舵柄挟在胳膊窝里掌着舵。他看得到那条鱼，他只要看看自己的两只手，感觉一下脊背还靠在船尾上，就知道这是千真万确的事，自己没在做梦。有好一会儿，眼看着好事就要泡汤了，他感到非常难受，以为这只不过是一场梦罢了，但等他后来看到鱼跳出水面，落下前一动不动地悬在半空中的那一刹那，他肯定这是真的，而且猜想这里面一定有什么天大的秘



密,让他怎么都不能相信。虽然现在他看得像往常那样清楚,但当时看得确实不很清楚。

现在他知道,那鱼就在这里,他的双手和脊背也都实实在在的,他确定自己绝没有在做梦。这双手很快就会好的,他想。它们血都快流干了,不过海水会把它们治好的。这海湾里的深蓝的海水可是世上最好的止血药,我所要做的就是保持头脑清醒。这两只老手可都已经尽了自己的本分。我们航行得很好。你看这鱼,闭着嘴,尾巴还一上一下地竖着,我们就像亲兄弟一样,齐心协力地向前航行。接着他的脑袋就有点儿不清楚了,他竟然胡思乱想起来,到底是它在带着我回家,还是我在带着它回家?要是说我把它拖在船后,那就毫无疑问是我带它回家了;要是这鱼丢尽了面子,被我放进了小船里,那么也不会有什么疑问,还是我带着它回家。不过这鱼和小船是并排地拴在一起航行的,那是怎么回事呢?管它呢,只要它高兴,就让它把我带回家去得了。我把它制伏,只不过是靠了诡计,可它对我却并无恶意。

他们向前航行,还是一帆风顺。老人把流着血的手浸在海水里,让咸咸的海水刺痛自己来保持头脑清醒。积云堆得很高很高,上空还有许多的卷云,老人由此看出微风将刮上一个晚上。老人不时地看看他的那条鱼,好像还是不相信这是真的一样。这时离第一条鲨鱼来袭击他刚好还有一个钟头。

这条鲨鱼的到来绝不是偶然的。当暗红色的血不断地从大鱼身上流出,在一英里深的海里沉下去并弥漫开来的时候,这条鲨鱼就嗅着这血腥味从海底深处游上来了。它迫不及待地蹿上来,速度快得竟然冲破了蓝色的水面,直接暴露在阳光里。接着它就掉回到海里,并循着血腥味的踪迹,顺着小船和大鱼所走的路线飞快地游去了。

有时它迷失了那气味,但它总会重新捕捉到,或者就凭嗅到

的那么一丝气味,然后飞快地拼命跟上,生怕错过了一顿美餐。这是条很大的灰鯖鲨,生来就是一副好体格,游得跟海里最快的鱼一般快,除了它的上下颚,全身上下都美极了。它的背部和剑鱼的一样蓝,肚子是银色的,鱼身光滑而漂亮。要是不看它那张紧闭着的大嘴,它长得就和剑鱼一样。现在它就在水面下迅速地游着,高高耸起的背鳍就像刀子一样划破水面,而且一点都不抖动。在它那紧闭着的双唇里面,八排牙齿全都朝里倾斜着。这些牙齿和大多数鲨鱼的不太一样,它们不是一般的金字塔形的,而是像人的手指蜷曲起来时的爪子一样。它们几乎跟老人的手指一样长,两边都像刀刃般锋利。这种鱼生来就吃海里所有的鱼,它们游得非常迅速,身体又非常健壮,还有齐备的武器,真是所向披靡,锐不可当。这时它又闻到了新鲜的血腥味,马上加快了速度朝目标游去,它那蓝色的背鳍就像刀刃一样快速地划过水面。

老人看着它游过来,看出这是条有恃无恐而为所欲为的鲨鱼,心里顿时微微一沉。他马上准备好渔叉,系紧绳子,紧紧盯住这条向他游来的鲨鱼。不过一摸绳子,才发现短了一截,缺了刚才他割了用来绑鱼的那一段。

这会儿老人头脑一下子清醒了过来,心放下了十二分的决心,但并没抱多少希望。事情太好了就不会长久,他这样对自己解释道。他一会儿盯着步步逼近的鲨鱼,一会儿朝那条大鱼看上一眼。说不准这真的是一场梦,他想。我没法阻止它来袭击我,不过我也许能弄死它。放马过来吧,灰鯖鲨!碰上我算你倒霉了。

鲨鱼飞快地逼近船尾,疯狂地袭击大鱼,老人看着它张大了嘴,眼睛显得很奇怪。它咬住了鱼尾巴上面一点儿的的地方,牙齿发出嘎吱嘎吱的响声。鲨鱼的头已经露在了水面上,它的背也



慢慢地显露出来，老人清晰地听见那条大鱼的皮肉被撕裂的声音。就在这一瞬间，他把渔叉朝下猛地向鲨鱼的脑袋扎去，刚好扎在它两眼之间的那条线和从鼻子笔直延伸到脑后的那条线的交叉点上。但事实上并没有这两条线，有的只是又大又尖的蓝蓝的脑袋和两只巨大的眼睛，还有那嘎吱作响、吞噬一切的凸出的两颌。但老人知道那儿正是大脑的所在，于是就使出了全身所有的力气，用鲜血模糊的双手握着一支上好的渔叉向它扎了下去。老人扎它倒并不抱什么希望，但怀着十分的决心和十二分的狠心。

鲨鱼翻了个身，老人看出它眼睛里已经没了生气，接着它又翻了个身，刚好在自己身上缠了两圈绳子。老人知道这鲨鱼就快死了，但它还是挣扎了一下。它肚子朝上，尾巴拍打着，两颌嘎吱作响，像一艘快艇似的在水面上划行。它拍打着尾巴，海水泛出白色的泡沫来。它四分之三的身体露出在水面上，绳子一下子被绷得很紧，它抖了一下，绳子啪地一声就断了。鲨鱼在水面上静静地浮了一会儿，老人紧盯着它，然后它慢慢地沉了下去。

“可惜呀，它可吃了我大约四十磅肉。”老人叹惜道。它把我的渔叉也带走了，还有那么多绳子，他想，而且糟糕的是现在这条鱼流的血更多了，一定还会有其他的鲨鱼来。

他不忍心地朝这条大鱼看了一眼，因为它已经被咬得残缺不全了。当鱼受到攻击的时候，他觉得就像自己受到攻击一样。

可是我把这条鲨鱼给杀了，谁让它来偷吃我的鱼，这就算是我为我的大鱼报了仇，他想。这条鲨鱼可是我见到过的最大的灰鯖鲨。天晓得，我竟见过这么大的鲨鱼。

事情太好了就不会长久了，他又一次这样解释道。我倒真希望在做梦呢，那样我就根本没有钓到过这条鱼，我也可以独自

躺在铺满旧报纸的床上了。

“不过人可不是生来就要接受失败的，”他说，“一个人可以被毁灭，但决不能被击垮。”不过我把这条大马林鱼给杀了，还是很伤心，他想。现在倒霉的时候终于要来了，而我连渔叉都丢了。这条灰鲭鲨真是又残忍又能干，又强壮又聪明。不过还好我比它更聪明。谁知道呢，说不准我比它要笨，他想。也许只是我的武器比它强罢了。

“别多想啦，糟老头。”他大声地命令自己，“顺着这航线向前，走一步看一步吧。”

但我一定得想想法子呀，他明白过来。因为我剩下的就这些东西了。你看，就这点东西，还有个棒球。不晓得那个了不起的狄马吉奥会不会喜欢我那样击中它的脑子。这可没什么了不起的，他想，谁都做得到。不过你是不是觉得我现在这双手跟骨刺一样是个很大的麻烦？我可不晓得。我的脚后跟可从没出过什么毛病，除了有一次在游水时我踩到了一条海鳐鱼，被它刺了一下，我的小腿就麻痹了，真是痛得要命。

“想点开心的事儿吧，糟老头，”他说，“现在你可是每过一分钟，就离家近一步啊。丢了四十磅鱼肉，你航行起来不是更轻快了吗？”

他很清楚等小船进了海流的中部会发生什么事。可是眼下真是一点办法也没有。

“不，有办法，”他惊喜地说出声来，“我可以把刀子绑在一支桨的把子上。”

于是他就一个胳膊窝挟着舵柄，一只脚踩住帆脚索，把刀子绑了上去。

“行了，”他说，“老头儿还是我这个老头儿，不过我现在总算不是赤手空拳了。”



这时风刮得大了些，他还是很顺利地向前航行着。他看了看鱼的上半身，渐渐地恢复了一点儿希望。

我真蠢，怎么会不抱希望呢，他想。再说，我认为这是个罪过。得了吧，别想罪过了，他嘲笑自己道。麻烦都已经够多了，还想什么罪过。何况我压根儿就不懂这个。

我根本不明白什么是罪过，也说不准我是相信还是不相信。也许杀死这条鱼真是一桩罪过。我看是的，尽管我是为了养活自己并且给许多人带来吃的才这么干的。不过话又得说回来，什么事不是罪过？别再想罪过了。再说现在想它也太迟了，我都把它杀了，而且有些人是拿了钱来干这个的。让他们去想吧。你生来就是个渔夫，就像那鱼天生就是一条鱼一样。圣彼德罗^①是个捕鱼的，跟那个了不起的狄马吉奥的父亲一样。

但他就是喜欢去想所有那些有他卷在里头的事，而且因为没有什么东西好看，又没有收音机，他就想得特别多，一个劲地想着罪过。你把鱼杀了可不光是为了养活自己、卖了它换买食品，他想。你杀了它还为了自尊心，因为你是个渔夫。它活着的时候你爱它，它死了你还是爱它。要是你爱它，杀了它就不是罪过。但说不准是更大的罪过。

“你想得太多了，糟老头。”他说出声来。

但你杀了那条灰鯖鲨不是很开心嘛，他想。它跟你一样，也靠吃活鱼维持生命。它不是食腐动物，也不像有些鲨鱼那样，只知道游来游去到处捕食满足胃口。它是美丽而高贵的，什么都不怕。

“我杀它是自卫，”老人为自己辩解道，“而且我让它死得很干脆。”

再说，世上到处都是一种东西杀死另外一种东西，只不过方式不同罢了。捕鱼养活了我，同样也会把我害死。不过那孩子

倒是在帮我活下去，他想。我可不能过分地自欺欺人。

他探身出去，从鱼身上被鲨鱼咬过的地方撕下一块肉。他细嚼着，觉得肉质很好，味道很鲜美，有韧性，汁液丰富，就像牲口的肉，不过不是红色的。肉里一点筋都没有，他知道要是在市场上这肉准能卖最高的价钱。可是眼下实在没有什么办法不让它的气味散发到水里去，老人预感糟糕透顶的时刻就快要来了。

风继续吹着，不过稍微往东北方向偏了一点，他明白这意味着风一下子还不会停下来。老人朝前方望去，看不到一片风帆，也看不到任何船或它们冒出来的烟。只有飞鱼从他船头下跃起，向两边游走，还有就是一簇簇黄色的马尾藻。他连只鸟儿都看不到。

航行了两个钟头，他一直在船尾歇着，有时候从大马林鱼身上撕下点儿肉来嚼嚼，有时休息一下，保持体力，就在这时候他看到了两条鲨鱼中首先露面的那一条。

“Ay。”他大声地喊了一声。这个词是没法翻译的，也许不过是一个响声，就像一个人感觉钉子穿过他的双手，钉进木头时不由自主地发出的尖叫。

“加拉诺鲨！”他惊讶地喊出声来。他看见另一个鳍紧跟在第一个的背后从水里冒出来，凭那褐色的三角形鳍和不断扫动的尾巴，老人认出它们正是铲鼻鲨。它们嗅到了血腥味，变得很兴奋，因为饿昏了头，于是就激动得一会儿迷失了嗅迹，一会儿又嗅到了。它们一直紧紧地跟着，步步靠近。

老人系紧帆脚索，卡牢舵柄。然后他拿起绑了刀子的桨，尽可能轻地把它举起来，因为他那双手已经痛得不听使唤了。然后他把手张开，再轻轻地捏住了桨，让双手松弛下来。他把手紧紧地合拢，以便能忍受疼痛而不致退缩，一边注视着游过来的鲨鱼。这会儿他看见了它们那又宽又扁的铲子般的头，还有它们



末尾呈白色的宽阔的胸鳍。这种发出难闻气味的鲨鱼，特别让人讨厌，既吞食其他的鱼，也吃腐烂的死鱼，饿得慌的时候，连船上的桨和舵都会咬。就是这些鲨鱼，会趁海龟在水面上睡觉的时候咬掉它们的脚和像鳍一样的四肢，要是碰到它们饿疯的时候，还会在水里袭击人，即使人身上并没有什么鱼血或黏液的腥味。

“Ay，”老人说道，“来吧，加拉诺鲨。快来送死吧。”

它们来了，但和那条灰鳍鲨不一样。一条转了个身，钻到小船底下不见了。老人觉得小船晃动起来，原来它在用嘴撕拉大鱼了。另一条用它那眯成缝似的黄眼睛注视着老人，然后飞快地游过来，张大着半圆形的上下颌，朝鱼身上已被咬过的地方咬去。在它褐色的头顶和脑袋跟脊髓相连的地方有道清晰的纹线，老人就看准那儿把绑在桨上的刀子朝那交叉点狠狠地扎进去，然后迅速地拔出来，再扎进这鲨鱼的黄色的猫眼。鲨鱼放开了咬住的鱼，身子朝下滑，但临死时还把咬下的肉吞了下去。

另一条鲨鱼还在疯狂地撕咬着大马林鱼，小船剧烈地摇晃着，于是老人就索性松开了帆脚索让小船横过来，这样鲨鱼就从船底下暴露了出来。他一看到鲨鱼，就探出身，一桨朝它扎去。他只扎在肉上，而鲨鱼的皮紧得很，刀子几乎都戳不进去，而且这一戳还震痛了他的双手和肩膀。鲨鱼很狡猾，迅速地浮了上来，探出了它的脑袋。说时迟，那时快，老人趁它的鼻子刚伸出水面往那条大鱼凑上去的时候，就对准它扁平的脑袋正中扎了下去。然后老人马上拔出刀刃，看准了朝同一地方又扎了下去。但这条鲨鱼仍旧紧闭着上下颌，死死地咬住大鱼不放，老人就顺势在它的左眼上给了一刀。不过这条鲨鱼真是硬骨头，饿死鬼，还是吊在那里。

“还不死心？那好！”老人说着就把刀刃戳进它的脊骨和脑

袋之间。这次扎起来很容易，他感觉它的软骨已经被戳掉了。老人把桨倒过来，然后把刀刃插进鲨鱼的两颌之间，想把它的嘴撬开。他把刀刃一转，鲨鱼就乖乖地松开了嘴溜走了。“滚吧，加拉诺鲨，滚得远远的，到一英里深的水里去，那里有你的朋友，说不准它还是你的老娘呢。”

老人擦了擦刀刃，把桨放下。然后他摸到了帆脚索，张起帆来，让小船重新回到原先的航道。

“这些畜生，一定吃掉了我四分之一的鱼肉，而且都是上好的鱼肉。”他心痛地说道，“但愿这只是一个梦，我压根儿就没有钓到过它。鱼啊，事情弄成这样，我真是很难过。”他不说话了，这时不想再看这条鱼了。大鱼已经流光了血，被海水冲刷着，虽然身上的条纹还看得出来，但看上去已经像镜子背面镀的银色一样了。

“鱼兄啊，我真不该来这么远的地方，你看现在我俩，我真是很抱歉，鱼兄。”

好了，别傻了，他自言自语。去看看绑刀子的绳子，看看有没有割断，再把自己的手弄弄好，还有鲨鱼要来呢。

“要是有块石头磨磨刀就好了，”老人看了看绑在桨把子上的刀子说道，“我该带块磨刀石过来的。”你该带的东西多着呢，他想。但你什么都没带来，老糊涂啊。眼下可不是想你没带什么东西的时候，想想怎么利用手头有的东西吧。

“你给我的好忠告太多了，我听得耳朵都起老茧了。”他一边自言自语地说着，一边把舵柄夹在胳肢窝里，双手浸到了水里，而小船在朝前进行。“天晓得最后那条鲨鱼咬了我多少鱼肉，这船现在倒轻多了。”他不愿去想大鱼被咬得像破棉絮一样的肚子。他知道每次鲨鱼猛地撞上去，就是一大块鱼肉被撕掉了，而大鱼现在就等于是给所有的鲨鱼留下了一条追踪的痕迹，宽得



就像在海面上开了一条大道。

它可真是条大鱼,要是鲨鱼没来的话,足够一个人整整过一个冬天啦。别想这个啦,想也没用,还是休息一下,把你的手弄弄好,保护这剩下的鱼肉吧。我手上的血腥味跟水里这么重的血腥味比,就算不上什么了。再说,我这双手出的血也不多。割破的那点地方也算不上什么。说不准出血还能让我的左手不会抽筋呢。

