

The Snows of Kilimanjaro

Ernest Hemingway

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A moving account of regret and redemption as Harry, a writer and man in his prime, unexpectedly faces death while stranded on the plains of Africa. This classic Hemingway short story was originally published in Esquire magazine in 1936.

The Snows of Kilimanjaro Details

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From Reader Review The Snows of Kilimanjaro for online ebook

Krystal says

This story will be better if you know nothing about it to begin with.

Isn't that always the way with short stories?

It brilliantly sets the scene, and introduces the main character, and is rich in detail considering it's only 15 pages long.

Harry is kind of a jerk, though, I'm just saying.

It muses over memories of different times and places, and evokes images well with a few choice words and phrases. Some of it flew over my head a little, but I like to read fast; this is one to take your time with, nibble each sentence before digesting and moving on.

Some intriguing symbolism, too, which is always fun.

It's well written, but the nature of the story means it'll appeal far more to the intellectuals delving deeper than those taking the story at face value.

Gabrielle Dubois says

I had already heard about The Snow..., but as surprising as it may seem, I had no idea of the content of this short story; which is very annoying, because as the story, the time, the characters and the subject of this story are revealed few pages after the beginning, we don't know who the characters are, or when the story happens. In my humble opinion, before reading a book, you don't have to know the author, the story he tells, the dates, places, why and how. And in this short story, if we do not know anything about all this before opening the book, we are very annoyed! And personally, I do not like that.

In short, before I understood the problem of the main character, Harry, I hated him. He suffers, alright. He has little hope of recovery, alright. That makes him irritable, I can understand, because I have physical and permanent pains that will never pass and I know that it can make irritable ... if we don't control ourselves! Harry's not a child anymore, is he! Biting people who love you and would do everything they could to help you is not excusable.

This being said, I kept on reading, after all, an unsympathetic main character, this can be interesting or entertaining or whatever. While waiting for help to arrive, Harry remembers some parts of his life.

The first memory sets in Karagatch. Do you know where Karagatch is? Well, I'll tell you, it's a village in the North Caucasus, in Russia. I didn't know where it was, I looked for, so you won't have to do it, if you have not read The Snows of Kilimanjaro yet.

Oh! And I'm going to tell you where is Schrunz or Schruns: it's in Austria. But as I don't ski in Austria or elsewhere, I didn't know it either!

Oh, and a weinstube is a restaurant-wine bar... if you don't speak German!

Anyway, next! We're told about a group of young secretaries who are going to die in the snow; obviously, an old man has knowingly sent them. Obviously, this is happening in Bulgaria, but I had neither the courage nor the desire to search for the historical truth of this fact to know what it was about.

A certain Herr Lent, who owns a mountain, a ski resort, a capital, loses all while playing cards with Harry our "hero". Why? What is the interest of this anecdote?

And Hemingway writes that Harry had never written a line on it and it was too late. Dare I say that perhaps Hemingway should not have written these memories either? These memories that his alcoholic, brawler, quarrelsome, unfair hero, who's envious of the rich people but who marries only rich women and despises them, a hero too lazy to write all this when he could have done it, did not write either?

And Harry continues to be unpleasant towards his wife, and his memories continue to wander, confused. Maybe they are confused to show us that Harry is delirious? But I didn't understand the interest of his memories.

Then it would seem that Hemingway practices the litotes: a figure of rhetoric and attenuation, which is to say less, to make one hear more. In *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, the author says less, for sure. But I should have had to open my ears to hear more, maybe?

In addition, there are sometimes weird phrases like: "He knew his neighbors in this neighborhood, because they were poor." ? Does this mean that when you're rich you can't know your neighbors? And when you are from the middle class? Do you know only some of your neighbors?

The only thing that pleased me in this short story is what Marie says. She's a housekeeper, and full of common sense: "When you have a husband who works until six o'clock, he gets drunk only a little while coming home, and he doesn't waste too much. When he works till five o'clock, he's drunk every night and leaves you without money. It's the wife of the worker who suffers from this reduction of working time. " I will have to read other Hemingway books to reconcile myself with his writings.

Piyangie says

The Snows of Kilimanjaro is my first short story read of Hemingway.

The story is about a writer who revisits his past on the verge of death. He dwells on the lost opportunities and failed relationships and vents out his frustration on his present wife/girlfriend. The story perhaps has a personal touch of the author's life.

