



THE MOST

Dangerous

GAME

RICHARD CONNELL

RETOLD BY SARA SIMPSON

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“Who cares how a jaguar feels?” Rainsford said.

“The jaguar cares how the jaguar feels!” Whitney said.

“That’s stupid,” Rainsford said. “A jaguar isn’t smart enough to understand what’s happening.”

“A jaguar is smart enough to understand fear. A jaguar is smart enough to be afraid of dying,” Whitney said.

“Stop being stupid,” Rainsford said. “The world is made up of two classes--the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are the hunters. I wonder if we’re getting close to that island?”

“I can’t tell how close we are. It’s too dark,” Whitney said, “but I hope we’re far away. I’ve heard some bad stories about that island.”

“Are there cannibals on it?” Rainsford asked.

“Not cannibals,” Whitney said. “Even cannibals wouldn’t stay on that island. It’s that bad. The sailors have been nervous all day just because we’re near it.”

“I *did* notice the sailors acting weird today,” Rainsford agreed.

“Even the toughest sailor on his ship is scared,” Whitney said. “I was talking to him, and he asked me if I could feel the bad energy in the air. Don’t laugh at me Rainsford, but he was right. I could feel something bad.”

“You’re imagining things,” Rainsford said. “One sailor making up stories can upset everybody on the ship.”

“Maybe you’re right,” Whitney said, “but I think sailors can sense danger even when other people can’t. I think an evil place gives off bad energy, and sailors have a gift for feeling it. I’m glad we’re almost out of this area. I’m going to bed. Good night, Rainsford.”

“Good night, Whitney,” Rainsford said.

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Do you think animals are intelligent enough to understand what is happening when they are being hunted? Why?

Do you agree that the world is made up of “hunters” and “hunteees”? Explain with an example from real life.

What do you think is being foreshadowed in this section?

After Whitney went to bed, Rainsford was alone on the ship's deck. It was totally quiet except for the sound of the ship's engine and the sound of the water. It was totally dark. Rainsford started to doze off.

A loud sound woke him up. It was someone shooting a gun somewhere in the distance. The gun went off three times. Rainsford jumped up and tried to see where the shots came from, but it was still too dark. As he leaned over the rail trying to see, Rainsford lost his balance. He fell into the water.

Undersline the complication to the story that happens here.

Rainsford tried to yell for help, but water kept going into his mouth. He tried to swim back to the ship, but he was getting tired quickly. Rainsford stopped swimming. He had to stay calm. The ship was getting farther and farther away. Rainsford took off all his clothes so they wouldn't drag him down. He yelled as loud as he could, but the ship got farther away. After a while, Rainsford couldn't see the ship at all. It was gone.

Rainsford remembered the sound of the gunshots. He swam in the direction from which he had heard them. He was starting to get tired, but he knew he couldn't stop swimming.

What animal do you think is screaming?

Then Rainsford heard a sound. It was a loud scream. It sounded like an animal that was in pain and afraid.

Rainsford wasn't sure what animal was making the sound. He didn't care. If there was an animal, that meant there was also land. Rainsford swam towards the sound. He heard a gunshot. He was getting closer to safety.

Rainsford could hear the sound of the ocean hitting the shore. Rainsford barely had enough time to see the rocks in the water and swim around them; one second later, and he would have been thrown against them by the waves and died. Rainsford used the last of his strength to pull himself up onto a flat rock. He could see there was a jungle and steep cliffs. He knew there might be dangerous animals or unfriendly people in the jungle, but he was too tired to care. Rainsford dragged

people who are weaker than I am? If I want to hunt them, why shouldn't I? It's natural for the strong to hunt the weak. I hunt the scum of the earth: sailors from poor ships--blacks, Chinese, whites--I don't care what race they are. **A thoroughbred horse or hound is worth more than 20 of them.**"

"They are human beings!" Rainsford said.

"Yes," Zaroff said. "That is why I hunt them. Hunting human beings makes me happy. Human beings, unlike animals, can reason. That makes them dangerous."

"How do you get the people you hunt?" Rainsford asked.

General Zaroff winked at Rainsford and smiled.