现在我还有什么可想的呢?什么都没有。我必须得什么都不想,才能对付下一条鲨鱼。

但愿这真是一个梦。不过谁晓得呢?说不准到最后我真能把它带回家呢。

接着来的还是条铲鼻鲨,不过是单枪匹马。看它的架势,就像一头猪急急忙忙地奔向饲料槽,不过猪可没有那么大的嘴巴,要是有的话,那人的脑袋都放得进了。老人来了个欲擒故纵,就让鲨鱼咬住大鱼,然后把桨上绑着的刀子扎进了它的脑袋。但鲨鱼朝后猛地一扭,翻了个身,刀刃啪的一声断掉了。

老人赶紧坐稳,掌好舵。这次他连看都不看那条大鲨鱼,任由它在水里慢慢地下沉,起先就是整个身子那么大,然后渐渐变小了,最后只剩一丁点儿了。这种情景总让老人看得入迷,可是这会儿他连看都不看一眼。

“现在我还剩那个渔钩,不过它没什么用处。我还有两把桨,还有那个舵把和短棍。”

如今它们可真是把我打败了。我太老了,用棍子是打不死鲨鱼的。不过我还有桨、短棍和舵把,有这些我就一定要试试。

他又把双手浸在海水里泡着。下午在渐渐地过去,已经快傍晚了,除了大海和天空,他什么都看不见。风比刚才刮得大了,他想着不久就能看到陆地。

“你已经累了，老家伙，你都累到骨头里了。”

鲨鱼直到快日落的时候才又一次来袭击他。

老人看见褐色的鳍顺着大鱼在水里留下的宽阔的痕迹游来。它们竟然都不用来回寻找鱼腥味就笔直地并排着朝小船游来。

他刹住舵把，系紧帆脚索，伸手到船尾底下拿棍子。拿出来的是个桨柄，是从一支断桨上锯下来的，大约两英尺半长。因为上面有个把手，所以他只能用一只手才能方便地使用。他就选了右手紧紧地捏住，弯着手按在上面，一边紧盯着过来的鲨鱼。来的这两条都是加拉诺鲨。

我得让第一条鲨鱼好好咬住了再打它的鼻尖，或者就朝它头顶正中打，他想。

两条鲨鱼一起紧逼过来，他一看到靠他很近的那条鲨鱼张开了嘴把牙齿嵌进了大鱼的银色腹部，就高高地举起棍子，然后向下重重地打在鲨鱼宽阔的头顶上。棍子打下去时，他觉得好像敲在坚韧的橡胶上，但他也感觉到了坚硬的骨头，于是就趁鲨鱼从大鱼身边滑下去的时候，又重重地朝它鼻尖上砸了一下。

另一条鲨鱼蹿上来后就狡猾地溜走了，这会儿它张大了嘴又扑了上来。它狠狠地撞在鱼身上，然后闭上两颌，老人只看见一块块白色的鱼肉从它嘴角溢出来。他抡起桨柄朝它砸去，只打中了头部，鲨鱼朝他看看，愣是把咬在嘴里的肉给撕了下来。老人趁它溜开去把肉咽下时，又抡起棍子朝它砸下去，不过只打中了它那厚实而坚韧的像橡胶一样的地方。

“过来吧，加拉诺鲨，再来吃呀。”

鲨鱼冲上前来，老人把棍子举到最高位置，趁它合上两颌时结结实实地给了它一棍子。这一下他感到打中了它脑门后面的骨头，于是在同一部位又给了它一棍子，这时鲨鱼慢慢地撕下嘴



里咬着的鱼肉，从鱼身边溜走了。

老人观望着，等它回来，可两条鲨鱼都没有再露面。接着他看见其中一条在海面上绕着圈儿游着，但没看见另外一条。

杀死它们是不可能了，要是我还年轻力壮，我肯定行。不过我已经把它们痛打了一顿，估计它们中哪一条都不会觉得好过。要是能用两只手抡起一根棒球棒，我准能把第一条打死。即使现在也能行，他想。

他再不愿朝那条鱼看一眼了。他知道它半个身子已经被咬烂了。刚才跟鲨鱼搏斗的时候，太阳已经落下去了。

“天马上就要黑了，到那时候我就能看得到哈瓦那的灯火了。如果我一直往东走到很远的地方，就会看见一个新开辟的海滩上的灯光。”

现在我离陆地应该不会太远，他想。这几天一直在海上，真希望没人会为此担心。当然了，那孩子肯定会担心。可我相信他对我一定有信心。好多老渔夫也会担心的。还有不少别的人，他想。我住在一个好镇子里啊。

他不能再跟这鱼说话了，它都给糟蹋得不成样子了。接着他脑海里想起了一件事。

“鱼兄啊，我现在只能叫你半条鱼了，你原来可是条完整的鱼。我真的很抱歉，我出海太远，我把咱俩都给毁了。不过我们杀死了不少鲨鱼，就你跟我一起，我们还打伤了好多条。你杀死过多少鱼啊，好兄弟？你头上长着那只矛一样的嘴，总不是白长的吧？”

他喜欢想想这条鱼，想着要是它在水里自由自在地游，那会怎样对付一条鲨鱼。唉，我真笨，我该砍下它这长嘴，拿来跟那些鲨鱼斗，但我没有斧头，后来我又把那把刀弄丢了。

要是把它砍下来了，我就可以把它绑在桨把上，那该是多好

的武器啊！那样，我们就能并肩跟它们斗啦。鱼兄啊，要是它们夜里来，你说咱们该怎么办？你有什么法子？

“对，跟它们斗，我要跟它们斗到底。”

但眼下既没有反光，也看不见什么灯火，只有风 and 那拉得稳稳的帆，周围一片漆黑，他觉得自己可能已经死了。他合上双手，摸摸掌心。双手还没死，他只需把它们分开再合上，就能感到活生生的痛楚。他把脊背靠在船尾上，肩膀告诉他自己还没有死。

我许过愿，要是逮住了这条鱼，我会念很多遍祷告，但我现在实在太累了，念不动了。我还是把麻袋拿来披在肩上吧。

他躺在船尾掌着舵，仰望着天空，等着从天空中出现反光。我还有半条鱼，他想。也许我运气好，能把这半条带回去。我总该多少有点运气吧。不，他否定了自己。谁让你走得这么远，你都把好运给冲没啦。

“别傻了，保持清醒，掌好你的舵。说不准你还有不少好运呢。”

“要是有什么地方卖好运，我倒想买一些。”

我拿什么来买呢？他问自己。不知道我拿一支弄丢了的渔叉、一把断了的小刀和两只伤了的手能不能买到。

“也许能。你不是想用在海上的八十四天来买它吗？人家也几乎把它卖给了你。你看，你不是已经钓了一条大鱼，还把它绑在了船边吗？这就是最大的运气啊！”

我可不能再胡思乱想了。好运这玩意儿，变着法儿来，谁认得出啊？可不管它是个什么样子，我都要一点儿，要多少钱我就给多少。要是我能看到灯火的反光就好了！我的愿望也太多了，但眼下我想的就是这个。他尽力坐得舒服些来把好运，因为身上一直疼痛，他就知道自己还没有死。



大约夜里十点的时候，他看见了城市的灯火反射出来的光线。起初只能依稀地看到一点，就像月亮升起前天上的微光，然后越过洋面望去，光线渐渐地清晰了，而此刻风也刮得越来越大了，大海波涛汹涌起来。他驾着小船来到了反光的圈子里，要不了多久就能靠近湾流了，他心想。

现在事情已经过去了，不过它们说不准还会再来袭击我。我一个人，没有武器，天又这么黑，怎么能对付它们呢？

这会儿他的身子僵硬疼痛，夜晚的寒风一吹，他的伤口和身上所有劳损过度的地方都疼痛起来。我希望我不用再跟它们斗了，我真是希望不用再斗下去了。

但到了午夜，他还是又跟它们搏斗了一回，而这一回他知道怎么搏斗也是徒劳的。它们成群进攻，朝大鱼直扑上来，老人只看见它们的鳍在水面上划出一道道水纹，还有它们身上发出的磷光。他朝它们的头打去，听到它们的牙齿撕咬大鱼的声音，还有它们在船底咬住大鱼时小船摇晃的声音。他看不到它们，只能凭感觉和听觉判断它们的位置，然后拼了命地挥动着棍子朝它们狠狠地砸去，但一会儿他就感到有什么东西用力地抓牢了棍子，然后棍子就不见了。

他把舵柄从舵上猛地拽下，提起它连打带砍，双手握着它一次次地向下戳去。可它们这会儿都到了船头前面，一条跟着一条地冲上来，成群地撕下一块块的鱼肉。当它们转身再来时，这些鱼肉在水面下发出一点点的亮光。

最后，有条鲨鱼朝鱼头冲过来，他知道这下子完了。他把舵柄抡起来就朝鲨鱼的脑袋劈过去。鲨鱼的牙齿咬住了厚实的鱼头，那儿的肉咬不下来，它的嘴被卡牢了。他一次又一次地朝鲨鱼劈过去。他听见舵把啪的一声断了，就索性拿起断下的把手朝鲨鱼扎去。他感觉已经扎进去了，而且心里清楚它还锋利得

很呢，就顺势再往下扎。鲨鱼终于松了嘴，翻了个身跑了。这是这群鲨鱼中的最后一条。它们再也没有什么可吃的了。

这时老人已经喘不过气来，嘴里的味儿怪怪的。这味儿带着铜腥气，又有点甜丝丝的，他一下子害怕起来，还好这味儿并不太浓，一会儿就过去了。

他朝海里吐了一口唾沫说道：“把它也吃了吧，加拉诺鲨。做个美梦吧，就梦见你干掉了一个老头。”

如今他明白自己最终还是给打败了，败得已经没法补救了。他回到船尾，发现那断成锯齿形的舵把还可以安在舵的狭槽里，这样掌舵就没问题了。他把麻袋围在肩上，让小船顺着航线前进。现在他航行得很轻松，他放下了所有的念头，同时也没了任何感觉。现在他什么都不顾了，只想着尽可能顺利地把小船行驶到家乡的港口。夜里还有些鲨鱼来咬那死鱼的残骸，就好像有人到饭桌上捡剩下的面包屑一样。老人没去搭理它们，只顾一心一意地掌好舵。他只注意到了船舷边再也没什么沉重的东西了，小船这时走得特别轻松，特别顺畅。

船还好好的，它完好无损，除了那个舵把，不过换一个很方便。

他感觉到小船已经顺着湾流在前进，并看见从沿岸那些海滩上的房子里透出来的灯光。他知道现在已经到了什么地方，而回家是不用担心了。

不管怎么说，风总是我们的朋友。然后他又纠正了自己，有时候是。还有大海，海里有我们的朋友，也有我们的敌人。对了，还有床，床也是我的朋友。对，就是床。床真是了个了不起的东西。要是吃了败仗，躺在床上那是很舒服的。我从来都不知道床竟然有这么舒服。那是什么东西把你打败了？

“没什么东西把我打败，要怪就怪我出海太远了。”



等他划进小港，露台餐馆的灯光全熄灭了，他知道人们都上床休息了。刚才海风慢慢变强，这会儿刮得更厉害了，不过港湾里还是静悄悄的。他把小船划到岩石下一小片鹅卵石前。没人来帮他的忙，他只好尽量把船往岸上靠，然后跨出船来，用绳索把小船系在一块岩石上。

他拔下桅杆，把帆卷起来绑好。然后他把桅杆扛在肩上往岸上爬。这时候他才明白自己有多疲惫。他歇了一会儿，然后借着街灯的反光，回头一看，发现那条鱼的大尾巴笔直地竖在小船的船尾后面。他看到它那光秃秃的脊骨弯曲成一条白线，还有那黑糊糊的脑袋，上面的长嘴还凸出在那里，而鱼头和鱼尾之间除了骨头还是骨头。

他接着往上爬，到了顶上，他摔倒在地，就索性躺了一会儿，让桅杆横压在肩下。他想爬起来，可就是起不来，他只好扛着桅杆坐在那儿，望着小路。一只猫从路那头走过，忙着它自己的事，老人看了一会儿，然后他又顾自望着小路了。

望了好一会儿，他才鼓了鼓劲放下桅杆，站起身来。然后他抓起桅杆，把它扛在肩上，顺着小路走去。路上他不得不坐下歇了五次，才走到他的棚屋。

进了棚屋，他把桅杆靠在墙上，摸着黑找到了一只水瓶，喝了一口水。然后他在床上躺下，拉起毯子，盖在肩上，再盖好背和腿。他脸朝下躺在报纸上，两臂笔直地伸到了床外，手掌向上。

早上，当孩子朝门内张望时，他正熟睡着。风刮得很猛，那些撒网的渔船不会出海了，所以孩子便睡了个懒觉，然后就到老人的棚屋来。老人不在的每个早上，他都过来看一看。孩子看见老人在喘气，接着又看见了老人的那双手，他哭了起来。他憋住声悄悄地走出去拿咖啡，一路上边走边哭着。

许多渔夫围在那条小船旁，看着绑在船边的东西。有一个渔夫卷起了裤腿站在水里，用一根渔线在量大鱼的残骸。

孩子没有走下岸去，实际上他刚才已经去过了，有个渔夫正替他看管着这条小船。

“他怎么样？”一个渔夫大声问道。

“在睡觉，”孩子喊着回答道，他不在乎人家看见他在哭，“不要让谁去打扰他。”

“从鼻子到尾巴足足有十八英尺长。”那个量鱼的渔夫叫道。

“我相信。”孩子说。

他走进露台餐馆，要了一罐咖啡。

“要烫一点，多加些牛奶和糖。”

“还要点什么？”

“不要了。过会儿我再看看他想吃点什么。”

“那条鱼可真大，”饭店老板说，“从来没有见过这么大的鱼。你们昨天捉到的那两条也不错。”

“让我的鱼见鬼去吧。”孩子说着又哭了起来。

“想要什么喝的吗？”老板问。

“不要，”孩子说，“叫他们别去打扰桑地亚哥。我就回来。”

“跟他说我很难过。”

“谢谢。”孩子说。

孩子拿着那罐热咖啡一直走进老人的棚屋，然后在他的身边坐下，等着他醒来。有一会儿眼看他快醒过来了，可是他翻了个身，又沉沉地睡过去了，孩子只好跨过小路去借了些木柴，点着了重热了一下咖啡。

老人终于醒了。

“别坐起来，”孩子说，“把这个喝了。”他倒了些咖啡在一只玻璃杯里。



老人与海

老人接过杯子，喝下了咖啡。

“它们把我打败了，马诺林，它们确实把我打败了。”

“它没把您打败。那条鱼可没有把您打败。”

“对。但后来我是真的被它们打败了。”

“佩德里科在看守着小船和打鱼的工具。您打算怎么处置那个鱼头？”

“让佩德里科把它切碎，放在捕鱼机里使用。”

“那个长嘴呢？”

“你要的话就送给你吧。”

“我要，”孩子说，“现在我们来计划一下别的事情。”

“他们来找过我吗？”

“当然啦。他们还派出了海岸警卫队和飞机。”

“海洋太大，而船又太小，它们很难看见我。”老人说，这时他觉得可以对一个人说说话而不用自言自语或对着海洋说话真是很开心的一件事，“我很想你，你们抓到什么没有？”

“头一天一条，第二天一条，第三天两条。”

“很好。”

“现在我们又可以一起钓鱼了。”

“不，我运气不好。我再也不会有好运了。”

“去它的好运吧，”孩子说，“我会给您带来好运的。”

“你爸妈会怎么说？”

“我才不在乎呢。昨天我抓了两条。不过现在我们要一起钓鱼，因为我还有好多东西要向您学呢。”

“我们得弄一支能扎死鱼的好长矛，经常把它放在船上。你可以用一辆旧福特汽车上的弹簧片做矛头。我们可以拿到瓜纳巴科亚[®]去磨，把它磨得很锋利，不要回火锻造，不然它会断裂。我的刀子就是这样断的。”

“我会再去弄把刀子来，把弹簧片也磨磨快。这大风要刮多少天？”

“说不准。可能三天，可能还不止。”

“我会把一切都安排好的。”孩子说，“您把手养好，老爷爷。”

“我知道怎么把它们照顾好。夜里，我感到胸口有什么东西碎了，我吐了一些奇怪的东西出来。”

“把胸口也养养好，”孩子说，“躺下吧，老爷爷，我去给您拿干净的衬衫，再带点吃的过来。”

“我不在的这两天的报纸，你也随便给我带一份过来。”

“您得快点好起来，我还有好多东西要向您学呢，您可以把什么都教给我。您吃了多少苦啊？”

“不少啊。”

“我去把吃的和报纸拿过来，”孩子说，“好好休息吧，老爷爷。我再到药房弄点药来给您治治手。”

“记得跟佩德里科说那鱼头是他的了。”

“好的，我知道了。”

孩子出了门，沿着那已经被踩踏得没了棱角的珊瑚石路走去，他又哭了起来。

那天下午，露台餐馆来了一群游客。有个女人朝下面的海水望去，看见在一些空的啤酒罐头和死梭鱼中间，有一条又粗又长的白色脊骨，一端还有条巨大的尾巴。东风从港口外头不断地掀起大浪，而这尾巴就随着潮水摇摆着。

