

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

Snapfile 18 Life of Pi

A gripping adventure story p. 212

One boy, one boat, one tiger

After a tragic shipwreck¹, a solitary lifeboat is left at the mercy of the wild blue waters of the Pacific. The only survivors are an eighteen-year-old boy, a zebra with a broken leg, a hyena, an orang-utan and a 450-pound Royal Bengal Tiger.

“Fantastic in nearly in every sense of the word, Life of Pi is a gripping adventure story, a parable about the place of human beings in the universe and a tantalizing² work of metafiction...

Laced with wit³ spiced with terror, it’s a book by an extraordinary talent”, San José Mercury News

1. sinking of a ship **2.** fascinating **3.** intelligence

Chapter 1 p. 213

I love Canada. I miss the heat of India, the food, the house lizards on the walls, the musicals on the silver screen, the cows wandering the streets, the crows¹ cawing, even the talk of cricket matches, but I love Canada. It is a great country much too cold for good sense, inhabited by compassionate, intelligent people with bad hairdos². Anyway, I have nothing to go home to in Pondicherry.

Richard Parker³ has stayed with me. I've never forgotten him. Dare I say I miss him? I do. I miss him. I still see him in my dreams. They are nightmares mostly, but nightmares tinged⁴ with love. Such is the strangeness of the human heart. I still cannot understand how he could abandon me so unceremoniously, without any sort of goodbye, without looking back even once. That pain is like an axe⁵ that chops at my heart.

The doctors and nurses at the hospital in Mexico were incredibly kind to me. And the patients, too. Victims of cancer or car accidents, once they heard my story, they hobbled⁶ and wheeled over to see me, they and their families, though none of them spoke English and I spoke no Spanish. They smiled at me, shook my hand, patted me on the head, let gifts of food and clothing on my bed. They moved me to incontrollable fits of laughing and crying.

Within a couple of days I could stand, even make two, three steps, despite nausea, dizziness⁷ and general weakness. [...] After a week or so, I could walk just about normally and I could wear shoes if I didn't lace them up. My skin healed, though I still have scars on my shoulders and back.

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*, 2001

1. black birds 2. hair styles 3. name of the tiger on the lifeboat 4. coloured 5. tool used for chopping wood 6. limped 7. vertigo

Chapter 47 p. 214

Pi's father, the owner of the Zoo of Pondicherry, decides to migrate to Canada with his family and his zoo animals. The ship transporting them sinks in the Pacific Ocean. Pi finds himself on a lifeboat with a zebra, a hyena and an orang-utan called Orange Juice. He believes they are the only survivors.

The hyena came back. It jumped on the bench and caught Orange Juice at the wrist¹ before she could strike. Orange Juice hit the hyena on the head with her other arm, but the blow only made the beast snarl² viciously. She made to bite, but the hyena moved faster. Alas, Orange Juice's defence lacked precision and coherence. Her fear was something useless that only hampered³ her. The hyena let go of her wrist and expertly got to her throat.

Dumb with pain and horror, I watched as Orange Juice thumped the hyena ineffectually and pulled at its hair while her throat was being squeezed by its jaws⁴. To the end she reminded me of us: her eyes expressed fear in such a humanlike way, as did her strained whimpers⁵. [...] She fell off the bench to the bottom of the lifeboat, the hyena with her. I heard noises but no longer saw anything.

I was next. [...] I raised my hands to the level of my chest – the weapons I had against the hyena. It looked up at me. Its mouth was red. Orange Juice lay next to it, against the dead zebra. [...] Just before throwing myself upon the hyena, to collect myself before the final struggle, I looked down.

Between my feet, under the bench, I beheld Richard Parker's head. It was gigantic. It looked the size of the planet Jupiter to my dazed⁶ senses. His paws were like volumes of Encyclopædia Britannica.

I made my way back to the bow⁷ and collapsed. I spent the night in a state of delirium. I kept thinking I had slept and was awaking after dreaming of a tiger.

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*, 2001

1. forearm 2. roar 3. slowed [her] down 4. *mâchoire* 5. cries 6. confused 7. front part of the boat

Chapter 89 p. 215

These are the last pages of my diary:

[...] No rain. Only morning greyness. Dolphins. Tried to gaff¹ one. Found I could not stand. R.P. weak and ill-tempered. Am so weak, if he attacks I won't be able to defend myself. Simply do not have the energy to blow whistle.

Calm and burning hot day. Sun beating without mercy. Feel my brains are boiling inside my head. Feel horrid.

Prostrate body and soul. Will die soon. R.P. breathing but not moving. Will die too. Will not kill me.

Salvation. An hour of heavy, delicious, beautiful rain. Filled mouth, filled bags and cans, filled body till it could not take another drop. Let myself be soaked² to rinse off salt. Crawled³ over to see R.P. Not reacting. Body curled, tail flat. Coat clumpy with wetness. Smaller when wet. Bony. Touched him for first time ever. To see if dead. Not. Body still warm. Amazing to touch him. Touched him and fur shuddered⁴ as if I were a gnat⁵. At length, head half in water stirred. Better to drink than to drown. Better sign still: tail jumped. Threw piece of turtle meat in front of nose. At last half rose – to drink. Drank and drank. Ate. Did not rise fully. Spent a good hour licking himself all over. Slept.

It's no use. Today I die. [...]

I closed my eyes and waited for my breath to leave my body. I muttered "Goodbye, Richard Parker. I'm sorry for having failed you. I did my best."

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*, 2001

1. catch 2. wet 3. move 4. tremble 5. small insect

Chapter 95, 1 p. 216

While Pi is in hospital after he was found on the coast of Mexico, two Japanese investigators question him in order to understand the causes of the shipwreck of the Tsimtsum.

“You want a story without animals.”

“Yes!”

“Without tigers or orang-utans?”

“That’s right.”

“Without hyenas or zebras.”

“Without them.” [...]

“So I’m right. You want a story without animals.”

“We want a story without animals that will explain the sinking of the Tsimtsum.”

“Give me a minute please.”

“Of course. I think we’re finally getting somewhere. Let’s hope he speaks some sense.”

(Long silence)

“Here’s another story.”

“Good.”

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*, 2001

Chapter 95, 2 p. 216

Pi has just told the Japanese investigators the second version of his story: a version without animals.

“The Tsimtsum sank on July 2nd, 1977.”

“Yes.”

“And I arrived on the coast of Mexico, the sole human survivor of the Tsimtsum, on February 14th, 1978.”

“That’s right.”

“I told you two stories that account for the 227 days in between.”

“Yes, you did.”

“Neither explains the sinking of the Tsimtsum.”

“That’s right.”

“Neither makes a factual difference to you.”

“That’s true.”

“You can’t prove which story is true and which is not. You must take my word for it.”

“I guess so.”

“In both stories the ship sinks, my family dies, and I suffer.”

“Yes, that’s true.”

“So, tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can’t prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with animals or the story without animals?”

Mr Okamoto: “That’s an interesting question.”

Mr Chiba: “The story with animals.”

Mr Okamoto: “Yes. The story with animals is the better story.” [...]

Mr Chiba: “Oh look – he’s crying.”

(Long silence)

Mr Okamoto: “We’ll be careful when we drive away. We don’t want to hit Richard Parker.”

Pi Patel: “Don’t worry, you won’t. He’s hiding somewhere you’ll never find him.”