"This place is called Ship-Trap Island for a reason!" Zaroff said. "Sometimes, the ships hit the rocks by accident. Sometimes, I help the ships find their way to the rocks."

Zaroff pointed out the window. Rainsford looked out; it was totally black. Zaroff pressed a button. A bright light flashed in the distance.

"When ships see the light, they think it's a safe place to land," Zaroff said. "It's really a place with huge, sharp rocks that will wreck the boat."

"You are a monster," Rainsford said. "You hunt poor men who have barely survived a shipwreck!"

"That's ridiculous," Zaroff said. "I'm quite civilized. I make sure the men get food and exercise before I hunt them. I don't just hunt them when they're weak. It wouldn't be any fun. I make sure they get into good shape before I hunt them. You'll see."

"What do you mean?" Rainsford asked.

"Tomorrow, we'll visit my training school," Zaroff said. "It's in the basement of this house. I have about 12

How does Zaroff feel about human life, based on what he says here?

Why does Zaroff says humans are dangerous to hunt?

Look back at your earlier guess about why the island is called Ship-Trap Island. Was your guess right?

Explain how Zaroff gets the human beings he hunts on the island.

window at the moon. Zaroff saw his dogs, and he called down to them, "We'll have better luck next time!"

Do you think Zaroff feels differently about hunting now than he did at the beginning of the story? How do you think his feelings about it have changed?

Describe the trap Rainsford sets for Zaroff.

Explain what happens with the trap (plot complication).

Explain what Zaroff thinks Rainsford has done.

Describe the two things that are upsetting Zaroff after the hunt. What does this tell you about his character (indirect characterization)?

Rainsford knew he didn't have much time. He remembered a trick he saw on a hunting trip to Uganda. Rainsford pulled a springy, small tree back and tied his knife to it with a vine. He pointed the knife down the trail where he knew Zaroff, Ivan, and the dogs would walk. The dogs could smell him, and they barked louder and louder. Rainsford understood how a hunted animal feels.

Rainsford climbed back into the tree just in time for Zaroff to pass by. The trap did not kill Zaroff, but Ivan lay on dead with the knife through his chest.

Rainsford jumped to the ground and started to run. Zaroff and the dogs weren't far behind him.

"Don't give up now! Be brave!" Rainsford said to himself.

Rainsford could see the ocean through the trees. He came to the edge of a cliff. The ocean was 20 feet below him. Rainsford stopped for a second. He could hear the dogs. He jumped into the ocean.

When Zaroff and the dogs got to the cliff, Zaroff stopped for a minute to look around. He shrugged his shoulders, then sat down to drink some brandy and smoke a cigarette.

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That night, General Zaroff ate a very nice dinner. He drank one bottle of wine, then half of another. There were two problems that kept Zaroff from truly enjoying his meal. First, he knew it would be hard to find another servant like Ivan. Second, Rainsford had gotten away. Rainsford hadn't played the game fairly; it wasn't fair that he had jumped off that cliff and killed himself. After dinner, Zaroff went to his library and read for a while. At 10:00pm, Zaroff went to bed. He was tired. He locked the door to his bedroom, then went to look out the

Then, Zaroff turned on the light.

A man, who had been hiding behind the bed curtains, stood in front of Zaroff.

“Rainsford!” General Zaroff screamed. “How did you get in here?”

“I swam,” Rainsford said. “It was faster than walking through the jungle.”

The general took a deep breath and smiled.

“Congratulations,” Zaroff said to Rainsford. “You have won the game.”

Rainsford did not smile.

“I am still an animal being hunted,” Rainsford said in a quiet voice. “Get ready, General Zaroff.”

“Excellent!” Zaroff said, preparing to fight. “One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. Are you ready, Mr. Rainsford?”

* * * * *

Rainsford had never slept in a better bed.

Explain how Rainsford tricked Zaroff.

Do you think Rainsford could trust Zaroff to let him go? Why or why not?

Use context clues to define the word “repast.”

Based on the last line of the story, infer what happened during the story’s climax.

What do you think happens to the eleven men still locked up in Zaroff’s basement? Why?