“那是什么？”她指着那条大鱼长长的脊骨问一名服务员。这脊骨现如今只是垃圾了，就等着潮水来把它冲走。

“Tiburón，”服务员说，“就是鲨鱼……”他正打算解释这是怎么回事，但说到这里，那位女士就接过了话。

“我不知道鲨鱼还有这么漂亮的尾巴，形状好美啊。”



老人与海

“我也不知道。”她的男伴说道。

在沿着小路上去的棚屋里，老人又睡着了。他还是脸朝下躺着，孩子坐在他身边，看着他。老人又梦见狮子了。

注解：

①墨西哥湾暖流简称湾流，是世界上规模最大的暖流。沿北美大陆东岸向东北流去，至北纬 40°附近进入西风带开始折向东流，并呈扇形展开，称北大西洋暖流。南赤道暖流因受巴西大陆之阻而分出的北支——圭亚那暖流，经墨西哥湾流出变为佛罗里达暖流，与北赤道暖流北上的安的列斯暖流汇合，组成强劲的湾流。该暖流因绕经炎热的墨西哥湾后而流出，因此规模很大，水温很高。在佛罗里达出口处宽约 60—80 公里，出口后加宽到 150 公里，深度达 800 米，流速每日 130—150 公里，表层水温度 27℃—28℃。湾流及北大西洋暖流所经之地水温和气温大幅度升高，在强大西风吹送下向东北可直达北极圈以北的巴伦支海，使欧洲西北部也成为温暖湿润的温带海洋性气候，一月平均气温比同纬度的亚洲东岸和北美东岸气温要高出 15℃—20℃，位于北极圈以北的苏联北冰洋沿岸港口摩尔曼斯克港成为不冻港。墨西哥湾暖流所以能成为世界上最强大的暖流，除上述北赤道暖流、安的列斯暖流加上南赤道暖流北上的圭亚那暖流外，还有墨西哥湾接受了由信风不断赶入的暖水，使墨西哥湾成了巨大的“热蓄水库”。从佛罗里达海峡流出的强大而高温、高速的佛罗里达洋流，与从东南来的安的列斯暖流汇合后，声势更大。

②鲟鳇是分布在世界温暖地区的洄游鱼类，以追逐飞鱼及竹筴鱼而出名，肉味并不可口，体色极美，但死后马上褪色。

③位于中美洲尼加拉瓜的东部，此地大多为茂密的热带雨林，土壤相当肥沃，适合农耕。

④这支纽约市的棒球队是美国职业棒球界的强队。

⑤美国职业棒球界按水平高低分大联赛及小联赛两种组织，美国联赛是两大联赛之一，扬基队是其中的佼佼者。

⑥指费城的希贝公园，是市棒球队比赛的主要场地。

⑦在北大西洋东部的一个火山群岛，位于摩洛哥西南，当时尚未独立，隶属西班牙。



老人与海

⑧测量水深的单位,每英寻等于 1.829 米。

⑨位于哈瓦那东南,是古巴中部滨加勒比海的一良港。

⑩我国天文学称之为参宿七,光度极亮。猎户座是赤道带星座之一。每年 2 月 5 日晚上 8 时猎户座经过上中天,是冬季夜晚星空的一个大星座,是全天最华丽的星座,也是众多星座中亮星最多的一个星座。

⑪即彼得。耶稣刚开始传道时,在加利利海边所收的最早的四个门徒之一。

⑫位于哈瓦那东约 5 英里处,为哈瓦那的郊区,有海滨浴场。

The Old Man and the Sea

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*^①, 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. It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went down to help him carry either the coiled lines or the gaff and harpoon and the sail that was furled around the mast. The sail was patched with flour sacks and, furled, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat.

The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They

① 该词为西班牙语,在此用斜体,全书均同。



were as old as erosions in a fishless desert.

Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated.

“Santiago,” the boy said to him as they climbed the bank from where the skiff was hauled up. “I could go with you again. We’ve made some money.”

The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him.

“No,” the old man said. “You’re with a lucky boat. Stay with them.”

“But remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones every day for three weeks.”

“I remember,” the old man said. “I know you did not leave me because you doubted.”

“It was papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey him.”

“I know,” the old man said. “It is quite normal.”

“He hasn’t much faith.”

“No,” the old man said. “But we have. Haven’t we?”

“Yes,” the boy said. “Can I offer you a beer on the Terrace and then we’ll take the stuff home.”

“Why not?” the old man said. “Between fishermen.”

They sat on the Terrace and many of the fishermen made fun of the old man and he was not angry. Others, of the older fishermen, looked at him and were sad. But they did not show it and they spoke politely about the current and the depths they

had drifted their lines at and the steady good weather and of what they had seen. The successful fishermen of that day were already in and had butchered their marlin out and carried them laid full length across two planks, with two men staggering at the end of each plank, to the fish house where they waited for the ice truck to carry them to the market in Havana. Those who had caught sharks had taken them to the shark factory on the other side of the cove where they were hoisted on a block and tackle, their livers removed, their fins cut off and their hides skinned out and their flesh cut into strips for salting.

When the wind was in the east a smell came across the harbour from the shark factory; but today there was only the faint edge of the odour because the wind had backed into the north and then dropped off and it was pleasant and sunny on the Terrace.

“Santiago,” the boy said.

“Yes,” the old man said. He was holding his glass and thinking of many years ago.

“Can I go out to get sardines for you for tomorrow?”

“No. Go and play baseball. I can still row and Rogelio will throw the net.”

“I would like to go. If I can’t fish with you, I would like to serve in some way.”

“You bought me a beer,” the old man said. “You are already a man.”

“How old was I when you first took me in a boat?”

“Five and you nearly were killed when I brought the fish in



too great and he nearly tore the boat to pieces. Can you remember ?”

“I can remember the tail slapping and banging and the thwart breaking and the noise of the clubbing. I can remember you throwing me into the bow where the wet coiled lines were and feeling the whole boat shiver and the noise of you clubbing him like chopping a tree down and the sweet blood smell all over me.”

“Can you really remember that or did I just tell it to you ?”

“I remember everything from when we first went together.”

The old man looked at him with his sun-burned, confident loving eyes.

“If you were my boy I’d take you out and gamble,” he said. “But you are your father’s and your mother’s and you are in a lucky boat.”

“May I get the sardines ?I know where I can get four baits too.”

“I have mine left from today. I put them in salt in the box.”

“Let me get four fresh ones.”

“One,” the old man said. His hope and his confidence had never gone. But now they were freshening as when the breeze rises.

“Two,” the boy said.

“Two,” the old man agreed. “You didn’t steal them ?”

“I would,” the boy said. “But I bought these.”

“Thank you,” the old man said. He was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride.

“Tomorrow is going to be a good day with this current,” he said.

“Where are you going?” the boy asked.

“Far out to come in when the wind shifts. I want to be out before it is light.”

“I’ll try to get him to work far out,” the boy said. “Then if you hook something truly big we can come to your aid.”

“He does not like to work too far out.”

“No,” the boy said. “But I will see something that he cannot see such as a bird working and get him to come out after dolphin.”

“Are his eyes that bad?”

“He is almost blind.”

“It is strange,” the old man said. “He never went turtle-ing. That is what kills the eyes.”

“But you went turtle-ing for years off the Mosquito Coast and your eyes are good.”

“I am a strange old man.”

“But are you strong enough now for a truly big fish?”

“I think so. And there are many tricks.”

“Let us take the stuff home,” the boy said. “So I can get the cast net and go after the sardines.”

They picked up the gear from the boat. The old man



carried the mast on his shoulder and the boy carried the wooden box with the coiled, hard-braided brown lines, the gaff and the harpoon with its shaft. The box with the baits was under the stern of the skiff along with the club that was used to subdue the big fish when they were brought alongside. No one would steal from the old man but it was better to take the sail and the heavy lines home as the dew was bad for them and, though he was quite sure no local people would steal from him, the old man thought that a gaff and a harpoon were needless temptations to leave in a boat.

They walked up the road together to the old man's shack and went in through its open door. The old man leaned the mast with its wrapped sail against the wall and the boy put the box and the other gear beside it. The mast was nearly as long as the one room of the shack. The shack was made of the tough budshields of the royal palm which are called *guano* and in it there was a bed, a table, one chair, and a place on the dirt floor to cook with charcoal. On the brown walls of the flattened, overlapping leaves of the sturdy fibered *guano* there was a picture in color of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and another of the Virgin of Cobre. These were relics of his wife. Once there had been a tinted photograph of his wife on the wall but he had taken it down because it made him too lonely to see it and it was on the shelf in the corner under his clean shirt.

“What do you have to eat?” the boy asked.

“A pot of yellow rice with fish. Do you want some?”

“No. I will eat at home. Do you want me to make the

fire ?”

“No. I will make it later on. Or I may eat the rice cold.”

“May I take the cast net ?”

“Of course.”

There was no cast net and the boy remembered when they had sold it. But they went through this fiction every day. There was no pot of yellow rice and fish and the boy knew this too.

“Eighty-five is a lucky number,” the old man said. “How would you like to see me bring one in that dressed out over a thousand pounds ?”

“I’ll get the cast net and go for sardines. Will you sit in the sun in the doorway ?”

“Yes. I have yesterday’s paper and I will read the baseball.”

The boy did not know whether yesterday’s paper was a fiction too. But the old man brought it out from under the bed.

“Perico gave it to me at the *bodega*,” he explained.

“I’ll be back when I have the sardines. I’ll keep yours and mine together on ice and we can share them in the morning. When I come back you can tell me about the baseball.”

“The Yankees cannot lose.”

“But I fear the Indians of Cleveland.”

“Have faith in the Yankees my son. Think of the great DiMaggio.”

“I fear both the Tigers of Detroit and the Indians of Cleveland.”

“Be careful or you will fear even the Reds of Cincinnati and



the White Sox of Chicago.”

“You study it and tell me when I come back.”

“Do you think we should buy a terminal of the lottery with an eighty-five? Tomorrow is the eighty-fifth day.”

“We can do that,” the boy said. “But what about the eighty-seven of your great record?”

“It could not happen twice. Do you think you can find an eighty-five?”

“I can order one.”

“One sheet. That’s two dollars and a half. Who can we borrow that from?”

“That’s easy. I can always borrow two dollars and a half.”

“I think perhaps I can too. But I try not to borrow. First you borrow. Then you beg.”

“Keep warm old man,” the boy said. “Remember we are in September.”

“The month when the great fish come,” the old man said. “Anyone can be a fisherman in May.”

“I go now for the sardines,” the boy said.

When the boy came back the old man was asleep in the chair and the sun was down. The boy took the old army blanket off the bed and spread it over the back of the chair and over the old man’s shoulders. They were strange shoulders, still powerful although very old, and the neck was still strong too and the creases did not show so much when the old man was asleep and his head fallen forward. His shirt had been patched so many times that it was like the sail and the patches were

faded to many different shades by the sun. The old man's head was very old though and with his eyes closed there was no life in his face. The newspaper lay across his knees and the weight of his arm held it there in the evening breeze. He was barefooted.

The boy left him there and when he came back the old man was still asleep.

"Wake up old man," the boy said and put his hand on one of the old man's knees.

The old man opened his eyes and for a moment he was coming back from a long way away. Then he smiled.

"What have you got?" he asked.

"Supper," said the boy. "We're going to have supper."

"I'm not very hungry."

"Come on and eat. You can't fish and not eat."

"I have," the old man said getting up and taking the newspaper and folding it. Then he started to fold the blanket.

"Keep the blanket around you," the boy said. "You'll not fish without eating while I'm alive."

"Then live a long time and take care of yourself," the old man said. "What are we eating?"

"Black beans and rice, fried bananas, and some stew."

The boy had brought them in a two-decker metal container from the Terrace. The two sets of knives and forks and spoons were in his pocket with a paper napkin wrapped around each set.

"Who gave this to you?"



裁藻韵世酝葬社葬档赋桌杂肆

“Martin. The owner.”

“I must thank him.”

“I thanked him already,” the boy said. “You don’t need to thank him.”

“I’ll give him the belly meat of a big fish,” the old man said. “Has he done this for us more than once?”

“I think so.”

“I must give him something more than the belly meat then. He is very thoughtful for us.”

“He sent two beers.”

“I like the beer in cans best.”

“I know. But this is in bottles, Hatuey beer, and I take back the bottles.”

“That’s very kind of you,” the old man said. “Should we eat?”

“I’ve been asking you to,” the boy told him gently. “I have not wished to open the container until you were ready.”

“I’m ready now,” the old man said. “I only needed time to wash.”

Where did you wash? the boy thought. The village water supply was two streets down the road. I must have water here for him, the boy thought, and soap and a good towel. Why am I so thoughtless? I must get him another shirt and a jacket for the winter and some sort of shoes and another blanket.

“Your stew is excellent,” the old man said.

“Tell me about the baseball,” the boy asked him.

“In the American League it is the Yankees as I said,” the

old man said happily.

“They lost today,” the boy told him.

“That means nothing. The great DiMaggio is himself again.”

“They have other men on the team.”

“Naturally. But he makes the difference. In the other league, between Brooklyn and Philadelphia I must take Brooklyn. But then I think of Dick Sisler and those great drives in the old park.”

“There was nothing ever like them. He hits the longest ball I have ever seen.”

“Do you remember when he used to come to the Terrace? I wanted to take him fishing but I was too timid to ask him. Then I asked you to ask him and you were too timid.”

“I know. It was a great mistake. He might have gone with us. Then we would have that for all of our lives.”

“I would like to take the great DiMaggio fishing,” the old man said. “They say his father was a fisherman. Maybe he was as poor as we are and would understand.”

“The great Sisler’s father was never poor and he, the father, was playing in the Big Leagues when he was my age.”

“When I was your age I was before the mast on a square rigged ship that ran to Africa and I have seen lions on the beaches in the evening.”

“I know. You told me.”

“Should we talk about Africa or about baseball?”

“Baseball I think,” the boy said. “Tell me about the great



John. J. McGraw.” He said *Jota* for J.

“He used to come to the Terrace sometimes too in the older days. But he was rough and harsh-spoken and difficult when he was drinking. His mind was on horses as well as baseball. At least he carried lists of horses at all times in his pocket and frequently spoke the names of horses on the telephone.”

“He was a great manager,” the boy said. “My father thinks he was the greatest.”

“Because he came here the most times,” the old man said. “If Durocher had continued to come here each year your father would think him the greatest manager.”

“Who is the greatest manager, really, Luque or Mike Gonzalez?”

“I think they are equal.”

“And the best fisherman is you.”

“No. I know others better.”

“*Qué va*,” the boy said. “There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you.”

“Thank you. You make me happy. I hope no fish will come along so great that he will prove us wrong.”

“There is no such fish if you are still strong as you say.”

“I may not be as strong as I think,” the old man said. “But I know many tricks and I have resolution.”

“You ought to go to bed now so that you will be fresh in the morning. I will take the things back to the Terrace.”

“Good night then. I will wake you in the morning.”

“You’re my alarm clock,” the boy said.

“Age is my alarm clock,” the old man said. “Why do old men wake so early? Is it to have one longer day?”

“I don’t know,” the boy said. “All I know is that young boys sleep late and hard.”

“I can remember it,” the old man said. “I’ll waken you in time.”

“I do not like for him to waken me. It is as though I were inferior.”

“I know.”

“Sleep well old man.”

The boy went out. They had eaten with no light on the table and the old man took off his trousers and went to bed in the dark. He rolled his trousers up to make a pillow, putting the newspaper inside them. He rolled himself in the blanket and slept on the other old newspapers that covered the springs of the bed.

He was asleep in a short time and he dreamed of Africa when he was a boy and the long golden beaches and the white beaches, so white they hurt your eyes, and the high capes and the great brown mountains. He lived along that coast now every night and in his dreams he heard the surf roar and saw the native boats come riding through it. He smelled the tar and oakum of the deck as he slept and he smelled the smell of Africa that the land breeze brought at morning.

Usually when he smelled the land breeze he woke up and dressed to go and wake the boy. But tonight the smell of the land breeze came very early and he knew it was too early in his



dream and went on dreaming to see the white peaks of the Islands rising from the sea and then he dreamed of the different harbours and roadsteads of the Canary Islands.

He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. 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. He never dreamed about the boy. He simply woke, looked out the open door at the moon and unrolled his trousers and put them on. He urinated outside the shack and then went up the road to wake the boy. He was shivering with the morning cold. But he knew he would shiver himself warm and that soon he would be rowing.

The door of the house where the boy lived was unlocked and he opened it and walked in quietly with his bare feet. The boy was asleep on a cot in the first room and the old man could see him clearly with the light that came in from the dying moon. He took hold of one foot gently and held it until the boy woke and turned and looked at him. The old man nodded and the boy took his trousers from the chair by the bed and, sitting on the bed, pulled them on.

The old man went out the door and the boy came after him. He was sleepy and the old man put his arm across his shoulders and said, "I am sorry."

"*Qué va,*" the boy said. "It is what a man must do."

They walked down the road to the old man's shack and all

along the road, in the dark, barefoot men were moving, carrying the masts of their boats.