The story, however is a little depressing; and my emotions kept on rolling between anger and pity to the main character, Harry - the writer. All in all he was not a likable character.

However, one cannot resist Hemingway's beautiful and intense writing even if you not like the story. The beauty, intensity and simplicity of expression and deliverance, I believe, is the secret of his success as a writer.

Overall, a good quick read.

Brina says

I enjoy reading short stories, either in collections or as stand alones. When I look back at what I have read in the last two years, I notice many books under two hundred pages. Because I have a tendency to go into a proverbial reading slump in between quality novels, these short stories serve the purpose of preventing a slump and keeping my reading mind fresh. As in previous years, a square on classics bingo is to read a classic short story. Having read Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* last year, a Pulitzer winner that

moved me, I selected *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* to fulfill this square. In this short work, Hemingway once again proves that his writing is Nobel worthy.

First written in 1936, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* features a writer named Harry who has gone on an African safari with his wife, or perhaps girlfriend. While in Africa, he scratches his knee on a thorn and develops gangrene in his right leg. As Harry's condition deteriorates toward death, he looks back at the key moments in his life which lead him to being at the present in Africa. With enough material to fill an entire book, Hemingway moves from Harry's past to present interspersed with his significant other's reminiscing as he leaves his readers hanging for the duration of this short tale. While reading, one can only hope that Hemingway would have followed up this story by revisiting Harry with a full length novella discussing his life and stories in more minute details.

Like Hemingway, Harry is a writer. As he reflects on the life passing before his eyes, he reflects on his army service in World War I, his convalescence, flashbacks, time in Paris, up until the present in Africa. With the gangrene poisoning setting in, one does not know if Harry is living in the present or the past. Meanwhile, his significant other reflects on her own past: her first husband, his tragic death, her children; in sum, a life worthy of the lifestyles of the rich and famous. Harry detests the rich and yet the two ended up together in a relationship that saved them both from the throes of depression. Both were on the verge of turning the corner when Harry contracted gangrene. Hemingway leaves the reader to imagine what will happen to his significant other moving forward.

At the story's onset, Hemingway, or perhaps an editor, notes that Kilimanjaro is the highest peak in Africa. On the summit's western edge, there lies a leopard carcass and no one can fathom what a leopard was doing at that altitude. Like Harry, perhaps the leopard was near death or had come to Kilimanjaro to reflect on his life flashing before his eyes. One never learns the purpose of the leopard in the story as this opening note is its only mention. In just thirty short pages, a reader can experience Hemingway's brilliance, leaving one compelled to reach for one of his full length novels. As I try to vary my reading, it may be awhile until I revisit Hemingway again although suffice it to say this will not be the last time I read his work. A true story telling master, Hemingway's work is always a treat to read, regardless of its length.

5 stars

Paula W says

Thank God this was only about 30 pages.

Steven Godin says

This short story may seem like one of man versus nature, and it is, but it also turns into a story of man versus himself, a theme Hemingway repeatedly analyzed and returned to throughout his career. Harry, a writer, and his wife, Helen, are stranded while on safari in Africa. Harry, lies on his cot, and in a series of flashbacks recalls the mountains of Bulgaria and Constantinople, as well as the suddenly hollow, sick feeling of being alone in Paris among other things. He is fully aware vultures are stalking around around his small camp, whilst a hyena lurks in the shadows. Knowing that he will most likely die before he wakes, Harry goes to sleep and dreams that the rescue plane is taking him to a snow covered summit of Kilimanjaro and the hope

of seeing the legendary leopard there. Concerning the structure of the story, Hemingway uses six sections, each of these sections inserts a flashback that appears in italic, continually juxtaposing the hopeless, harrowing present with the past, which often seemed full of promise. The flashbacks themselves center around concerns about the erosion of values: lost love, loose sex, drinking, revenge, and war.

Both Harry and Hemingway were of a Lost Generation during World War I and had to rebuild their lives after being wounded in combat and seeing the horrors of war. This particular work, some have asserted, seems to reflect Hemingway's concerns about leaving unfinished business behind as a writer and the proper lifestyle for a writer that is conducive to writing on a daily basis, so even though it's fiction, Hemingway definitely uses his life as mold for the story. He was quoted as saying once that "politics, women, drink, money, and ambition" ruin writers.

