The Key West and Earnest Hemingway's Cats

The island of Key West in Florida once held a special place in the life of Earnest Hemingway. In spite of having read and admired some of his works, I was quite unaware of this connection until, upon arriving in the Key West, I stumbled upon his house on a hot, sunny day as I was trying to escape the heat. I had set out to explore the charming town centre, towing the tourist map. The Key West is the last of a string of islands collectively known as the Florida Keys, connected to the mainland through a series of bridges. I had crossed the famous seven-mile bridge over crystal blue ocean water to get there, although I imagine the mode and method of transportation might have been quite different when Hemingway first arrived there.

Located on a quiet street, there were no ostentatious signs announcing the place, so that mostly those looking for it (perhaps with a map) would find and recognise it. The house is an elegant one, with French colonial style verandas overlooking a garden and a pool. Now called The Earnest Hemingway Home and Museum, it was the birthplace of many of his works. According to the museum website, Hemingway lived in this house in the 30s with his second wife Pauline, their sons and, of course, their cats.

Hemingway had a lot of cats in the house and not much has changed in that respect since. In fact, one may even go so far as to say that cats are now the true residents of the place. Now there are many stories revolving around these cats, but the basic gist of it is this; one of them, Snow White, was given to him by a ship captain. Snow White was six-toed, and is believed to be ancestor to the many cats which have continued to live on the premises. Now these cats, they are everywhere. When they are not chasing one another across the lawn, they are can be found curled up on the porch or being pampered by the museum staff. Complementing their celebrity status, the museum gift shop even sells postcards featuring them. As I walked around the house, I thought of the story my father told me of how Hemingway once had to shoot one of his cats which had been gravely injured. He later wrote about the sadness of having to mercy kill someone they love in a letter to a friend.

Being in the house was like stepping into the past. As much as I loved it, it was soon time to go back to the world of the present. Making my way out through the maze of paths and trees, I found myself having to cautiously manoeuvre around some of the cats which had laid claim to the doorway as their napping ground. It seemed a fitting way to end the tour.

Photo courtesy: Sheema Hossain

What I watched last week

As I scroll through my subscriptions list last Friday, a video by ELLE caught my eye. After ignoring it for a few days I finally watched it having nothing better to watch in my feed, and I am very glad that I did.

The video was titled "These Are the Shocking Side Effects of Carrying a Heavy Bag. The Cost of Being a Woman." Just like the title it showed the many sideeffects we can get simply by carrying a heavy bag on one shoulder, something almost every women does on a daily basis. Other than the common occurrences that we might think of like back pain, one woman actually got cancer on her shoulder, and had to get surgery, all because of carrying a heavy bag. She then decided to test out the weight of random bags from random women on the streets, and the results were shocking. Some of these bags weighed a drastic 13 pounds, while the contents in the pocket of a man only weighed 13 ounces.

Experts suggested if you must carry heavy loads, to do so only using backpacks that evenly distribute the weight. Instead of on one shoulder that can permanently deform your back, and constrict the muscles around your spine. The consequences of what our daily activities have on us can truly be shocking.

Catch the entire video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4cjOqv 8bfQ&t=0s

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