When they reached the old man's shack the boy took the rolls of line in the basket and the harpoon and gaff and the old man carried the mast with the furled sail on his shoulder.

"Do you want coffee?" the boy asked.

"We'll put the gear in the boat and then get some."

They had coffee from condensed milk cans at an early morning place that served fishermen.

"How did you sleep old man?" the boy asked. He was waking up now although it was still hard for him to leave his sleep.

"Very well, Manolin," the old man said. "I feel confident today."

"So do I," the boy said. "Now I must get your sardines and mine and your fresh baits. He brings our gear himself. He never wants anyone to carry anything."

"We're different," the old man said. "I let you carry things when you were five years old."

"I know it," the boy said. "I'll be right back. Have another coffee. We have credit here."

He walked off, barefooted on the coral rocks, to the ice house where the baits were stored.

The old man drank his coffee slowly. It was all he would have all day and he knew that he should take it. For a long time now eating had bored him and he never carried a lunch. He had a bottle of water in the bow of the skiff and that was all he



needed for the day.

The boy was back now with the sardines and the two baits wrapped in a newspaper and they went down the trail to the skiff, feeling the pebbled sand under their feet, and lifted the skiff and slid her into the water.

“Good luck old man.”

“Good luck,” the old man said. He fitted the rope lashings of the oars onto the thole pins and, leaning forward against the thrust of the blades in the water, he began to row out of the harbour in the dark. There were other boats from the other beaches going out to sea and the old man heard the dip and push of their oars even though he could not see them now the moon was below the hills.

Sometimes someone would speak in a boat. But most of the boats were silent except for the dip of the oars. They spread apart after they were out of the mouth of the harbour and each one headed for the part of the ocean where he hoped to find fish. The old man knew he was going far out and he left the smell of the land behind and rowed out into the clean early morning smell of the ocean. He saw the phosphorescence of the Gulf weed in the water as he rowed over the part of the ocean that the fishermen called the great well because there was a sudden deep of seven hundred fathoms where all sorts of fish congregated because of the swirl the current made against the steep walls of the floor of the ocean. Here there were concentrations of shrimp and bait fish and sometimes schools of squid in the deepest holes and these rose close to the surface at

night where all the wandering fish fed on them.

In the dark the old man could feel the morning coming and as he rowed he heard the trembling sound as flying fish left the water and the hissing that their stiff set wings made as they soared away in the darkness. He was very fond of flying fish as they were his principal friends on the ocean. He was sorry for the birds, especially the small delicate dark terns that were always flying and looking and almost never finding, and he thought, the birds have a harder life than we do except for the robber birds and the heavy strong ones. Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel? She is kind and very beautiful. But she can be so cruel and it comes so suddenly and such birds that fly, dipping and hunting, with their small sad voices are made too delicately for the sea.

He always thought of the sea as *la mar* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman. Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as *el mar* which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought.



He was rowing steadily and it was no effort for him since he kept well within his speed and the surface of the ocean was flat except for the occasional swirls of the current. He was letting the current do a third of the work and as it started to be light he saw he was already further out than he had hoped to be at this hour.

I worked the deep wells for a week and did nothing, he thought. Today I'll work out where the schools of bonito and albacore are and maybe there will be a big one with them.

Before it was really light he had his baits out and was drifting with the current. One bait was down forty fathoms. The second was at seventy-five and the third and fourth were down in the blue water at one hundred and one hundred and twenty-five fathoms. Each bait hung head down with the shank of the hook inside the bait fish, tied and sewed solid and all the projecting part of the hook, the curve and the point, was covered with fresh sardines. Each sardine was hooked through both eyes so that they made a half garland on the projecting steel. There was no part of the hook that a great fish could feel which was not sweet smelling and good tasting.

The boy had given him two fresh small tunas, or albacores, which hung on the two deepest lines like plummets and, on the others, he had a big blue runner and a yellow jack that had been used before; but they were in good condition still and had the excellent sardines to give them scent and attractiveness. Each line, as thick around as a big pencil, was looped onto a green-sapped stick so that any pull or touch on

the bait would make the stick dip and each line had two forty-fathom coils which could be made fast to the other spare coils so that, if it were necessary, a fish could take out over three hundred fathoms of line.

Now the man watched the dip of the three sticks over the side of the skiff and rowed gently to keep the lines straight up and down and at their proper depths. It was quite light and any moment now the sun would rise.

The sun rose thinly from the sea and the old man could see the other boats, low on the water and well in toward the shore, spread out across the current. Then the sun was brighter and the glare came on the water and then, as it rose clear, the flat sea sent it back at his eyes so that it hurt sharply and he rowed without looking into it. He looked down into the water and watched the lines that went straight down into the dark of the water. He kept them straighter than anyone did, so that at each level in the darkness of the stream there would be a bait waiting exactly where he wished it to be for any fish that swam there. Others let them drift with the current and sometimes they were at sixty fathoms when the fishermen thought they were at a hundred.

But, he thought, I keep them with precision. Only I have no luck anymore. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready.

The sun was two hours higher now and it did not hurt his eyes so much to look into the east. There were only three boats



in sight now and they showed very low and far inshore.

All my life the early sun has hurt my eyes, he thought. Yet they are still good. In the evening I can look straight into it without getting the blackness. It has more force in the evening too. But in the morning it is painful.

Just then he saw a man-of-war bird with his long black wings circling in the sky ahead of him. He made a quick drop, slanting down on his back-swept wings, and then circled again.

“He’s got something,” the old man said aloud. “He’s not just looking.”

He rowed slowly and steadily toward where the bird was circling. He did not hurry and he kept his lines straight up and down. But he crowded the current a little so that he was still fishing correctly though faster than he would have fished if he was not trying to use the bird.

The bird went higher in the air and circled again, his wings motionless. Then he dove suddenly and the old man saw flying fish spurt out of the water and sail desperately over the surface.

“Dolphin,” the old man said aloud. “Big dolphin.”

He shipped his oars and brought a small line from under the bow. It had a wire leader and a medium-sized hook and he baited it with one of the sardines. He let it go over the side and then made it fast to a ring bolt in the stern. Then he baited another line and left it coiled in the shade of the bow. He went back to rowing and to watching the long-winged black bird who was working, now, low over the water.

As he watched the bird dipped again slanting his wings for

the dive and then swinging them wildly and ineffectually as he followed the flying fish. The old man could see the slight bulge in the water that the big dolphin raised as they followed the escaping fish. The dolphin were cutting through the water below the flight of the fish and would be in the water, driving at speed, when the fish dropped. It is a big school of dolphin, he thought. They are widespread and the flying fish have little chance. The bird has no chance. The flying fish are too big for him and they go too fast.

He watched the flying fish burst out again and again and the ineffectual movements of the bird. That school has gotten away from me, he thought. They are moving out too fast and too far. But perhaps I will pick up a stray and perhaps my big fish is around them. My big fish must be somewhere.

The clouds over the land now rose like mountains and the coast was only a long green line with the gray blue hills behind it. The water was a dark blue now, so dark that it was almost purple. As he looked down into it he saw the red sifting of the plankton in the dark water and the strange light the sun made now. He watched his lines to see them go straight down out of sight into the water and he was happy to see so much plankton because it meant fish. The strange light the sun made in the water, now that the sun was higher, meant good weather and so did the shape of the clouds over the land. But the bird was almost out of sight now and nothing showed on the surface of the water but some patches of yellow, sun-bleached Sargasso weed and the purple, formalized, iridescent, gelatinous bladder



of a Portuguese man-of-war floating close beside the boat. It turned on its side and then righted itself. It floated cheerfully as a bubble with its long deadly purple filaments trailing a yard behind it in the water.

“*Agua mala*,” the man said. “You whore.”

From where he swung lightly against his oars he looked down into the water and saw the tiny fish that were coloured like the trailing filaments and swam between them and under the small shade the bubble made as it drifted. They were immune to its poison. But men were not and when some of the filaments would catch on a line and rest there slimy and purple while the old man was working a fish, he would have welts and sores on his arms and hands of the sort that poison ivy or poison oak can give. But these poisonings from the *agua mala* came quickly and struck like a whiplash.

The iridescent bubbles were beautiful. But they were the falsest thing in the sea and the old man loved to see the big sea turtles eating them. The turtles saw them, approached them from the front, then shut their eyes so they were completely carapaced and ate them filaments and all. The old man loved to see the turtles eat them and he loved to walk on them on the beach after a storm and hear them pop when he stepped on them with the horny soles of his feet.

He loved green turtles and hawk-bills with their elegance and speed and their great value and he had a friendly contempt for the huge, stupid loggerheads, yellow in their armour-plating, strange in their love-making, and happily eating the

Portuguese men-of-war with their eyes shut.

He had no mysticism about turtles although he had gone in turtle boats for many years. He was sorry for them all, even the great trunk backs that were as long as the skiff and weighed a ton. Most people are heartless about turtles because a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered. But the old man thought, I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs. He ate the white eggs to give himself strength. He ate them all through May to be strong in September and October for the truly big fish.

He also drank a cup of shark liver oil each day from the big drum in the shack where many of the fishermen kept their gear. It was there for all fishermen who wanted it. Most fishermen hated the taste. But it was no worse than getting up at the hours that they rose and it was very good against all colds and gripes and it was good for the eyes.

Now the old man looked up and saw that the bird was circling again.

"He's found fish," he said aloud. No flying fish broke the surface and there was no scattering of bait fish. But as the old man watched, a small tuna rose in the air, turned and dropped head first into the water. The tuna shone silver in the sun and after he had dropped back into the water another and another rose and they were jumping in all directions, churning the water and leaping in long jumps after the bait. They were circling it and driving it.

If they don't travel too fast I will get into them, the old



man thought, and he watched the school working the water white and the bird now dropping and dipping into the bait fish that were forced to the surface in their panic.

“The bird is a great help,” the old man said. Just then the stern line came taut under his foot, where he had kept a loop of the line, and he dropped his oars and felt the weight of the small tuna’s shivering pull as he held the line firm and commenced to haul it in. The shivering increased as he pulled in and he could see the blue back of the fish in the water and the gold of his sides before he swung him over the side and into the boat. He lay in the stern in the sun, compact and bullet shaped, his big, unintelligent eyes staring as he thumped his life out against the planking of the boat with the quick shivering strokes of his neat, fast-moving tail. The old man hit him on the head for kindness and kicked him, his body still shuddering, under the shade of the stern.

“Albacore,” he said aloud. “He’ll make a beautiful bait. He’ll weigh ten pounds.”

He did not remember when he had first started to talk aloud when he was by himself. He had sung when he was by himself in the old days and he had sung at night sometimes when he was alone steering on his watch in the smacks or in the turtle boats. He had probably started to talk aloud, when alone, when the boy had left. But he did not remember. When he and the boy fished together they usually spoke only when it was necessary. They walked at night or when they were storm-bound by bad weather. It was considered a virtue not to talk

unnecessarily at sea and the old man had always considered it so and respected it. But now he said his thoughts aloud many times since there was no one that they could annoy.

“If the others heard me talking out loud they would think that I am crazy,” he said aloud. “But since I am not crazy, I do not care. And the rich have radios to talk to them in their boats and to bring them the baseball.”

Now is no time to think of baseball, he thought. Now is the time to think of only one thing. That which I was born for. There might be a big one around that school, he thought. I picked up only a straggler from the albacore that were feeding. But they are working far out and fast. Everything that shows on the surface today travels very fast and to the north-east. Can that be the time of day? Or is it some sign of weather that I do not know?

He could not see the green of the shore now but only the tops of the blue hills that showed white as though they were snow-capped and the clouds that looked like high snow mountains above them. The sea was very dark and the light made prisms in the water. The myriad flecks of the plankton were annulled now by the high sun and it was only the great deep prisms in the blue water that the old man saw now with his lines going straight down into the water that was a mile deep.

The tuna, the fishermen called all the fish of that species tuna and only distinguished among them by their proper names when they came to sell them or to trade them for baits, were down again. The sun was hot now and the old man felt it on the



back of his neck and felt the sweat trickle down his back as he rowed.

I could just drift, he thought, and sleep and put a bight of line around my toe to wake me. But today is eighty-five days and I should fish the day well.

Just then, watching his lines, he saw one of the projecting green sticks dip sharply.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes,” and shipped his oars without bumping the boat. He reached out for the line and held it softly between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. He felt no strain nor weight and he held the line lightly. Then it came again. This time it was a tentative pull, not soild nor heavy, and he knew exactly what it was. One hundred fathoms down a marlin was eating the sardines that covered the point and the shank of the hook where the hand-forged hook projected from the head of the small tuna.

The old man held the line delicately, and softly, with his left hand, unleashed it from the stick. Now he could let it run through his fingers without the fish feeling any tension.

This far out, he must be huge in this month, he thought. Eat them, fish. Eat them. Please eat them. How fresh they are and you down there six hundred feet in that cold water in the dark. Make another turn in the dark and come back and eat them.

He felt the light delicate pulling and then a harder pull when a sardine’s head must have been more difficult to break from the hook. Then there was nothing.

“Come on,” the old man said aloud. “Make another turn. Just smell them. Aren’t they lovely? Eat them good now and then there is the tuna. Hard and cold and lovely. Don’t be shy, fish. Eat them.”

He waited with the line between his thumb and his finger, watching it and the other lines at the same time for the fish might have swum up or down. Then came the same delicate pulling touch again.

“He’ll take it,” the old man said aloud. “God help him to take it.”

He did not take it though. He was gone and the old man felt nothing.

“He can’t have gone,” he said. “Christ knows he can’t have gone. He’s making a turn. Maybe he has been hooked before and he remembers something of it.”

Then he felt the gentle touch on the line and he was happy.

“It was only his turn,” he said. “He’ll take it.”

He was happy feeling the gentle pulling and then he felt something hard and unbelievably heavy. It was the weight of the fish and he let the line slip down, down, down, unrolling off the first of the two reserve coils. As it went down, slipping lightly through the old man’s fingers, he still could feel the great weight, though the pressure of his thumb and finger were almost imperceptible.

“What a fish,” he said. “He has it sideways in his mouth now and he is moving off with it.”

Then he will turn and swallow it, he thought. He did not



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say that because he knew that if you said a good thing it might not happen. He knew what a huge fish this was and he thought of him moving away in the darkness with the tuna held crosswise in his mouth. At that moment he felt him stop moving but the weight was still there. Then the weight increased and he gave more line. He tightened the pressure of his thumb and finger for a moment and the weight increased and was going straight down.

“He’s taken it,” he said. “Now I’ll let him eat it well.”

He let the line slip through his fingers while he reached down with his left hand and made fast the free end of the two reserve coils to the loop of the two reserve coils of the next line. Now he was ready. He had three forty-fathom coils of line in reserve now, as well as the coil he was using.

“Eat it a little more,” he said. “Eat it well.”

Eat it so that the point of the hook goes into your heart and kills you, he thought. Come up easy and let me put the harpoon into you. All right. Are you ready? Have you been long enough at table?

“Now !” he said aloud and struck hard with both hands, gained a yard of line and then struck again and again, swinging with each arm alternately on the cord with all the strength of his arms and the pivoted weight of his body.

Nothing happened. The fish just moved away slowly and the old man could not raise him an inch. His line was strong and made for heavy fish and he held it against his back until it was so taut that beads of water were jumping from it. Then it

began to make a slow hissing sound in the water and he still held it, bracing himself against the thwart and leaning back against the pull. The boat began to move slowly off toward the north-west.

The fish moved steadily and they travelled slowly on the calm water. The other baits were still in the water but there was nothing to be done.

“I wish I had the boy,” the old man said aloud. “I’m being towed by a fish and I’m the towing bitt. I could make the line fast. But then he could break it. I must hold him all I can and give him line when he must have it. Thank God he is travelling and not going down.”

What I will do if he decides to go down, I don’t know. What I’ll do if he sounds and dies, I don’t know. But I’ll do something. There are plenty of things I can do.

He held the line against his back and watched its slant in the water and the skiff moving steadily to the north-west.

This will kill him, the old man thought. He can’t do this forever. But four hours later the fish was still swimming steadily out to sea, towing the skiff, and the old man was still braced solidly with the line across his back.

“It was noon when I hooked him, ” he said. “And I have never seen him.”

He had pushed his straw hat hard down on his head before he hooked the fish and it was cutting his forehead. He was thirsty too and he got down on his knees and, being careful not to jerk on the line, moved as far into the bow as he could get



and reached the water bottle with one hand. He opened it and drank a little. Then he rested against the bow. He rested sitting on the unstepped mast and sail and tried not to think but only to endure.

Then he looked behind him and saw that no land was visible. That makes no difference, he thought. I can always come in on the glow from Havana. There are two more hours before the sun sets and maybe he will come up before that. If he doesn't maybe he will come up with the moon. If he does not do that maybe he will come up with the sunrise. I have no cramps and I feel strong. It is he that has the hook in his mouth. But what a fish to pull like that. He must have his mouth shut tight on the wire. I wish I could see him. I wish I could see him only once to know what I have against me.