A decent read, that turned out better than I thought, and in a short space of time only it was easy to see why Hemingway was regarded as one of the 20th century's most important writers.

David Sarkies says

The Last Thoughts of a Dying Man

30 August 2016 - Paris

Well, there I was, sitting on a train on the Paris Metro heading towards the first of the cafes (I would call them pubs, but they are not strictly pubs in the Anglo sense of the word) where Ernest Hemingway would spend his time getting drunk with his literary mates. At the time, I was reading Satre's *Men Without Shadows* but a part of me felt that if I was going to have a drink at the six cafes that Hemingway frequented then maybe Hemingway would be a much more appropriate author to read than Satre, though the problem was that I hadn't brought any Hemingway with me. Fortunately the internet saved me because not only had I been wanting to read *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* for quite a while, but the text was also available for me to read. So, when I sat down at Les Deux Magots I grabbed my smartphone and began to read this incredibly engaging short story.

Before I begin I have to admit that the three cafes (Les Deux Magots, Cafe de Flore, and Brasserie Lipp) that I visited were incredibly expensive. In fact the price of a drink would be around ten euros. At the first one I ordered a beer but then I realised that I was supposed to be doing an Ernest Hemingway so when I went to the Cafe de Flore and the Brasserie Lipp I decided that I would go for some wine (red of course since I am not a big fan of white wine). As I was sitting at the Brasserie Lipp I then struck upon the idea that I should mention to the waiter that I was doing a project on Ernest Hemingway (which I'm not, but the word project always seems to get people to assist) and he proceeded to show me where Hemingway used to sit. Still, I do wonder if these cafes were as expensive in Hemingway's time as they are now. Anyway, before I continue, here is a photo of where Hemingway used to sit in Brasserie Lipp:

Well, it seems that I have been waffling on about Hemingway's drinking habits and not actually talking about this short story. Well, needless to say it literally blew my mind. The story is about a man named Harry who is dying of gangrene, namely because he suffered a wound and it was not attended to fast enough. Mind you, this was not an uncommon occurrence at the time as I have since found out that penicillin wasn't

discovered until after World War I, which meant that if you were seriously wounded then your chances of survival, especially if the wound became infected, were slim. This story, however, occurred after World War I, though it is clear that Harry was involved in the war. When the war finish, instead of returning home Harry decided to stay and travel around the region, which is why he ended up on the plains of Africa.

The thing about this story that struck me is that it is about the lost generation, the generation and fought in, and survived, World War I. I have been confronted with the realities of World War I while travelling about Europe, in particular visiting the Musee d'armie in Paris and the Flanders Field Museum in Ypres, and I have to admit that it is incredibly emotional. In fact if they have to build anything in any of the areas where the war was fought they have to bring in the bomb squad because there is still live rounds buried in the ground. I was actually taken to a spot where they were building a road and the number of shells that had been pulled out of the ground one hundred years after the war was incredible.

Okay, I know that I have probably gone off topic a bit, but the thing is that with me, being four generations away from those who fought in the war, visiting these sites still had a significant impact upon. In a way this generation, the generation that fought in World War I, seems to be reflective of my father's generation, those who went to Vietnam, and returned to a world where they struggle to be able to connect to those who never experienced life on the battlefield. In a way it is probably why people like Hemmingway didn't return to the United States because for him, and for the other American veterans of the the First World War) the actual fighting was so far away from home, and when one returns home one literally returns to what is in effect a foreign land. In the end many of them ended up like Harry, dying in a foreign land, never having managed to realise their dreams.

Chrissie says

Here is a link to the story: <http://www.cardinalhayes.org/ourpages...>

This story grabbed me from the start. It did not let me go until its very last line. It is about a man, Harry, dying of gangrene out on the plains of Africa. He is with Helen, a woman he loves. Will he die, or will he be saved?

Harry is quarreling with Helen. Why is it that we are the meanest to those we love most? Read this, found at the beginning of the tale:

"He looked at her and saw her crying.

'Listen,' he said. 'Do you think that it is fun to do this? I don't know why I'm doing it. It's trying to kill to keep yourself alive, I imagine. I was all right when we started talking. I didn't mean to start this, and now I'm crazy as a coot and being as cruel to you as I can be. Don't pay any attention, darling, to what I say. I love you, really. You know I love you. I've never loved any one else the way I love you.'

