Mid-Life Crisis Essay, Research Paper

Mid-Life CrisisIn Horst Stern s The Last Hunt, a man named Joop is portrayed as a professional worker in a very well known bank. Outside of being a banker, Joop enjoys to hunt wild animals. This has been a hobby of his since he was a young boy. Throughout the story many questions are raised about Joop s true feelings about his job, hunting, and his life. In the beginning of the story, a women walks in on Joop while he is staring at a picture on a wall in his office. The women is very embarrassed because she believes he is staring at the nudity part of the picture. This indeed is not true as the reader further examines the reason behind the picture. By looking at the picture, Joop realizes that he is going through a mid-life crises, which can only be resolved by exorcising memories of his wife, the bear, and the goddess of hunting, Diana. The solution to the first part of his mid-life crisis is to get rid of the memories of Mari that still resided deep within his mind. He does this by visiting the house where the majority of these memories take place. While touring through the house he remembers all the ways that Mari resembled the goddess of Diana. During the period that Joop was married to Mari, she portrayed herself in a few ways as being Diana. She did this by giving the name of “Worshipping Diana to the act of Joop kissing her. Her skin was white except for one violet-colored bruise just under her right collarbone; it never disappeared entirely during the hunting season and came from the kick of her hefty weapons. It pleased her that he liked to kiss this particular spot. She called it “Worshipping Diana” (Stern 112). By doing this, Mari therefore implies that she believes she is the goddess of hunting. Not only does Mari imply that she is similar to the goddess Diana, but Joop also feels very upset about her believing that she is a goddess and he is just one of her pawns. ” Her solemnity always frightened him, since it seemed to suggest that his main role in her eyes was as high priest of her own cult” (Stern 112). In this case the high priest would be the hunter Joop, and he would be serving Mari in her own fantasies. Joop s departure from the house was very swift because he wanted to get the memories of Mari behind him. Joop climbed wearily into the car and told his chauffeur to drive . . . Without turning around he raised a had in a gesture of farewell the woman would be able to see through the rear window. He had not had the strength to utter all the polite words called for upon his departure from the tower, which he knew he would never see again. For him, Mari s pheasant had just fallen dead at his feet, pierced by a volley of bleak memories (117). By leaving in such a quick pace without saying goodbye to the lady or watching the house fade away in the distance, Joop partially exorcised the memories of Mari. The only thing remaining that kept memories of Mari alive was the painting hanging up in Joop s office. That would be taken care of as soon as Joop returned to normal work. After leaving the house, Joop then continued on toward his next step in overcoming the crisis. He had always struggled in his hunting times. He never had a real clean kill to his name. When ever he went hunting with Mari, he was not able to kill the animal on the first shot. He felt very upset that he was not able to have a real trophy from hunting. When he was presented with the opportunity on his trip to have a chance at killing an extremely large bear, he jumped on it in a flash. When Joop finally arrived at the place where he was going to kill the bear he felt as if his crisis was soon going to be over. When the bear finally arrived and the shot rang out from Joop s rifle, Joop realized he once again did not kill the Bear instantly. He feels very embarrassed by that and decides to stay on top of the shooting blind until the moon disappears.

Long before Joop has time to think all this, however, the bear has collapsed on top of the horse carcass, dead. Joop bares his head. Dushan shakes Joop s hand and passes him the bottle of schnapps. Joop murmurs an embarrassed, insincere thank you and takes a swig. But it is not the cheap spirits that send a shudder through him, shaking him until he grows rigid, his eyes staring, mute. Dushan registers Joop s distress without understanding it. He departs. Joop stays on alone in the blind until the moon finally departs, too. The night wind runs its fingers gently through the bear s fur (151). By killing the bear, more of Joop s mid-life crisis is solved. But he still has the picture of Diana hanging up in his office which needed to be taken care of. When Joop returns to his job and office. He is resting a little bit more comfortable thinking that everything is now straightened out. He believes that he paid for the kill and that by doing so his problems are solved because money always was a solution to his problems in the past. He can not think of the killing without feeling it stab his conscience. The word is like a title under the picture of the bear s dreadful end. Since he can t get it out of his head, especially at night, when he has to pass his gun rack in the hall on the way to the bathroom he has taken refuge in the kind of cynicism that always cheered him up after even the most questionable deals of love affairs. This cynical motto ran: I paid my money and I got what I paid for, that s all. He paid for the bear and now he will get its skin-any objections? Money has been his tried and true method of straightening out the things that went wrong in his life; it has always worked (154). He then proceeds to get a letter in the mail saying that he cannot keep the fur of the bear because the law does not permit export of such a large animal. He also sees the money fall out that he couldn t seem to get rid off. He gets angry and tears the check up because he does not think that the problem has been totally solved. To completely solve his mid-life crisis, Joop got rid of the paining of Diana. By doing this, he is getting rid of all memories of Mari that he may have. He also will not see the man in the background of the painting as a reflection of himself anymore. Not only did he get rid of the picture, but also he installs a glass pane with a lock on it on the front of his gun rack. After the glass is installed, Joop is satisfied that all the memories that have been haunting him have been solved by the actions of exorcising the memories of Mari, the bear, and Diana.