The fish never changed his course nor his direction all that night as far as the man could tell from watching the stars. It was cold after the sun went down and the old man's sweat dried cold on his back and his arms and his old legs. During the day he had taken the sack that covered the bait box and spread it in the sun to dry. After the sun went down he tied it around his neck so that it hung down over his back and he cautiously worked it down under the line that was across his shoulders now. The sack cushioned the line and he had found a way of leaning forward against the bow so that he was almost comfortable. The position actually was only somewhat less intolerable; but he thought of it as almost comfortable.

I can do nothing with him and he can do nothing with me,

he thought. Not as long as he keeps this up.

Once he stood up and urinated over the side of the skiff and looked at the stars and checked his course. The line showed like a phosphorescent streak in the water straight out from his shoulders. They were moving more slowly now and the glow of Havana was not so strong, so that he knew the current must be carrying them to the eastward. If I lose the glare of Havana we must be going more to the eastward, he thought. For if the fish's course held true I must see it for many more hours. I wonder how the baseball came out in the grand leagues today, he thought. It would be wonderful to do this with a radio. Then he thought, think of it always. Think of what you are doing. You must do nothing stupid.

Then he said aloud, "I wish I had the boy. To help me and to see this."

No one should be alone in their old age, he thought. But it is unavoidable. I must remember to eat the tuna before he spoils in order to keep strong. Remember, no matter how little you want to, that you must eat him in the morning. Remember, he said to himself.

During the night two porpoises came around the boat and he could hear them rolling and blowing. He could tell the difference between the blowing noise the male made and the sighting blow of the female.

"They are good," he said. "They play and make jokes and love one another. They are our brothers like the flying fish."

Then he began to pity the great fish that he had hooked.



He is wonderful and strange and who knows how old he is, he thought. Never have I had such a strong fish nor one who acted so strangely. Perhaps he is too wise to jump. He could ruin me by jumping or by a wild rush. But perhaps he has been hooked many times before and he knows that this is how he should make his fight. He can't know that it is only one man against him, nor that it is an old man. But what a great fish he is and what will he bring in the market if the flesh is good. He took the bait like a male and he pulls like a male and his fight has no panic in it. I wonder if he has any plans or if he is just as desperate as I am ?

He remembered the time he had hooked one of a pair of marlin. The male fish always let the female fish feed first and the hooked fish, the female, made a wild, panic-stricken, despairing fight that soon exhausted her, and all the time the male had stayed with her, crossing the line and circling with her on the surface. He had stayed so close that the old man was afraid he would cut the line with his tail which was sharp as a scythe and almost of that size and shape. When the old man had gaffed her and clubbed her, holding the rapier bill with its sandpaper edge and clubbing her across the top of her head until her colour turned to a colour almost like the backing of mirrors, and then, with the boy's aid, hoisted her aboard, the male fish had stayed by the side of the boat. Then, while the old man was clearing the lines and preparing the harpoon, the male fish jumped high into the air beside the boat to see where the female was and then went down deep, his lavender wings, that were

his pectoral fins, spread wide and all his wide lavender stripes showing. He was beautiful, the old man remembered, and he had stayed.

That was the saddest thing I ever saw with them, the old man thought. The boy was sad too and we begged her pardon and butchered her promptly.

“I wish the boy was here,” he said aloud and settled himself against the rounded planks of the bow and felt the strength of the great fish through the line he held across his shoulders moving steadily toward whatever he had chosen.

When once, through my treachery, it had been necessary to him to make a choice, the old man thought.

His choice had been to stay in the deep dark water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either one of us.

Perhaps I should not have been a fisherman, he thought. But that was the thing that I was born for. I must surely remember to eat the tuna after it gets light.

Some time before daylight something took one of the baits that were behind him. He heard the stick break and the line begin to rush out over the gunwale of the skiff. In the darkness he loosened his sheath knife and taking all the strain of the fish on his left shoulder he leaned back and cut the line against the wood of the gunwale. Then he cut the other line closest to him and in the dark made the loose ends of the reserve coils fast. He



worked skillfully with the one hand and put his foot on the coils to hold term as he drew his knots tight. Now he had six reserve coils of line. There were two from each bait he had severed and the two from the bait the fish had taken and they were all connected.

After it is light, he thought, I will work back to the forty-fathom bait and cut it away too and link up the reserve coils. I will have lost two hundred fathoms of good Catalan *cardel* and the hooks and leaders. That can be replaced. But who replaces this fish if I hook some fish and it cuts him off? I don't know what that fish was that took the bait just now. It could have been a marlin or a broadbill or a shark. I never felt him. I had to get rid of him too fast.

Aloud he said, "I wish I had the boy."

But you haven't got the boy, he thought. You have only yourself and you had better work back to the last line now, in the dark or not in the dark, and cut it away and hook up the two reserve coils.

So he did it. It was difficult in the dark and once the fish made a surge that pulled him down on his face and made a cut below his eye. The blood ran down his cheek a little way. But it coagulated and dried before it reached his chin and he worked his way back to the bow and rested against the wood. He adjusted the sack and carefully worked the line so that it came across a new part of his shoulders and, holding it anchored with his shoulders, he carefully felt the pull of the fish and then felt with his hand the progress of the skiff through the water.

I wonder what he made that lurch for, he thought. The wire must have slipped on the great hill of his back. Certainly his back cannot feel as badly as mine does. But he cannot pull this skiff forever, no matter how great he is. Now everything is cleared away that might make trouble and I have a big reserve of line; all that a man can ask.

“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. It was cold now in the time before daylight and he pushed against the wood to be warm. I can do it as long as he can, he thought. And in the first light the line extended out and down into the water. The boat moved steadily and when the first edge of the sun rose it was on the old man’s right shoulder.

“He’s headed north,” the old man said. The current will have set us far to the eastward, he thought. I wish he would turn with the current. That would show that he was tiring.

When the sun had risen further the old man realized that the fish was not tiring. There was only one favorable sign. The slant of the line showed he was swimming at a lesser depth. That did not necessarily mean that he would jump. But he might.

“God let him jump,” the old man said. “I have enough line to handle him.”

Maybe if I can increase the tension just a little it will hurt him and he will jump, he thought. Now that it is daylight let



him jump so that he'll fill the sacks along his backbone with air and then he cannot go deep to die.

He tried to increase the tension, but the line had been taut up to the very edge of the breaking point since he had hooked the fish and he felt the harshness as he leaned back to pull and knew he could put no more strain on it. I must not jerk it ever, he thought. Each jerk widens the cut the hook makes and then when he does jump he might throw it. Anyway I feel better with the sun and for once I do not have to look into it.

There was yellow weed on the line but the old man knew that only made an added drag and he was pleased. It was the yellow Gulf weed that had made so much phosphorescence in the night.

"Fish," he said. "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends."

Let us hope so, he thought.

A small bird came toward the skiff from the north. He was a warbler and flying very low over the water. The old man could see that he was very tired.

The bird made the stern of the boat and rested there. Then he flew around the old man's head and rested on the line where he was more comfortable.

"How old are you?" the old man asked the bird. "Is this your first trip?"

The bird looked at him when he spoke. He was too tired even to examine the line and he teetered on it as his delicate feet gripped it fast.

“It’s steady,” the old man told him. “It’s too steady. You shouldn’t be that tired after a windless night. What are birds coming to ?”

The hawks, he thought, that come out to sea to meet them. But he said nothing of this to the bird who could not understand him anyway and who would learn about the hawks soon enough.

“Take a good rest, small bird,” he said. “Then go in and take your chance like any man or bird or fish.”

It encouraged him to talk because his back had stiffened in the night and it hurt truly now.

“Stay at my house if you like, bird,” he said. “I am sorry I cannot hoist the sail and take you in with the small breeze that is rising. But I am with a friend.”

Just then the fish gave a sudden lurch that pulled the old man down onto the bow and would have pulled him overboard if he had not braced himself and given some line.

The bird had flown up when the line jerked and the old man had not even seen him go. He felt the line carefully with his right hand and noticed his hand was bleeding.

“Something hurt him then,” he said aloud and pulled back on the line to see if he could turn the fish. But when he was touching the breaking point he held steady and settled back against the strain of the line.

“You’re feeling it now, fish,” he said. “And so, God knows, am I.”

He looked around for the bird now because he would have



liked him for company. The bird was gone.

You did not stay long, the man thought. But it is rougher where you are going until you make the shore. How did I let the fish cut me with that one quick pull be made? I must be getting very stupid. Or perhaps I was looking at the small bird and thinking of him. Now I will pay attention to my work and then I must eat the tuna so that I will not have a failure of strength.

“I wish the boy were here and that I had some salt,” he said aloud.

Shifting the weight of the line to his left shoulder and kneeling carefully he washed his hand in the ocean and held it there, submerged, for more than a minute watching the blood trail away and the steady movement of the water against his hand as the boat moved.

“He has slowed much,” he said.

The old man would have liked to keep his hand in the salt water longer but he was afraid of another sudden lurch by the fish and he stood up and braced himself and held his hand up against the sun. It was only a line burn that had cut his flesh. But it was in the working part of his hand. He knew he would need his hands before this was over and he did not like to be cut before it started.

“Now,” he said, when his hand had dried. “I must eat the small tuna. I can reach him with the gaff and eat him here in comfort.”

He knelt down and found the tuna under the stern with the

gaff and drew it toward him keeping it clear of the coiled lines. Holding the line with his left shoulder again, and bracing on his left hand and arm, he took the tuna off the gaff hook and put the gaff back in place. He put one knee on the fish and cut strips of dark red meat longitudinally from the back of the head to the tail. They were wedge-shaped strips and he cut them from next to the backbone down to the edge of the belly. When he had cut six strips he spread them out on the wood of the bow, wiped his knife on his trousers, and lifted the carcass of the bonito by the tail and dropped it overboard.

“I don’t think I can eat an entire one,” he said and drew his knife across one of the strips. He could feel the steady hard pull of the line and his left hand was cramped. It drew up tight on the heavy cord and he looked at it in disgust.

“What kind of a hand is that,” he said. “Cramp then if you want. Make yourself into a claw. It will do you no good.”

Come on, he thought and looked down into the dark water at the slant of the line. Eat it now and it will strengthen the hand. It is not the hand’s fault and you have been many hours with the fish. But you can stay with him forever. Eat the bonito now.

He picked up a piece and put it in his mouth and chewed it slowly. It was not unpleasant.

Chew it well, he thought, and get all the juices. It would not be bad to eat with a little lime or with lemon or with salt.

“How do you feel, hand?” he asked the cramped hand that was almost as stiff as rigor mortis. “I’ll eat some more



for you.”

He ate the other part of the piece that he had cut in two. He chewed it carefully and then spat out the skin.

“How does it go, hand? Or is it too early to know?”

He took another full piece and chewed it.

It is a strong full-blooded fish, he thought. I was lucky to get him instead of dolphin. Dolphin is too sweet. This is hardly sweet at all and all the strength is still in it.

There is no sense in being anything but practical though, he thought. I wish I had some salt. And I do not know whether the sun will rot or dry what is left, so I had better eat it all although I am not hungry. The fish is calm and steady. I will eat it all and then I will be ready.

“Be patient, hand,” he said. “I do this for you.”

I wish I could feed the fish, he thought. He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it. Slowly and conscientiously he ate all of the wedge-shaped strips of fish.

He straightened up, wiping his hand on his trousers.

“Now,” he said. “You can let the cord go, hand, and I will handle him with the right arm alone until you stop that nonsense.” He put his left foot on the heavy line that the left hand had held and lay back against the pull against his back.

“God help me to have the cramp go,” he said. “Because I do not know what the fish is going to do.”

But he seems calm, he thought, and following his plan. But what is his plan, he thought. And what is mine? Mine I must improvise to his because of his great size. If he will jump I

can kill him. But he stays down forever. Then I will stay down with him forever.

He rubbed the cramped hand against his trousers and tried to gentle the fingers. But it would not open. Maybe it will open with the sun, he thought. Maybe it will open when the strong raw tuna is digested. If I have to have it, I will open it, cost whatever it costs. But I do not want to open it now by force. Let it open by itself and come back of its own accord. After all I abused it much in the night when it was necessary to free and untie the various lines.

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.

He thought of how some men feared being out of sight of land in a small boat and knew they were right in the months of sudden bad weather. But now they were in hurricane months and, when there are no hurricanes, the weather of hurricane months is the best of all the year.

If there is a hurricane you always see the signs of it in the sky for days ahead, if you are at sea. They do not see it ashore because they do not know what to look for, he thought. The land must make a difference too, in the shape of the clouds. But we have no hurricane coming now.



He looked at the sky and saw the white cumulus built like friendly piles of ice cream and high above were the thin feathers of the cirrus against the high September sky.

“light *brisa*,” he said. “Better weather for me than for you, fish.”

His left hand was still cramped, but he was unknotting it slowly.

I hate a cramp, he thought. It is a treachery of one’s own body. It is humiliating before others to have a diarrhoea from ptomaine poisoning or to vomit from it. But a cramp, he thought of it as a *calambre*, humiliates oneself especially when one is alone.

If the boy were here he could rub it for me and loosen it down from the forearm, he thought. But it will loosen up.

Then, with his right hand he felt the difference in the pull of the line before he saw the slant change in the water. Then, as he leaned against the line and slapped his left hand hard and fast against his thigh he saw the line slanting slowly upward.

“He’s coming up,” he said. “Come on hand. Please come on.”

The line rose slowly and steadily and then the surface of the ocean bulged ahead of the boat and the fish came out. He came out unendingly and water poured from his sides. He was bright in the sun and his head and back were dark purple and in the sun the stripes on his sides showed wide and a light lavender. His sword was as long as a baseball bat and tapered like a rapier and he rose his full length from the water and then

re-entered it, smoothly, like a diver and the old man saw the great scythe-blade of his tail go under and the line commenced to race out.

“He is two feet longer than the skiff,” the old man said. The line was going out fast but steadily and the fish was not panicked. The old man was trying with both hands to keep the line just inside of breaking strength. He knew that if he could not slow the fish with a steady pressure the fish could take out all the line and break it.

He is a great fish and I must convince him, he thought. I must never let him learn his strength nor what he could do if he made his run. If I were him I would put in everything now and go until something broke. But, thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able.

The old man had seen many great fish. He had seen many that weighed more than a thousand pounds and he had caught two of that size in his life, but never alone. Now alone, and out of sight of land, he was fast to the biggest fish that he had ever seen and bigger than he had ever heard of, and his left hand was still as tight as the gripped claws of an eagle.

It will uncramp though, he thought. Surely it will uncramp to help my right hand. There are three things that are brothers; the fish and my two hands. It must uncramp. It is unworthy of it to be cramped. The fish had slowed again and was going at his usual pace.

I wonder why he jumped, the old man thought. He jumped



almost as though to show me how big he was. I know now, anyway, he thought. I wish I could show him what sort of man I am. But then he would see the cramped hand. Let him think I am more man than I am and I will be so. I wish I was the fish, he thought, with everything he has against only my will and my intelligence.

He settled comfortably against the wood and took his suffering as it came and the fish swam steadily and the boat moved slowly through the dark water. There was a small sea rising with the wind coming up from the east and at noon the old man's left hand was uncramped.

"Bad news for you, fish," he said and shifted the line over the sacks that covered his shoulders.

He was comfortable but suffering, although he did not admit the suffering at all.

"I am not religious," he said. "But I will say ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys that I should catch this fish, and I promise to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre if I catch him. That is a promise."

He commenced to say his prayers mechanically. Sometimes he would be so tired that he could not remember the prayer and then he would say them fast so that they would come automatically. Hail Marys are easier to say than Our Fathers, he thought.

"Hail Mary full of Grace the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the

hour of our death. Amen.” Then he added, “Blessed Virgin, pray for the death of this fish. Wonderful though he is.”

With his prayers said, and feeling much better, but suffering exactly as much, and perhaps a little more, he leaned against the wood of the bow and began, mechanically, to work the fingers of his left hand.

The sun was hot now although the breeze was rising gently.

“I had better re-bait that little line out over the stern,” he said. “If the fish decides to stay another night I will need to eat again and the water is low in the bottle. I don’t think I can get anything but a dolphin here. But if I eat him fresh enough he won’t be bad. I wish a flying fish would come on board tonight. But I have no light to attract them. A flying fish is excellent to eat raw and I would not have to cut him up. I must save all my strength now. Christ, I did not know he was so big.”

“I’ll kill him though,” he said. “In all his greatness and his glory.”

Although it is unjust, he thought. But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures.

“I told the boy I was a strange old man,” he said. “Now is when I must prove it.”

The thousand times that he had proved it meant nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it.

I wish he’d sleep and I could sleep and dream about the lions, he thought. Why are the lions the main thing that is left?



Don't think, old man, he said to himself. Rest gently now against the wood and think of nothing. He is working. Work as little as you can.

It was getting into the afternoon and the boat still moved slowly and steadily. But there was an added drag now from the easterly breeze and the old man rode gently with the small sea and the hurt of the cord across his back came to him easily and smoothly.

Once in the afternoon the line started to rise again. But the fish only continued to swim at a slightly higher level. The sun was on the old man's left arm and shoulder and on his back. So he knew the fish had turned east of north.