He slipped into the familiar lie he made his bread and butter by.

'You're sweet to me.'

'You bitch,' he said. 'You rich bitch. That's poetry. I'm full of poetry now. Rot and poetry. Rotten poetry.'

'Stop it. Harry, why do you have to turn into a devil now?'

'I don't like to leave anything,' the man said. 'I don't like to leave things behind.'"

And then later:

""You're a fine woman,' he said. 'Don't pay any attention to me. '"

Who is this book about? For me it is about Hemingway himself and his and other authors' need to write.

"There was so much to write. He had seen the world change; not just the events; although he had seen many of them and had watched the people, but he had seen the subtler change and he could remember how the people were at different times. He had been in it and he had watched it and it was his duty to write of it; but now he never would."

Hemingway's ability to write of places, be it Africa, Paris, a ranch, the Black Forest of Germany or anywhere else, is perfected in this story. Harry speaks of the Paris he cared about but had not yet written of:

"There never was another part of Paris that he loved like that, the sprawling trees, the old white plastered houses painted brown below, the long green of the autobus in that round square, the purple flower dye upon the paving, the sudden drop down the hill of the rue Cardinal Lemoine to the River, and the other way the narrow crowded world of the rue Mouffetard. The street that ran up toward the Pantheon and the other that he always took with the bicycle, the only asphalted street in all that quarter, smooth under the tires, with the high narrow houses and the cheap tall hotel where Paul Verlaine had died. There were only two rooms in the apartments where they lived and he had a room on the top floor of that hotel that cost him sixty francs a month where he did his writing, and from it he could see the roofs and chimney pots and all the hills of Paris."

There is something in Hemingway's prose that feels natural, so clean and simple and so absolutely wonderful to me! Regardless of the plot, there is always the writing to enjoy; this alone satisfies me.

Here, as Harry lies there dying, thinking of all he has not yet written and wants to write tears come to my eyes. I feel as though I am losing someone who must survive because he has such talent for writing. Is it silly that I feel sorrow for the loss of his writing? Is it silly that I feel profound sorrow for the stories and lines that may never come to be?

One more thing--the ending is perfect.

I adore this story. For me, this is perhaps Hemingway's best.

Melanti says

Just not much of a Hemingway fan.

But I did like this better than I liked *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Besarta says

It was not her fault that when he went to her he was already over. How could a woman know that you meant nothing that you said; that you spoke only from habit and to be comfortable?... He had his life and it was over and then he went on living it again with different people and more money, with the best of the same places, and some new ones.

B.A. Wilson says

Well, I think the 1 star rating makes it clear that I hate this. Some people call this Hemingway's best work. I think it's a pretentious piece of crap that lacks emotion, a storyline, and decent characters.

It is poorly edited and extremely sexist (in the most boring sort of way), and yes, I understand this was a popular failure of men from this time period. It basically hates on women, remarking on their stupidity and worthlessness about every third paragraph. Every second paragraph is endless rambling about writing and being a writer that even I, as someone who writes, couldn't care about.

The whole short story is full of nonsense that I feel pretty sure he wrote while drunk (Hopefully. If not, then I'm actually embarrassed for him). Then I suspect he fell so in love with his own rambling sentences that he didn't bother to edit decently once sober.

It's basically a telling montage with one irritating run on sentence after another, and it's not even interesting or insightful. There are no surprises here, except how much I hate this short story and wish I hadn't wasted my time finishing it. Don't expect to feel any emotion while reading it, other than general irritation and boredom. This is tedious. Thank goodness it was short, so the suffering was limited.

Also, I'm actually feeling sad that people from this time period apparently didn't have anything better to read than this, if it's considered a classic and some of his best work. I wish I could make a quantum leap back through time to carry the people something insightful, forwarding thinking, emotionally resonant, and unique. Instead, all they got was this boring montage built around a dislike of women, a fear of death, and condescending ideas about art and creation.

PattyMacDotComma says

4★

“No, he thought, when everything you do, you do too long, and do too late, you can't expect to find the people still there. The people all are gone. The party's over and you are with your hostess now.”

Harry's dying. Gangrene. He's not happy about it, but he's resigned to it and short-tempered with his wife who tries to feed him broth and withhold whiskey, insisting he needs to keep his strength up for when the truck or the plane comes. This is Africa. No casual passersby.

