It was getting to Hemingway, the reviewers’ chary and catty commentary, even before excerpts from Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Writing candidly, as he claimed he always did, to Max Perkins (who by now had become not only his editor at Scribner’s but his fishing friend in Key West), Hemingway ridiculed the kind of personal attacks his critics (including Stein) had been making. In July 26, 1933, he wrote about the Stein excerpt and then segued into his own third-person defense:

Poor old Hem the fragile one. 99 days in the sun on the gulf stream. 54 swordfish. Seven in one day. A 468 pounder in 65 minutes, alone, no help except them holding me around the waist and pouring buckets of water on my head. Two hours and twenty minutes of straight hell with another. A 343 pounder that jumped 44 times, hooked in the bill. I killed him in an hour and forty five minutes. Poor fragile old Hem posing as a fisherman again. Weigh 187 lbs. Down from 211—I’m going to write damned good memoirs when I write them because I’m jealous of no one, have a rat trap memory and the documents.¹

Tired as he had become of the literary world, Hemingway liked thinking of the columns he would write for *Esquire*. His steady production of books and stories, each one requiring a complete investment of his abilities and his concentration, had worn him down. Although he spent more hours of his days on non-writing activities than on writing, his focus from day to day remained on his work. At first, his *Esquire* essays were about deep-sea fishing and other Key West, Cuban, or Bimini events. Then he turned to writing about writing and other more retrospective
themes; at times he published fiction. Later, his *Esquire* pieces became much more socio-political.

With the negative reception of *Death in the Afternoon*, however, Hemingway’s energy seemed to wane. He felt that he had explored most of the themes he then thought were interesting in his short stories; he didn’t have the next novel in mind. Pauline, always an astute observer, could see that her husband was drifting. Without his work to tether him to their life, he was more aimless than she had ever known him to be. While her accompanying him to the west for their summer of hunting, fishing, and riding cheered him, the lackluster reception of *Death in the Afternoon* had erased that equilibrium. She had decided that Uncle Gus’s offer to send Hemingway on safari to Africa might be the only thing that would save her husband’s psyche.

When early spring of 1933 brought the excitement of marlin fishing to the fore again, she knew that planning the safari was the answer. Ernest’s friendship with Jane Mason had continued to not only exist but to expand: they were writing to each other about their writing, now, and Hemingway had given her the manuscript for at least one story, “A Way You’ll Never Be.” The focus for their relationship still seemed to be marlin fishing, so Pauline tried to accompany Ernest as often as she could. At heart, she disliked the whole business of fishing: the deep waters troubled her, the baits and rods were unpleasant, and she was not naturally athletic. When Bumby came for visits, he liked the adventure; sometimes Pauline stayed in Key West with the smaller boys and let Ernest’s oldest son do the surveillance she was attempting for herself. In the spring of 1933, she took Bumby and Patrick to Cuba for the fishing and then returned to Key West; she also reassured Ernest in a letter that she had received an unexpected interest check and so would pay the house bills, and keep those accounts separate.

By this time, the affair between Jane Mason and Ernest may have been sexual. There is a story of Jane’s entering Hemingway’s Havana hotel room by crawling through the transom; there is the acknowledged privilege of the extremely wealthy woman who can do much as she likes. But life often takes unexpected turns. The same May in 1933 that Bumby arrived, when Jane was driving him, Patrick, and her adopted son Tony back from Havana to Jaimanitas, she had an accident and rolled her large Packard: the four barely escaped injury. According to Alane Salierno Mason, Jane’s car (a Chevrolet) was forced off the road by a bus and “tumbled 40 feet into a ravine, turning over 3 times.” Several days later, Jane “fell or jumped” from the second-story balcony of her home and broke her back. Alarmed at her erratic behavior, her husband