Now that he had seen him once, he could picture the fish swimming in the water with his purple pectoral fins set wide as wings and the great erect tail slicing through the dark. I wonder how much he sees at that depth, the old man thought. His eye is huge and a horse, with much less eye, can see in the dark. Once I could see quite well in the dark. Not in the absolute dark. But almost as a cat sees.

The sun and his steady movement of his fingers had uncramped his left hand now completely and he began to shift more of the strain to it and he shrugged the muscles of his back to shift the hurt of the cord a little.

"If you're not tired, fish," he said aloud. "You must be very strange."

He felt very tired now and he knew the night would come soon and he tried to think of other things. He thought of the

Big Leagues, to him they were the *Gran Ligas*, and he knew that the Yankees of New York were playing the *Tigres* of Detroit.

This is the second day now that I do not know the result of the *juegos*, he thought. But I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel. What is a bone spur? he asked himself. *Un espuela de hueso*. We do not have them. Can it be as painful as the spur of a fighting cock in one's heel? I do not think I could endure that or the loss of the eye and of both eyes and continue to fight as the fighting cocks do. Man is not much beside the great birds and beasts. Still I would rather be that beast down there in the darkness of the sea.

"Unless sharks come," he said aloud. "If sharks come, God pity him and me."

Do you believe the great DiMaggio would stay with a fish as long as I will stay with this one? he thought. I am sure he would and more since he is young and strong. Also his father was a fisherman. But would the bone spur hurt him too much?

"I do not know," he said aloud. "I never had a bone spur."

As the sun set he remembered, to give himself more confidence, the time in the tavern at Casablanca when he had played the hand game with the great negro from Cienfuegos who was the strongest man on the docks. They had gone one day and one night with their elbows on a chalk line on the table and their forearms straight up and their hands gripped tight. Each one was trying to force the other's hand down onto the



table. There was much betting and people went in and out of the room under the kerosene lights and he had looked at the arm and hand of the negro and at the negro's face. They changed the referees every four hours after the first eight so that the referees could sleep. Blood came out from under the fingernails of both his and the negro's hands and they looked each other in the eye and at their hands and forearms and the bettors went in and out of the room and sat on high chairs against the wall and watched. The walls were painted bright blue and were of wood and the lamps threw their shadows against them. The negro's shadow was huge and it moved on the wall as the breeze moved the lamps.

The odds would change back and forth all night and they fed the negro rum and lighted cigarettes for him. Then the negro, after the rum, would try for a tremendous effort and once he had the old man, who was not an old man then but was Santiago *El Campeón*, nearly three inches off balance. But the old man had raised his hand up to dead even again. He was sure then that he had the negro, who was a fine man and a great athlete, beaten. And at daylight when the bettors were asking that it be called a draw and the referee was shaking his head, he had unleashed his effort and forced the hand of the negro down and down until it rested on the wood. The match had started on a Sunday morning and ended on a Monday morning. Many of the bettors had asked for a draw because they had to go to work on the docks loading sacks of sugar or at the Havana Coal Company. Otherwise everyone would have wanted it to go to a

finish. But he had finished it anyway and before anyone had to go to work.

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.

The sun will bake it out well now, he thought. It should not cramp on me again unless it gets too cold in the night. I wonder what this night will bring.

An airplane passed overhead on its course to Miami and he watched its shadow scaring up the schools of flying fish.

“With so much flying fish there should be dolphin,” he said. He leaned back on the line to see if it was possible to gain any on his fish. But he could not and it stayed at the hardness and water-drop shivering that preceded breaking. The boat moved ahead slowly and he watched the airplane until he could no longer see it.

It must be very strange in an airplane, he thought. I wonder what the sea looks like from that height? They should be able to see the fish well if they do not fly too high. I would like to fly very slowly at two hundred fathoms high and see the



fish from above. In the turtle boats I was in the cross-trees of the mast-head and even at that height I saw much. The dolphin look greener from there and you can see their stripes and their purple spots and you can see all of the school as they swim. Why is it that all the fast-moving fish of the dark current have purple backs and usually purple stripes or spots? The dolphin looks green of course because he is really golden. But when he comes to feed, truly hungry, purple stripes show on his sides as on a marlin. Can it be anger, or the greater speed he makes that brings them out?

Just before it was dark, as they passed a great island of Sargasso weed that heaved and swung in the light sea as though the ocean were making love with something under a yellow blanket, his small line was taken by a dolphin. He saw it first when it jumped in the air, true gold in the last of the sun and bending and flapping wildly in the air. It jumped again and again in the acrobatics of its fear and he worked his way back to the stern and crouching and holding the big line with his right hand and arm, he pulled the dolphin in with his left hand, stepping on the gained line each time with his bare left foot. When the fish was at the stern, plunging and cutting from side to side in desperation, the old man leaned over the stern and lifted the burnished gold fish with its purple spots over the stern. Its jaws were working convulsively in quick bites against the hook and it pounded the bottom of the skiff with its long flat body, its tail and its head until he clubbed it across the shining golden head until it shivered and was still.

The old man unhooked the fish, re-baited the line with another sardine and tossed it over. Then he worked his way slowly back to the bow. He washed his left hand and wiped it on his trousers. Then he shifted the heavy line from his right hand to his left and washed his right hand in the sea while he watched the sun go into the ocean and the slant of the big cord.

“He hasn’t changed at all,” he said. But watching the movement of the water against his hand he noted that it was perceptibly slower.

“I’ll lash the two oars together across the stern and that will slow him in the night,” he said. “He’s good for the night and so am I.”

It would be better to gut the dolphin a little later to save the blood in the meat, he thought. I can do that a little later and lash the oars to make a drag at the same time. I had better keep the fish quiet now and not disturb him too much at sunset. The setting of the sun is a difficult time for all fish.

He let his hand dry in the air then grasped the line with it and eased himself as much as he could and allowed himself to be pulled forward against the wood so that the boat took the strain as much, or more, than he did.

I’m learning how to do it, he thought. This part of it anyway. Then too, remember he hasn’t eaten since he took the bait and he is huge and needs much food. I have eaten the whole bonito. Tomorrow I will eat the dolphin. He called it *dorado*. Perhaps I should eat some of it when I clean it. It will be harder to eat than the bonito. But, then, nothing is easy.



“How do you feel, fish?” he asked aloud. “I feel good and my left hand is better and I have food for a night and a day. Pull the boat, fish.”

He did not truly feel good because the pain from the cord across his back had almost passed pain and gone into a dullness that he mistrusted. But I have had worse things than that, he thought. My hand is only cut a little and the cramp is gone from the other. My legs are all right. Also now I have gained on him in the question of sustenance.

It was dark now as it becomes dark quickly after the sun sets in September. He lay against the worn wood of the bow and rested all that he could. The first stars were out. He did not know the name of Rigel but he saw it and knew soon they would all be out and he would have all his distant friends.

“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.”

Imagine if each day a man must try to kill the moon, he thought. The moon runs away. But imagine if a man each day should have to try to kill the sun? We were born lucky, he thought.

Then he was sorry for the great fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. How many people will he feed, he thought. But are they worthy to eat him? No, of course not. There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behaviour and his great dignity.

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.

Now, he thought, I must think about the drag. It has its perils and its merits. I may lose so much line that I will lose him, if he makes his effort and the drag made by the oars is in place and the boat loses all her lightness. Her lightness prolongs both our suffering but it is my safety since he has great speed that he has never yet employed. No matter what passes I must gut the dolphin so he does not spoil and eat some of him to be strong.

Now I will rest an hour more and feel that he is solid and steady before I move back to the stern to do the work and make the decision. In the meantime I can see how he acts and if he shows any changes. The oars are a good trick; but it has reached the time to play for safety. He is much fish still and I saw that the hook was in the corner of his mouth and he has kept his mouth tight shut. The punishment of the hook is nothing. The punishment of hunger, and that he is against something that he does not comprehend, is everything. Rest now, old man, and let him work until your next duty comes.

He rested for what he believed to be two hours. The moon did not rise now until late and he had no way of judging the time. Nor was he really resting except comparatively. He was still bearing the pull of the fish across his shoulders but he placed his left hand on the gunwale of the bow and confided



more and more of the resistance to the fish to the skiff itself.

How simple it would be if I could make the line fast, he thought. But with one small lurch he could break it. I must cushion the pull of the line with my body and at all times be ready to give line with both hands.

“But you have not slept yet, old man,” he said aloud. “It is half a day and a night and now another day and you have not slept. You must devise a way so that you sleep a little if he is quiet and steady. If you do not sleep you might become unclear in the head.”

I’m clear enough in the head, he thought. Too clear. I am as clear as the stars that are my brothers. Still I must sleep. They sleep and the moon and the sun sleep and even the ocean sleeps sometimes on certain days when there is no current and a flat calm.

But remember to sleep, he thought. Make yourself do it and devise some simple and sure way about the lines. Now go back and prepare the dolphin. It is too dangerous to rig the oars as a drag if you must sleep.

I could go without sleeping, he told himself. But it would be too dangerous.

He started to work his way back to the stern on his hands and knees, being careful not to jerk against the fish. He may be half asleep himself, he thought. But I do not want him to rest. He must pull until he dies.

Back in the stern he turned so that his left hand held the strain of the line across his shoulders and drew his knife from

its sheath with his right hand. The stars were bright now and he saw the dolphin clearly and he pushed the blade of his knife into his head and drew him out from under the stern. He put one of his feet on the fish and slit him quickly from the vent up to the tip of his lower jaw. Then he put his knife down and gutted him with his right hand, scooping him clean and pulling the gills clear. He felt the maw heavy and slippery in his hands and he slit it open. There were two flying fish inside. They were fresh and hard and he laid them side by side and dropped the guts and the gills over the stern. They sank leaving a trail of phosphorescence in the water. The dolphin was cold and a leprous gray-white now in the starlight and the old man skinned one side of him while he held his right foot on the fish's head. Then he turned him over and skinned the other side and cut each side off from the head down to the tail.

He slid the carcass overboard and looked to see if there was any swirl in the water. But there was only the light of its slow descent. He turned then and placed the two flying fish inside the two fillets of fish and putting his knife back in its sheath, he worked his way slowly back to the bow. His back was bent with the weight of the line across it and he carried the fish in his right hand.

Back in the bow he laid the two fillets of fish out on the wood with the flying fish beside them. After that he settled the line across his shoulders in a new place and held it again with his left hand resting on the gunwale. Then he leaned over the side and washed the flying fish in the water, noting the speed of



the water against his hand. His hand was phosphorescent from skinning the fish and he watched the flow of the water against it. The flow was less strong and as he rubbed the side of his hand against the planking of the skiff, particles of phosphorus floated off and drifted slowly astern.

“He is tiring or he is resting,” the old man said. “Now let me get through the eating of this dolphin and get some rest and a little sleep.”

Under the stars and with the night colder all the time he ate half of one of the dolphin fillets and one of the flying fish, gutted and with its head cut off.

“What an excellent fish dolphin is to eat cooked,” he said. “And what a miserable fish raw. I will never go in a boat again without salt or limes.”

If I had brains I would have splashed water on the bow all day and drying, it would have made salt, he thought. But then I did not hook the dolphin until almost sunset. Still it was a lack of preparation. But I have chewed it all well and I am not nauseated.

The sky was clouding over to the east and one after another the stars he knew were gone. It looked now as though he were moving into a great canyon of clouds and the wind had dropped.

“There will be bad weather in three or four days,” he said. “But not tonight and not tomorrow. Rig now to get some sleep, old man, while the fish is calm and steady.”

He held the line tight in his right hand and then pushed his thigh against his right hand as he leaned all his weight against

the wood of the bow. Then he passed the line a little lower on his shoulders and braced his left hand on it.

My right hand can hold it as long as it is braced, he thought. If it relaxes in sleep my left hand will wake me as the line goes out. It is hard on the right hand. But he is used to punishment. Even if I sleep twenty minutes or a half an hour it is good. He lay forward cramping himself against the line with all of his body, putting all his weight onto his right hand, and he was asleep.

He did not dream of the lions but instead of a vast school of porpoises that stretched for eight or ten miles and it was in the time of their mating and they would leap high into the air and return into the same hole they had made in the water when they leaped.

Then he dreamed that he was in the village on his bed and there was a norther and he was very cold and his right arm was asleep because his head had rested on it instead of a pillow.

After that he began to dream of the long yellow beach and he saw the first of the lions come down onto it in the early dark and then the other lions came and he rested his chin on the wood of the bows where the ship lay anchored with the evening off-shore breeze and he waited to see if there would be more lions and he was happy.

The moon had been up for a long time but he slept on and the fish pulled on steadily and the boat moved into the tunnel of clouds.

He woke with the jerk of his right fist coming up against



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his face and the line burning out through his right hand. He had no feeling of his left hand but he braked all he could with his right and the line rushed out. Finally his left hand found the line and he leaned back against the line and now it burned his back and his left hand, and his left hand was taking all the strain and cutting badly. He looked back at the coils of line and they were feeding smoothly. Just then the fish jumped making a great bursting of the ocean and then a heavy fall. Then he jumped again and again and the boat was going fast although line was still racing out and the old man was raising the strain to breaking point and raising it to breaking point again and again. He had been pulled down tight onto the bow and his face was in the cut slice of dolphin and he could not move.

This is what we waited for, he thought. So now let us take it.

Make him pay for the line, he thought. Make him pay for it.

He could not see the fish's jumps but only heard the breaking of the ocean and the heavy splash as he fell. The speed of the line was cutting his hands badly but he had always known this would happen and he tried to keep the cutting across the calloused parts and not let the line slip into the palm nor cut the fingers.

If the boy was here he would wet the coils of line, he thought. Yes. If the boy were here. If the boy were here.

The line went out and out and out but it was slowing now and he was making the fish earn each inch of it. Now he got his

head up from the wood and out of the slice of fish that his cheek had crushed. Then he was on his knees and then he rose slowly to his feet. He was ceding line but more slowly all the time. He worked back to where he could feel with his foot the coils of line that he could not see. There was plenty of line still and now the fish had to pull the friction of all that new line through the water.

Yes, he thought. And now he has jumped more than a dozen times and filled the sacks along his back with air and he cannot go down deep to die where I cannot bring him up. He will start circling soon and then I must work on him. I wonder what started him so suddenly. Could it have been hunger that made him desperate, or was he frightened by something in the night? Maybe he suddenly felt fear. But he was such a calm, strong fish and he seemed so fearless and so confident. It is strange.

“You better be fearless and confident yourself, old man,” he said. “You’re holding him again but you can not get line. But soon he has to circle.”

The old man held him with his left hand and his shoulders now and stooped down and scooped up water in his right hand to get the crushed dolphin flesh off of his face. He was afraid that it might nauseate him and he would vomit and lose his strength. When his face was cleaned he washed his right hand in the water over the side and then let it stay in the salt water while he watched the first light come before the sunrise. He’s headed almost east, he thought. That means he is tired and



going with the current. Soon he will have to circle. Then our true work begins.

After he judged that his right hand had been in the water long enough he took it out and looked at it.

“It is not bad,” he said. “And pain does not matter to a man.”

He took hold of the line carefully so that it did not fit into any of the fresh line cuts and shifted his weight so that he could put his left hand into the sea on the other side of the skiff.

“You did not do so badly for something worthless,” he said to his left hand. “But there was a moment when I could not find you.”

Why was I not born with two good hands? he thought. Perhaps it was my fault in not training that one properly. But God knows he has had enough chances to learn. He did not do so badly in the night, though, and he has only cramped once. If he cramps again let the line cut him off.

When he thought that he knew that he was not being clear-headed and he thought he should chew some more of the dolphin. But I can't, he told himself. It is better to be light-headed than to lose your strength from nausea. And I know I cannot keep it if I eat it since my face was in it. I will keep it for an emergency until it goes bad. But it is too late to try for strength now through nourishment. You're stupid, he told himself. Eat the other flying fish.

It was there, cleaned and ready, and he picked it up with his left hand and ate it chewing the bones carefully and eating

all of it down to the tail.

It has more nourishment than almost any fish, he thought. At least the kind of strength that I need. Now I have done what I can, he thought. Let him begin to circle and let the fight come.

The sun was rising for the third time since he had put to sea when the fish started to circle.

He could not see by the slant of the line that the fish was circling. It was too early for that. He just felt a faint slackening of the pressure of the line and he commenced to pull on it gently with his right hand. It tightened, as always, but just when he reached the point where it would break, line began to come in. He slipped his shoulders and head from under the line and began to pull in line steadily and gently. He used both of his hands in a swinging motion and tried to do the pulling as much as he could with his body and his legs. His old legs and shoulders pivoted with the swinging of the pulling.

“It is a very big circle,” he said. “But he is circling.”

Then the line would not come in any more and he held it until he saw the drops jumping from it in the sun. Then it started out and the old man knelt down and let it go grudgingly back into the dark water.

“He is making the far part of his circle now,” he said. I must hold all I can, he thought. The strain will shorten his circle each time. Perhaps in an hour I will see him. Now I must convince him and then I must kill him.

But the fish kept on circling slowly and the old man was



wet with sweat and tired deep into his bones two hours later. But the circles were much shorter now and from the way the line slanted he could tell the fish had risen steadily while he swam.

