



Ernest Hemingway's Nobel Prize Medal was stolen from the El Cobre Sanctuary, located just outside Santiago de Cuba, in the 1980's. One version of the theft suggests that the thieves were not unknown to the local residents. When word reached Raul Castro, he reputedly issued an ultimatum, "Return the medal within 72 hours or face the consequences. I know who you are." Although the medal was returned, it was never again put on public display and remained, in hiding, under the care of the Archbishop of Santiago. Rarely has it been seen. The last person I know to have seen the medal was Ernest's granddaughter, Mariel Hemingway.

On December 6, 2011, I was awarded the rare privilege of viewing, holding and performing with the medal. A film crew from Mundo Latino captured the event for use in a multi-part documentary about Hemingway in Cuba to be directed by Esteban Rios Rivera.

There is no proof that Hemingway ever accompanied the medal to Santiago; nevertheless, I have created a scene that depicts the arrival of the medal at the El Cobre Sanctuary. In discussing This scene with the staff of the Archbishop of Santiago, I explained that it was in the spirit of Hemingway but based on poetic license. Soon a message arrived from the Archbishop's secretary, 'We approve your "license".'

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What follows is a verbatim record of the scene as performed from memory and filmed in Santiago de Cuba with the Nobel Prize Medal of Ernest Hemingway:

After the war, I finally completed *The Old Man and the Sea* and I was almost killed in a plane

crash in Africa. In 1954, for one or both of those things, I was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. This is part of what I said:  
*(He picks up the speech and reads.)*

“Writing at its best is a lonely life...A true writer should always try for something that has never been done before...Then sometimes, with great luck, he will succeed...It is because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him.” *(He returns the speech.)*



I dedicated my Nobel Prize Medal to the fishermen of Cojimar. Although I had told this story of an old man and his fish to the whole world, it is their story and they should share this medal.

A medal is worn close to the heart and my heart is in Cuba. The good people of Cuba have taken me into their hearts and caused me to live here longer than I have lived anywhere else. This is my true home.

Later, I traveled, with the medal, to Santiago de Cuba and entered the church. There, in the El Cobre Sanctuary, I knelt at the feet of the Patron Saint of Cuba and deposited the medal. *(He closes his eyes and prays.)*

Silently, I prayed for the protection, the peace and the prosperity of the warm, friendly, generous people of Cuba.

In Cuba, the people accepted me unconditionally. I could breathe and be happy. It is my clear, well lighted place. *(He crosses himself.)*

Amen.

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Hemingway On Stage  
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