***The Pearl***

***Novella Summary***

**Chapter One**

The novella opens at dawn with the waking of Kino, his wife Juana, and his infant son Coyotito. They live in a small village by the sea in La Paz, Mexico, where Kino makes a living by diving for pearls. Kino appreciates his family and his heritage, identifying the mood of each scene by relating it to songs or sounds his people took from the environment and their surroundings beginning centuries earlier. Readers learn that Kino and his wife speak to each other very little, as they understand one another so well they have little need for the spoken word.

During their peaceful morning routine, a scorpion enters their brush house and climbs down a rope towards the baby. The baby laughs, shaking his hanging box, and the scorpion falls down into the bed and stings the baby. Kino erupts in a fit of rage, killing the insect violently. Juana immediately tries to suck the poison out of the wound, but panics that her quick response is not enough to save her innocent child. In the meantime, neighbors gather outside, drawn by the child’s screams. Juana demands that they summon the doctor, but doubts that the doctor will consider people of her social class a priority. Her solution is to travel to the doctor. As they make their way into town, neighbors follow Kino’s family, and beggars, who judge the natives because they are Indians, observe the family, casting them as lower on the social ladder. Upon arriving at the doctor’s residence, a native acting as a servant to the doctor meets Kino. This native refuses to speak in the native language, showing shame for their shared heritage. The doctor turns Kino’s family away without even coming out to meet them because the only payment Kino possesses is a few gray, misshapen pearls. Kino feels great insult and reacts, again, in a fit of rage and punches the gate outside of the doctor’s home, causing his hand to bleed.

**Chapter Two**

At the onset of Chapter Two, Steinbeck takes more time to address the landscape of Kino’s home in order to set up an environment full of marshy mangroves, oppressive heat, and hazy mirages. Kino decides that his best chance at getting medical attention for his son is to find a pearl the doctor will accept as payment. Coyotito is suffering from a fever and swelling, but not the stomach cramps indicative that the poison has spread enough to kill him. Juana and the baby accompany Kino out on their canoe, an item cherished by Kino that has been passed down for generations. He relies on the canoe for survival, for without it he would not be able to provide for his family. (The narrator takes the opportunity to explain how pearls are formed. When a grain of sand becomes wedged within the fleshy folds of an oyster, a coating is secreted to protect the animal from damage. This secretion continues to be produced until either the sand is dislodged from the oyster or a pearl is formed.)

Due to his visit to the doctor that morning, Kino makes a late start compared to the other pearl divers. Kino, fitted with rope, a heavy rock, and a basket for collecting his findings, jumps into the water, hopeful that he will find a worthy pearl. He collects several oysters and returns to the canoe believing he’s found “the pearl of the world.” Too superstitious to go immediately to his prized find, he waits and opens another oyster first. Upon finally opening the great oyster, he is taken aback immediately by the beauty and immense size of the pearl inside.

Instantly, he begins to think of all of the wonderful things his family will gain from such a pearl. He’s unable to contain his emotions, and his screams incite the other pearl divers nearby to paddle to his canoe. At about the same moment, Juana takes off the poultice, or bandage-like covering, from Coyotito’s wound and discovers it is healing.