For an hour the old man had been seeing black spots before his eyes and the sweat salted his eyes and salted the cut over his eye and on his forehead. He was not afraid of the black spots. They were normal at the tension that he was pulling on the line. Twice, though, he had felt faint and dizzy and that had worried him.

“I could not fail myself and die on a fish like this,” he said. “Now that I have him coming so beautifully, God help me endure. I’ll say a hundred Our Fathers and a hundred Hail Marys. But I can not say them now.”

Consider them said, he thought. I’ll say them later.

Just then he felt a sudden banging and jerking on the line he held with his two hands. It was sharp and hard-feeling and heavy.

He is hitting the wire leader with his spear, he thought. That was bound to come. He had to do that. It may make him jump though and I would rather he stayed circling now. The jumps were necessary for him to take air. But after that each one can widen the opening of the hook wound and he can throw the hook.

“Don’t jump, fish,” he said. “Don’t jump.”

The fish hit the wire several times more and each time he shook his head the old man gave up a little line.

I must hold his pain where it is, he thought. Mine does not matter. I can control mine. But his pain could drive him mad.

After a while the fish stopped beating at the wire and started circling slowly again. The old man was gaining line steadily now. But he felt faint again. He lifted some sea water with his left hand and put it on his head. Then he put more on and rubbed the back of his neck.

“I have no cramps,” he said. “He’ll be up soon and I can last. You have to last. Don’t even speak of it.”

He kneeled against the bow and, for a moment, slipped the line over his back again. I’ll rest now while he goes out on the circle and then stand up and work on him when he comes in, he decided.

It was a great temptation to rest in the bow and let the fish make one circle by himself without recovering any line. But when the strain showed the fish had turned to come toward the boat, the old man rose to his feet and started the pivoting and the weaving pulling that brought in all the line he gained.

I’m tireder than I have ever been, he thought, and now the trade wind is rising. But that will be good to take him in with. I need that badly.

“I’ll rest on the next turn as he goes out,” he said. “I feel much better. Then in two or three turns more I will have him.”

His straw hat was far on the back of his head and he sank down into the bow with the pull of the line as he felt the fish turn.

You work now, fish, he thought. I’ll take you at the turn.



The sea had risen considerably. But it was a fairweather breeze and he had to have it to get home.

“I’ll just steer south and west,” he said. “A man is never lost at sea and it is a long island.”

It was on the third turn that he saw the fish first.

He saw him first as a dark shadow that took so long to pass under the boat that he could not believe its length.

“No,” he said. “He can’t be that big.”

But he was that big and at the end of this circle he came to the surface only thirty yards away and the man saw his tail out of water. It was higher than a big scythe blade and a very pale lavender above the dark blue water. It raked back and as the fish swam just below the surface the old man could see his huge bulk and the purple stripes that banded him. His dorsal fin was down and his huge pectorals were spread wide.

On this circle the old man could see the fish’s eye and the two gray sucking fish that swam around him. Sometimes they attached themselves to him. Sometimes they darted off. Sometimes they would swim easily in his shadow. They were each over three feet long and when they swam fast they lashed their whole bodies like eels.

The old man was sweating now but from something else besides the sun. On each calm placid turn the fish made he was gaining line and he was sure that in two turns more he would have a chance to get the harpoon in.

But I must get him close, close, close, he thought. I mustn’t try for the head. I must get the heart.

“Be calm and strong, old man,” he said.

On the next circle the fish’s back was out but he was a little too far from the boat. On the next circle he was still too far away but he was higher out of water and the old man was sure that by gaining some more line he could have him alongside.

He had rigged his harpoon long before and its coil of light rope was in a round basket and the end was made fast to the bitt in the bow.

The fish was coming in on his circle now calm and beautiful looking and only his great tail moving. The old man pulled on him all that he could to bring him closer. For just a moment the fish turned a little on his side. Then he straightened himself and began another circle.

“I moved him,” the old man said. “I moved him then.”

He felt faint again now but he held on the great fish all the strain that he could. I moved him, he thought. Maybe this time I can get him over. Pull, hands, he thought. Hold up, legs. Last for me, head. Last for me. You never went. This time I’ll pull him over.

But when he put all of his effort on, starting it well out before the fish came alongside and pulling with all his strength, the fish pulled part way over and then righted himself and swam away.

“Fish,” the old man said. “Fish, you are going to have to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too?”

That way nothing is accomplished, he thought. His mouth



was too dry to speak but he could not reach for the water now. I must get him alongside this time, he thought. I am not good for many more turns. Yes you are, he told himself. You're good for ever.

On the next turn, he nearly had him. But again the fish righted himself and swam slowly away.

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.

Now you are getting confused in the head, he thought. You must keep your head clear. Keep your head clear and know how to suffer like a man. Or a fish, he thought.

“Clear up, head,” he said in a voice he could hardly hear. “Clear up.”

Twice more it was the same on the turns.

I do not know, the old man thought. He had been on the point of feeling himself go each time. I do not know. But I will try it once more.

He tried it once more and he felt himself going when he turned the fish. The fish righted himself and swam off again slowly with the great tail weaving in the air.

I'll try it again, the old man promised, although his hands were mushy now and he could only see well in flashes.

He tried it again and it was the same. So he thought, and he felt himself going before he started; I will try it once again.

He took all his pain and what was left of his strength and

his long gone pride and he put it against the fish's agony and the fish came over onto his side and swam gently on his side, his bill almost touching the planking of the skiff and started to pass the boat, long, deep, wide, silver and barred with purple and interminable in the water.

The old man dropped the line and put his foot on it and lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all his strength, and more strength he had just summoned, into the fish's side just behind the great chest fin that rose high in the air to the altitude of the man's chest. He felt the iron go in and he leaned on it and drove it further and then pushed all his weight after it.

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. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff.

The old man felt faint and sick and he could not see well. But he cleared the harpoon line and let it run slowly through his raw hands and, when he could see, he saw the fish was on his back with his silver belly up. The shaft of the harpoon was projecting at an angle from the fish's shoulder and the sea was discolouring with the red of the blood from his heart. First it was dark as a shoal in the blue water that was more than a mile deep. Then it spread like a cloud. The fish was silvery and still and floated with the waves.



The old man looked carefully in the glimpse of vision that he had. Then he took two turns of the harpoon line around the bitt in the bow and laid his head on his hands.

“Keep my head clear,” he said against the wood of the bow. “I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work.”

Now I must prepare the nooses and the rope to lash him alongside, he thought. Even if we were two and swamped her to load him and bailed her out, this skiff would never hold him. I must prepare everything, then bring him in and lash him well and step the mast and set sail for home.

He started to pull the fish in to have him alongside so that he could pass a line through his gills and out his mouth and make his head fast alongside the bow. I want to see him, he thought, and to touch and to feel him. He is my fortune, he thought. But that is not why I wish to feel him. I think I felt his heart, he thought. When I pushed on the harpoon shaft the second time. Bring him in now and make him fast and get the noose around his tail and another around his middle to bind him to the skiff.

“Get to work, old man,” he said. He took a very small drink of the water. “There is very much slave work to be done now that the fight is over.”

He looked up at the sky and then out to his fish. He looked at the sun carefully. It is not much more than noon, he thought. And the trade wind is rising. The lines all mean nothing now. The boy and I will splice them when we are

home.

“Come on, fish,” he said. But the fish did not come. Instead he lay there wallowing now in the seas and the old man pulled the skiff up onto him.

When he was even with him and had the fish’s head against the bow he could not believe his size. But he untied the harpoon rope from the bitt, passed it through the fish’s gills and out his jaws, made a turn around his sword then passed the rope through the other gill, made another turn around the bill and knotted the double rope and made it fast to the bitt in the bow. He cut the rope then and went astern to noose the tail. The fish had turned silver from his original purple and silver, and the stripes showed the same pale violet colour as his tail. They were wider than a man’s hand with his fingers spread and the fish’s eye looked as detached as the mirrors in a periscope or as a saint in a procession.

“It was the only way to kill him,” the old man said. He was feeling better since the water and he knew he would not go away and his head was clear. He’s over fifteen hundred pounds the way he is, he thought. Maybe much more. If he dresses out two-thirds of that at thirty cents a pound?

“I need a pencil for that,” he said. “My head is not that clear. But I think the great DiMaggio would be proud of me today. I had no bone spurs. But the hands and the back hurt truly.” I wonder what a bone spur is, he thought. Maybe we have them without knowing of it.

He made the fish fast to bow and stern and to the middle



thwart. He was so big it was like lashing a much bigger skiff alongside. He cut a piece of line and tied the fish's lower jaw against his bill so his mouth would not open and they would sail as cleanly as possible. Then he stepped the mast and, with the stick that was his gaff and with his boom rigged, the patched sail drew, the boat began to move, and half lying in the stern he sailed south-west.

He did not need a compass to tell him where south-west was. He only needed the feel of the trade wind and the drawing of the sail. I better put a small line out with a spoon on it and try and get something to eat and drink for the moisture. But he could not find a spoon and his sardines were rotten. So he hooked a patch of yellow Gulf weed with the gaff as they passed and shook it so that the small shrimps that were in it fell onto the planking of the skiff. There were more than a dozen of them and they jumped and kicked like sand fleas. The old man pinched their heads off with his thumb and forefinger and ate them chewing up the shells and the tails. They were very tiny but he knew they were nourishing and they tasted good.

The old man still had two drinks of water in the bottle and he used half of one after he had eaten the shrimps. The skiff was sailing well considering the handicaps and he steered with the tiller under his arm. He could see the fish and he had only to look at his hands and feel his back against the stern to know that this had truly happened and was not a dream. At one time when he was feeling so badly toward the end, he had thought perhaps it was a dream. Then when he had seen the fish come

out of the water and hang motionless in the sky before he fell, he was sure there was some great strangeness and he could not believe it. Then he could not see well, although now he saw as well as ever.

Now he knew there was the fish and his hands and back were no dream. The hands cure quickly, he thought. I bled them clean and the salt water will heal them. The dark water of the true gulf is the greatest healer that there is. All I must do is keep the head clear. The hands have done their work and we sail well. With his mouth shut and his tail straight up and down we sail like brothers. Then his head started to become a little unclear and he thought, is he bringing me in or am I bringing him in? If I were towing him behind there would be no question. Nor if the fish were in the skiff, with all dignity gone, there would be no question either. But they were sailing together lashed side by side and the old man thought, let him bring me in if it pleases him. I am only better than him through trickery and he meant me no harm.

They sailed well and the old man soaked his hands in the salt water and tried to keep his head clear. There were high cumulus clouds and enough cirrus above them so that the old man knew the breeze would last all night. The old man looked at the fish constantly to make sure it was true. It was an hour before the first shark hit him.

The shark was not an accident. He had come up from deep down in the water as the dark cloud of blood had settled and dispersed in the mile deep sea. He had come up so fast and



absolutely without caution that he broke the surface of the blue water and was in the sun. Then he fell back into the sea and picked up the scent and started swimming on the course the skiff and the fish had taken.

Sometimes he lost the scent. But he would pick it up again, or have just a trace of it, and he swam fast and hard on the course. He was a very big Mako shark built to swim as fast as the fastest fish in the sea and everything about him was beautiful except his jaws. His back was as blue as a sword fish's and his belly was silver and his hide was smooth and handsome. He was built as a sword fish except for his huge jaws which were tight shut now as he swam fast. Just under the surface with his high dorsal fin knifing through the water without wavering. Inside the closed double lip of his jaws all of his eight rows of teeth were slanted inwards. They were not the ordinary pyramid-shaped teeth of most sharks. They were shaped like a man's fingers when they are crisped like claws. They were nearly as long as the fingers of the old man and they had razorsharp cutting edges on both sides. This was a fish built to feed on all the fishes in the sea, that were so fast and strong and well armed that they had no other enemy. Now he speeded up as he smelled the fresher scent and his blue dorsal fin cut the water.

When the old man saw him coming he knew that this was a shark that had no fear at all and would do exactly what he wished. He prepared the harpoon and made the rope fast while he watched the shark come on. The rope was short as it lacked

what he had cut away to lash the fish.

The old man's head was clear and good now and he was full of resolution but he had little hope. It was too good to last, he thought. He took one look at the great fish as he watched the shark close in. It might as well have been a dream, he thought. I can not keep him from hitting me but maybe I can get him. *Dentuso*, he thought. Bad luck to your mother.

The shark closed fast astern and when he hit the fish the old man saw his mouth open and his strange eyes and the clicking chop of the teeth as he drove forward in the meat just above the tail. The shark's head was out of water and his back was coming out and the old man could hear the noise of skin and flesh ripping on the big fish when he rammed the harpoon down onto the shark's head at a spot where the line between his eyes intersected with the line that ran straight back from his nose. There were no such lines. There was only the heavy sharp blue head and the big eyes and the clicking, thrusting all-swallowing jaws. But that was the location of the brain and the old man hit it. He hit it with his blood mused hands driving a good harpoon with all his strength. He hit it without hope but with resolution and complete malignancy.

The shark swung over and the old man saw his eye was not alive and then he swung over once again, wrapping himself in two loops of the rope. The old man knew that he was dead but the shark would not accept it. Then, on his back, with his tail lashing and his jaws clicking, the shark plowed over the water as a speedboat does. The water was white where his tail beat it



and three-quarters of his body was clear above the water when the rope came taut, shivered, and then snapped. The shark lay quietly for a little while on the surface and the old man watched him. Then he went down very slowly.

“He took about forty pounds,” the old man said aloud. He took my harpoon too and all the rope, he thought, and now my fish bleeds again and there will be others.

He did not like to look at the fish anymore since he had been mutilated. When the fish had been hit it was as though he himself were hit.

But I killed the shark that hit my fish, he thought. And he was the biggest *dentuso* that I have ever seen. And God knows that I have seen big ones.

It was too good to last, he thought. I wish it had been a dream now and that I had never hooked the fish and was alone in bed on the newspapers.

“But man is not made for defeat,” he said. “A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” I am sorry that I killed the fish though, he thought. Now the bad time is coming and I do not even have the harpoon. The *dentuso* is cruel and able and strong and intelligent. But I was more intelligent than he was. Perhaps not, he thought. Perhaps I was only better armed.

“Don’t think, old man,” he said aloud. “Sail on this course and take it when it comes.”

But I must think, he thought. Because it is all I have left. That and baseball. I wonder how the great DiMaggio would have liked the way I hit him in the brain. It was no great thing,

he thought. Any man could do it. But do you think my hands were as great a handicap as the bone spurs? I cannot know. I never had anything wrong with my heel except the time the sting ray stung it when I stepped on him when swimming and paralyzed the lower leg and made the unbearable pain.

“Think about something cheerful, old man,” he said. “Every minute now you are closer to home. You sail lighter for the loss of forty pounds.”

He knew quite well the pattern of what could happen when he reached the inner part of the current. But there was nothing to be done now.

“Yes, there is,” he said aloud. “I can lash my knife to the butt of one of the oars.”

So he did that with the tiller under his arm and the sheet of the sail under his foot.

“Now,” he said. “I am still an old man. But I am not unarmed.”

The breeze was fresh now and he sailed on well. He watched only the forward part of the fish and some of his hope returned.

It is silly not to hope, he thought. Besides I believe it is a sin. Do not think about sin, he thought. There are enough problems now without sin. Also I have no understanding of it.

I have no understanding of it and I am not sure that I believe in it. Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish. I suppose it was even though I did it to keep me alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin. Do not think about sin. It is much



too late for that and there are people who are paid to do it. Let them think about it. You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish. San Pedro was a fisherman as was the father of the great DiMaggio.

But he liked to think about all things that he was involved in and since there was nothing to read and he did not have a radio, he thought much and he kept on thinking about sin. You did not kill the fish only to keep alive and to sell for food, he thought. You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. 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?

“You think too much, old man,” he said aloud.

But you enjoyed killing the *dentuso*, he thought. He lives on the live fish as you do. He is not a scavenger nor just a moving appetite as some sharks are. He is beautiful and noble and knows no fear of anything.

“I killed him in self-defense,” the old man said aloud. “And I killed him well.”

Besides, he thought, everything kills everything else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive. The boy keeps me alive, he thought. I must not deceive myself too much.

He leaned over the side and pulled loose a piece of the meat of the fish where the shark had cut him. He chewed it and noted its quality and its good taste. It was firm and juicy, like meat, but it was not red. There was no stringiness in it and he knew that it would bring the highest price in the market. But

there was no way to keep its scent out of the water and the old man knew that a very bad time was coming.

The breeze was steady. It had backed a little further into the north-east and he knew that meant that it would not fall off. The old man looked ahead of him but he could see no sails nor could he see the hull nor the smoke of any ship. There were only the flying fish that went up from his bow sailing away to either side and the yellow patches of Gulf weed. He could not even see a bird.

He had sailed for two hours, resting in the stern and sometimes chewing a bit of the meat from the marlin, trying to rest and to be strong, when he saw the first of the two sharks.

“Ay,” he said aloud. There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood.