He daydreams and dreams about all the women in his life, each richer than the previous one, and this last

wife the richest of all. He remembers what fun Paris was, all the friends he had, but he's aware that his current wife, through no fault of her own, will be his last companion, the "hostess".

A lot of people seem to think this is autobiographical, and to a point, it is. Harry and Hemingway are both writers. Harry laments that he wasted his time and didn't write what he should have. Africa, plane crash, multiple wives – both.

BUT, this was published in Esquire Magazine in 1936, almost 20 years before Hemingway's 1954 plane crashes (and before a couple of wives as well). AND, nobody can accuse Hemingway of not writing productively. Perhaps this was written as a caution to himself?

It is also a platform where he can champion the poor and criticise the rich. Consider the irony of this being first published in a men's magazine whose target market was most decidedly not the poor!

Harry's silent reminiscing is no doubt partly Hemingway's well-known escapades, but a lot is a good writer's imagination. Cautioning himself or not, Hemingway did acquire more women and maintain a colourful lifestyle.

The fact that Harry's stranded in remote Africa with his wife means he knows he hasn't got long to live. Hemingway isn't maudlin, or tugging at heartstrings. Harry is matter-of-fact and cranky. He is sorry for his perfectly decent wife, stuck in the African bush with a dying man, and he does his best to be pleasant, but it's hard work.

Some might consider this a (view spoiler)

Download the story here:

<http://www.cardinalhayes.org/ourpages...>

Thanks to Chrissie from the Reading for Pleasure Group who have short story discussions.

Thomas says

Yes, I think that this story serves as a moving account of a man who comes to terms with his life as he prepares to die. However, while I hate to sound as repetitive in my reviews of Hemingway as Hemingway sounds in his actual writing, I cannot stand how his protagonists always take out their frustrations on women. As the main character suffers, he calls his partner a "rich bitch" and a "caretaker and destroyer of his talent." I rate Hemingway's work so low because from my perspective, I must point out how he lets his characters get away with sexism and misogyny, even if they do indeed face painful circumstances. I will say it now and I will say it again: an individual's anger does not justify their mistreatment of another person. I wish Hemingway had understood that in his life and in his writing.

Paula Kalin says

A short story about regret from a dying man set in Africa.

Daniel Clausen says

When I was young, I wanted to put my experiences and accomplishments against those of the greats. Hemingway was among those whose biography I read, hoping to get a glimpse of "what it took" to become a writer. Hemingway is one of the reasons I considered journalism as a career...later, I would decide not to do journalism. Later, I would decide to have other role models. And that would be okay too. Hemingway as a role model was as sparse as his writing.

But going back to Hemingway helps burn some of the fat off my soul. In this short story, Hemingway writes, "They had made this safari with the minimum of comfort. There was no hardship; but there was no luxury and he had thought that he could get back into training that way. That in some way he could work the fat off his soul the way a fighter went into the mountains to work and train in order to burn it out of his body."

Come to a foreign town.
Read books in abundance.
Live as simply as possible.
Write in abundance.
Truly this is a model to follow.
Has the fat from my soul been burned?

As I read this short story, I see hints of regret...a writer's regret. The writer's temptation is always to avoid the work. To find some reason, the void in which he/she writes, the apathy of those who don't read and certainly don't want to read his/her work, a business opportunity, a chance to socialize, anything to avoid the humbling work of actually putting words to page. Dying in a tent in Africa...one more way to avoid the work of writing...

When asked by George Plimpton about the function of his art, Hemingway proved once again to be a master of the "one true sentence": "From things that have happened and from things as they exist and from all things that you know and all those you cannot know, you make something through your invention that is not a representation but a whole new thing truer than anything true and alive, and you make it alive, and if you make it well enough, you give it immortality."

I should mention that I watched the movie version of this short story with my mom as she was dying of an illness. I did this without realizing what the movie was about. But my mother enjoyed the movie. In fact, she loved watching Gregory Peck and the old-style of film took her back to her childhood. The short story somehow feels diminished compared with the movie version...I can't say exactly why...I think the movie had more substance...

I would recommend Hemingway as a sparse model for how to live as a writer and how to do the work. I would recommend you return to him when there is fat that needs burning from your soul. I don't recommend him as a role model for manhood, but I would recommend his writing to understand the toxicity of manhood.

What else is there to say? Time to let this review die? The howling of the hyena tells me that it is over...