“*Galanos*,” he said aloud. He had seen the second fin now coming up behind the first and had identified them as shovel-nosed sharks by the brown, triangular fin and the sweeping movements of the tail. They had the scent and were excited and in the stupidity of their great hunger they were losing and finding the scent in their excitement. But they were closing all the time.

The old man made the sheet fast and jammed the tiller. Then he took up the oar with the knife lashed to it. He lifted it as lightly as he could because his hands rebelled at the pain. Then he opened and closed them on it lightly to loosen them.



He closed them firmly so they would take the pain now and would not flinch and watched the sharks come. He could see their wide, flattened, shovel-pointed heads now and their white-tipped wide pectoral fins. They were hateful sharks, bad smelling, scavengers as well as killers and when they were hungry they would bite at an oar or the rudder of a boat. It was these sharks that would cut the turtles' legs and flippers off when the turtles were asleep on the surface, and they would hit a man in the water, if they were hungry, even if the man had no smell of fish blood nor of fish slime on him.

“Ay,” the old man said. “*Galanos*. Come on *galanos*.”

They came. But they did not come as the Mako had come. One turned and went out of sight under the skiff and the old man could feel the skiff shake as he jerked and pulled on the fish. The other watched the old man with his slitted yellow eyes and then came in fast with his half circle of jaws wide to hit the fish where he had already been bitten. The line showed clearly on the top of his brown head and back where the brain joined the spinal cord and the old man drove the knife on the oar into the juncture, withdrew it, and drove it in again into the shark's yellow cat-like eyes. The shark let go of the fish and slid down, swallowing what he had taken as he died.

The skiff was still shaking with the destruction the other shark was doing to the fish and the old man let go the sheet so that the skiff would swing broadside and bring the shark out from under. When he saw the shark he leaned over the side and punched at him. He hit only meat and the hide was set hard and

he barely got the knife in. The blow hurt not only his hands but his shoulder too. But the shark came up fast with his head out and the old man hit him squarely in the center of his flat-topped head as his nose came out of water and lay against the fish. The old man withdrew the blade and punched the shark exactly in the same spot again. He still hung to the fish with his jaws hooked and the old man stabbed him in his left eye. The shark still hung there.

“No ?” the old man said and he drove the blade between the vertebrae and the brain. It was an easy shot now and he felt the cartilage sever. The old man reversed the oar and put the blade between the shark’s jaws to open them. He twisted the blade and as the shark slid loose he said, “Go on, *galano*. Slide down a mile deep. Go see your friend, or maybe it’s your mother.”

The old man wiped the blade of his knife and laid down the oar. Then he found the sheet and the sail filled and he brought the skiff onto her course.

“They must have taken a quarter of him and of the best meat,” he said aloud. “I wish it were a dream and that I had never hooked him. I’m sorry about it, fish. It makes everything wrong.” He stopped and he did not want to look at the fish now. Drained of blood and awash he looked the colour of the silver backing of a mirror and his stripes still showed.

“I shouldn’t have gone out so far, fish.” he said. “Neither for you nor for me. I’m sorry, fish.”

Now, he said to himself. Look to the lashing on the knife and see if it has been cut. Then get your hand in order because



there still is more to come.

“I wish I had a stone for the knife,” the old man said after he had checked the lashing on the oar butt. “I should have brought a stone.” You should have brought many things, he thought. But you did not bring them, old man. Now it is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is.

“You give me much good counsel,” he said aloud. “I’m tired of it.”

He held the tiller under his arm and soaked both his hands in the water as the skiff drove forward.

“God knows how much that last one took,” he said. “But she’s much lighter now.” He did not want to think of the mutilated under-side of the fish. He knew that each of the jerking bumps of the shark had been meat torn away and that the fish now made a trail for all sharks as wide as a highway through the sea.

He was a fish to keep a man all winter, he thought. Don’t think of that. Just rest and try to get your hands in shape to defend what is left of him. The blood smell from my hands means nothing now with all that scent in the water. Besides they do not bleed much. There is nothing cut that means anything. The bleeding may keep the left from cramping.

What can I think of now? he thought. Nothing. I must think of nothing and wait for the next ones. I wish it had really been a dream, he thought. But who knows? It might have turned out well.

The next shark that came was a single shovelnose. He came like a pig to the trough if a pig had a mouth so wide that you could put your head in it. The old man let him hit the fish and then drove the knife on the oar down into his brain. But the shark jerked backwards as he rolled and the knife blade snapped.

The old man settled himself to steer. He did not even watch the big shark sinking slowly in the water, showing first life-size, then small, then tiny. That always fascinated the old man. But he did not even watch it now.

“I have the gaff now,” he said. “But it will do no good. I have the two oars and the tiller and the short club.”

Now they have beaten me, he thought. I am too old to club sharks to death. But I will try it as long as I have the oars and the short club and the tiller.

He put his hands in the water again to soak them. It was getting late in the afternoon and he saw nothing but the sea and the sky. There was more wind in the sky than there had been, and soon he hoped that he would see land.

“You’re tired, old man,” he said. “You’re tired inside.”

The sharks did not hit him again until just before sunset.

The old man saw the brown fins coming along the wide trail the fish must make in the water. They were not even quartering on the scent. They were headed straight for the skiff swimming side by side.

He jammed the tiller, made the sheet fast and reached under the stern for the club. It was an oar handle from a broken



oar sawed off to about two and a half feet in length. He could only use it effectively with one hand because of the grip of the handle and he took good hold of it with his right hand, flexing his hand on it, as he watched the sharks come. They were both galanos.

I must let the first one get a good hold and hit him on the point of the nose or straight across the top of the head, he thought.

The two sharks closed together and as he saw the one nearest him open his jaws and sink them into the silver side of the fish, he raised the club high and brought it down heavy and slamming onto the top of the shark's broad head. He felt the rubbery solidity as the club came down. But he felt the rigidity of bone too and he struck the shark once more hard across the point of the nose as he slid down from the fish.

The other shark had been in and out and now came in again with his jaws wide. The old man could see pieces of the meat of the fish spilling white from the corner of his jaws as he bumped the fish and closed his jaws. He swung at him and hit only the head and the shark looked at him and wrenched the meat loose. The old man swung the club down on him again as he slipped away to swallow and hit only the heavy solid rubberiness.

“Come on, *galano*,” the old man said. “Come in again.”

The shark came in a rush and the old man hit him as he shut his jaws. He hit him solidly and from as high up as he could raise the club. This time he felt the bone at the base of the brain and he hit him again in the same place while the shark

tore the meat loose sluggishly and slid down from the fish.

The old man watched for him to come again but neither shark showed. Then he saw one on the surface swimming in circles. He did not see the fin of the other.

I could not expect to kill them, he thought. I could have in my time. But I have hurt them both badly and neither one can feel very good. If I could have used a bat with two hands I could have killed the first one surely. Even now, he thought.

He did not want to look at the fish. He knew that half of him had been destroyed. The sun had gone down while he had been in the fight with the sharks.

“It will be dark soon,” he said. “Then I should see the glow of Havana. If I am too far to the eastward I will see the lights of one of the new beaches.”

I cannot be too far out now, he thought. I hope no one has been too worried. There is only the boy to worry, of course. But I am sure he would have confidence. Many of the older fishermen will worry. Many others too, he thought. I live in a good town.

He could not talk to the fish anymore because the fish had been ruined too badly. Then something came into his head.

“Half fish,” he said. “Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both. But we have killed many sharks, you and I, and ruined many others. How many did you ever kill, old fish? You do not have that spear on your head for nothing.”

He liked to think of the fish and what he could do to a



shark if he were swimming free. I should have chopped the bill off to fight them with, he thought. But there was no hatchet and then there was no knife.

But if I had, and could have lashed it to an oar butt, what a weapon. Then we might have fought them together. What will you do now if they come in the night? What can you do?

“Fight them,” he said. “I’ll fight them until I die.”

But in the dark now and no glow showing and no lights and only the wind and the steady pull of the sail he felt that perhaps he was already dead. He put his two hands together and felt the palms. They were not dead and he could bring the pain of life by simply opening and closing them. He leaned his back against the stern and knew he was not dead. His shoulders told him.

I have all those prayers I promised if I caught the fish, he thought. But I am too tired to say them now. I better get the sack and put it over my shoulders.

He lay in the stern and steered and watched for the glow to come in the sky. I have half of him, he thought. Maybe I’ll have the luck to bring the forward half in. I should have some luck. No, he said. You violated your luck when you went too far outside.

“Don’t be silly,” he said aloud. “And keep awake and steer. You may have much luck yet.”

“I’d like to buy some if there’s any place they sell it,” he said.

What could I buy it with? he asked himself. Could I buy it with a lost harpoon and a broken knife and two bad hands?

“You might,” he said. “You tried to buy it with eighty-four days at sea. They nearly sold it to you too.”

I must not think nonsense, he thought. Luck is a thing that comes in many forms and who can recognize her? I would take some though in any form and pay what they asked. I wish I could see the glow from the lights, he thought. I wish too many things. But that is the thing I wish for now. He tried to settle more comfortably to steer and from his pain he knew he was not dead.

He saw the reflected glare of the lights of the city at what must have been around ten o'clock at night. They were only perceptible at first as the light is in the sky before the moon rises. Then they were steady to see across the ocean which was rough now with the increasing breeze. He steered inside of the glow and he thought that now, soon, he must hit the edge of the stream.

Now it is over, he thought. They will probably hit me again. But what can a man do against them in the dark without a weapon?

He was stiff and sore now and his wounds and all of the strained parts of his body hurt with the cold of the night. I hope I do not have to fight again, he thought. I hope so much I do not have to fight again.

But by midnight he fought and this time he knew the fight was useless. They came in a pack and he could only see the lines in the water that their fins made and their phosphorescence as they threw themselves on the fish. He



clubbed at heads and heard the jaws chop and the shaking of the skiff as they took hold below. He clubbed desperately at what he could only feel and hear and he felt something seize the club and it was gone.

He jerked the tiller free from the rudder and beat and chopped with it, holding it in both hands and driving it down again and again. But they were up to the bow now and driving in one after the other and together, tearing off the pieces of meat that showed glowing below the sea as they turned to come once more.

One came, finally, against the head itself and he knew that it was over. He swung the tiller across the shark's head where the jaws were caught in the heaviness of the fish's head which would not tear. He swung it once and twice and again. He heard the tiller break and he lunged at the shark with the splintered butt. He felt it go in and knowing it was sharp he drove it in again. The shark let go and rolled away. That was the last shark of the pack that came. There was nothing more for them to eat.

The old man could hardly breathe now and he felt a strange taste in his mouth. It was coppery and sweet and he was afraid of it for a moment. But there was not much of it.

He spat into the ocean and said, "Eat that, *galanos*. And make a dream you've killed a man."

He knew he was beaten now finally and without remedy and he went back to the stern and found the jagged end of the tiller would fit in the slot of the rudder well enough for him to

steer. He settled the sack around his shoulders and put the skiff on her course. He sailed lightly now and he had no thoughts nor any feelings of any kind. He was past everything now and he sailed the skiff to make his home port as well and as intelligently as he could. In the night sharks hit the carcass as someone might pick up crumbs from the table. The old man paid no attention to them and did not pay any attention to anything except steering. He only noticed how lightly and how well the skiff sailed now there was no great weight beside her.

She's good, he thought. She is sound and not harmed in any way except for the tiller. That is easily replaced.

He could feel he was inside the current now and he could see the lights of the beach colonies along the shore. He knew where he was now and it was nothing to get home.

The wind is our friend, anyway, he thought. Then he added, sometimes. And the great sea with our friends and our enemies. And bed, he thought. Bed is my friend. Just bed, he thought. Bed will be a great thing. It is easy when you are beaten, he thought. I never knew how easy it was. And what beat you, he thought.

"Nothing," he said aloud. "I went out too far."

When he sailed into the little harbour the lights of the Terrace were out and he knew everyone was in bed. The breeze had risen steadily and was blowing strongly now. It was quiet in the harbour though and he sailed up onto the little patch of shingle below the rocks. There was no one to help him so he pulled the boat up as far as he could. Then he stepped out and



made her fasten to a rock.

He unstepped the mast and furled the sail and tied it. Then he shouldered the mast and started to climb. It was then he knew the depth of his tiredness. He stopped for a moment and looked back and saw in the reflection from the street light the great tail of the fish standing up well behind the skiff's stern. He saw the white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head with the projecting bill and all the nakedness between.

He started to climb again and at the top he fell and lay for some time with the mast across his shoulder. He tried to get up. But it was too difficult and he sat there with the mast on his shoulder and looked at the road. A cat passed on the far side going about its business and the old man watched it. Then he just watched the road.

Finally he put the mast down and stood up. He picked the mast up and put it on his shoulder and started up the road. He had to sit down five times before he reached his shack.

Inside the shack he leaned the mast against the wall. In the dark he found a water bottle and took a drink. Then he lay down on the bed. He pulled the blanket over his shoulders and then over his back and legs and he slept face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up.

He was asleep when the boy looked in the door in the morning. It was blowing so hard that the drifting boats would not be going out and the boy had slept late and then come to the

old man's shack as he had come each morning. The boy saw that the old man was breathing and then he saw the old man's hands and he started to cry. He went out very quietly to go to bring some coffee and all the way down the road he was crying.

Many fishermen were around the skiff looking at what was lashed beside it and one was in the water, his trousers rolled up, measuring the skeleton with a length of line.

The boy did not go down. He had been there before and one of the fishermen was looking after the skiff for him.

"How is he?" one of the fishermen shouted.

"Sleeping," the boy called. He did not care that they saw him crying. "Let no one disturb him."

"He was eighteen feet from nose to tail," the fisherman who was measuring him called.

"I believe it," the boy said.

He went into the Terrace and asked for a can of coffee.

"Hot and with plenty of milk and sugar in it."

"Anything more?"

"No. Afterwards I will see what he can eat."

"What a fish it was," the proprietor said. "There has never been such a fish. Those were two fine fish you took yesterday too."

"Damn my fish," the boy said and he started to cry again.

"Do you want a drink of any kind?" the proprietor asked.

"No," the boy said. "Tell them not to bother Santiago. I'll be back."

"Tell him how sorry I am."



“Thanks,” the boy said.

The boy carried the hot can of coffee up to the old man’s shack and sat by him until he woke. Once it looked as though he were waking. But he had gone back into heavy sleep and the boy had gone across the road to borrow some wood to heat the coffee.

Finally the old man woke.

“Don’t sit up,” the boy said. “Drink this.” He poured some of the coffee in a glass.

The old man took it and drank it.

“They beat me, Manolin,” he said. “They truly beat me.”

“He didn’t beat you. Not the fish.”

“No. Truly. It was afterwards.”

“Pedrico is looking after the skiff and the gear. What do you want done with the head?”

“Let Pedrico chop it up to use in fish traps.”

“And the spear?”

“You keep it if you want it.”

“I want it,” the boy said. “Now we must make our plans about the other things.”

“Did they search for me?”

“Of course. With coast guard and with planes.”

“The ocean is very big and a skiff is small and hard to see,” the old man said. He noticed how pleasant it was to have someone to talk to instead of speaking only to himself and to the sea. “I missed you,” he said. “What did you catch?”

“One the first day. One the second and two the third.”

“Very good.”

“Now we fish together again.”

“No. I am not lucky. I am not lucky anymore.”

“The hell with luck,” the boy said. “I’ll bring the luck with me.”

“What will your family say?”

“I do not care. I caught two yesterday. But we will fish together now for I still have much to learn.”

“We must get a good killing lance and always have it on board. You can make the blade from a spring leaf from an old Ford. We can grind it in Guanabacoa. It should be sharp and not tempered so it will break. My knife broke.”

“I’ll get another knife and have the spring ground. How many days of heavy *brisa* have we?”

“Maybe three. Maybe more.”

“I will have everything in order,” the boy said. “You get your hands well old man.”

“I know how to care for them. In the night I spat something strange and felt something in my chest was broken.”

“Get that well too,” the boy said. “Lie down, old man, and I will bring you your clean shirt. And something to eat.”

“Bring any of the papers of the time that I was gone,” the old man said.

“You must get well fast for there is much that I can learn and you can teach me everything. How much did you suffer?”

“Plenty,” the old man said.

“I’ll bring the food and the papers,” the boy said. “Rest



well, old man. I will bring stuff from the drugstore for your hands.”

“Don’t forget to tell Pedrico the head is his.”

“No. I will remember.”

As the boy went out the door and down the worn coral rock road he was crying again.

That afternoon there was a party of tourists at the Terrace and looking down in the water among the empty beer cans and dead barracudas a woman saw a great long white spine with a huge tail at the end that lifted and swung with the tide while the east wind blew a heavy steady sea outside the entrance to the harbour.

“What’s that ?”she asked a waiter and pointed to the long backbone of the great fish that was now just garbage waiting to go out with the tide.

“Tiburón,”the waiter said. “Eshark.” He was meaning to explain what had happened.

“I didn’t know sharks had such handsome, beautifully formed tails.”

“I didn’t either,” her male companion said.

Up the road, in his shack, the old man was sleeping again. He was still sleeping on his face and the boy was sitting by him watching him. The old man was dreaming about the lions.