

The book cover features a central image of a tiger's face with its eyes open, set against a background of green ferns. The text is overlaid on this image.

THE MOST

Dangerous

GAME

RICHARD CONNELL

RETOLD BY SARA SIMPSON

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Mr. Whitney and Mr. Rainsford were on a boat in the Caribbean Ocean. Both were rich and bored. They were sailing all over the Caribbean, looking for places to go big game hunting and stopping when they found someplace to hunt. Rainsford and Whitney were standing on the boat's deck. Off in the distance, there was an island.

"Look over there," Whitney said to Rainsford. "Somewhere over there, there's a large island. Nobody knows much about it."

"What's the name of the island?" Rainsford asked.

"I don't know the island's real name," Whitney said. "Sailors call it Ship-Trap Island. They hate the place and won't go near it."

"I can't see the island," Rainsford said, squinting.

"You have good eyes, but nobody could see anything when it's this dark," Whitney said. "I've seen you shoot a moose hiding in the bushes 400 yards away, but even *you* can't see something four miles away on the ocean on a moonless night."

"Ugh! It's like moist, black velvet!" Rainsford said.

"Well, don't worry," Whitney said. "We will be in Rio de Janeiro in a few days. The guns we ordered so we could go jaguar hunting are already there. We'll have a great time hunting in the Amazon. Hunting is a great sport."

"Hunting is the best sport in the world!" Rainsford said.

"Hunting is the best sport in the world if you are a *hunter*," Whitney said. "It's not the best sport in the world if you are a jaguar."

"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.

* * * * *

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.

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.

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 himself to the edge of the jungle and fell into the deepest sleep of his life.

* * * * *

When Rainsford woke up, it was late in the afternoon. He had been asleep at least 16 hours. Rainsford felt better, and now he was hungry.

"I heard gunshots," Rainsford said to himself. "That means there are people here, and people have food." He was a little worried about what men he would find; they might not be friendly. He couldn't worry about that now. He had to eat.

Rainsford walked along the shore. As he walked, he noticed the jungle plants near him were bent and broken. A large animal had been through there. There was blood on the ground. A bullet casing was nearby. Rainsford looked at the bullet casing.

"That's from a 22-caliber rifle," Rainsford said. "That's odd. That size gun shouldn't be powerful enough to kill a big animal. I can tell the animal put up a fight. I'm guessing that the first three shots I heard when I was on the boat were from the hunter trying to shoot it, and the animal getting away. The last shot was the one that killed the animal."

Rainsford looked at the ground. He saw footprints from a pair of hunting boots. He followed the footprints. He was in a hurry; it was starting to get dark.

Finally, Rainsford saw some lights. He thought he had found a village because there were so many. However, when Rainsford got closer to the lights, he was very surprised. It wasn't a village. It was one, huge house. The house was so big, it was more like a castle.

Rainsford couldn't believe what he was seeing. He thought he was imagining it.

The castle wasn't in his imagination. It was real. Rainsford knocked on the door. The biggest man Rainsford had ever seen opened the door. The man had huge muscles and a long, black beard. He had on a black military uniform with gray, fur trim in spite of the heat. The man was pointing a gun at Rainsford's heart.

"Don't worry," Rainsford said, trying to smile. "I'm not a robber! I fell off a boat. My name is Sanger Rainsford. I'm from New York City."

The man didn't move. He kept the gun pointed at Rainsford.

"My name is Sanger Rainsford," Rainsford said again. "I fell off a boat. I'm hungry."

The man didn't say anything, but he took his finger off the gun's trigger. With his other hand, the man gave a military salute. The man clicked his heels together and stood at attention. Rainsford saw another man coming down the stairs. The man stood up very straight. He was thin. He wore formal evening clothes. The man came and shook Rainsford's hand. The man's voice had a slight accent. It was the voice of a rich, cultured person.

"Mr. Rainsford, the famous big game hunter! Welcome to my home. I read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, and I recognized you from your picture in the book. My name is General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was handsome; he second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man, past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheekbones, a sharp cut nose, a spare, dark face--the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat.

General Zaroff gave the big man a hand sign. The man put away his gun, saluted, and left the room.

"That is Ivan," General Zaroff said. "He's very, very strong. Sadly, he's deaf and can't speak. His mind is a little slow. Like all Russian Cossacks, he's a bit of a savage. So am I."

Zaroff smiled. He had red lips and pointed teeth.

"Come with me," Zaroff said to Rainsford. "We can talk later. Right now, you need clothes, food, and rest."

Ivan came back. General Zaroff said something to him. Zaroff's lips moved, but he didn't actually make any sound. Rainsford didn't know what Zaroff said to Ivan.

"Go with Ivan, Mr. Rainsford," Zaroff said. "He'll take you to a room where you can get cleaned up and put on fresh clothes. I was about to eat dinner when you came. I'll wait and eat with you."

The bedroom was beautiful. The bed was big enough for six men. Ivan laid out a suit for Rainsford to wear. Rainsford saw the tag inside the suit. It had been made by a tailor in London who only made clothing for royalty.

The dining room was huge. On every wall, there were mounted animal heads from Zaroff's hunting trips--lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears. The heads were the biggest and most perfect that Rainsford had ever seen. General Zaroff was sitting alone at the big table.

"Have a drink, Mr. Rainsford," General Zaroff said. The liquor was very good. Everything on the table was the best quality--the cloth napkins, the crystal glasses, the silverware, the china plates. Rainsford and Zaroff ate Russian borscht (a rich, red soup served with cream).

"We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses," General Zaroff said. "We are very far away from the rest of the world. I hope the champagne is good; it had to be brought in on a

boat. All the temperature changes and shaking up can ruin the flavor.”

“The champagne is very good,” Rainsford said. General Zaroff was an excellent host—a real gentleman. However, Zaroff did one thing that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Every time Rainsford would look up from eating, Zaroff was staring at him.

“I hope you weren’t surprised that I knew who you were when you got here,” Zaroff said. “I read all books on hunting written in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt.”

“I can see that you love to hunt,” Rainsford said, pointing at the animals heads on the walls. “That buffalo head is the largest I’ve ever seen.”

“Yes. That one,” Zaroff said. “He was a monster.”

“Did the buffalo attack you?” Rainsford asked.

“He did,” Zaroff said. “He threw me against a tree. The hit was so hard it broke my skull, but I got him.”

“I think the buffalo is the most dangerous game to hunt,” Rainsford said.

General Zaroff didn’t say anything for a minute. He just smiled his strange, red-lipped smile.

“You’re wrong,” Zaroff said. “Buffalo isn’t the most dangerous big game to hunt. Here on my island, I hunt something even more dangerous.”

Rainsford was surprised. “Is there big game to hunt on this island?”

Zaroff nodded. “The biggest game. It isn’t here naturally, though. I have to bring it here so I can hunt it.”

“Is it tigers?” Rainsford asked.

“No, it isn’t tigers,” Zaroff said. “I stopped hunting tigers years ago. It got boring. It wasn’t enough of a challenge. It wasn’t dangerous enough. I live for danger. We will have a great time hunting together, Mr. Rainsford. I’m happy you are here.”

“But what are we hunting?” Rainsford asked.

“I’ll tell you soon,” Zaroff said. “I think you’ll be impressed. I have invented a new type of hunting. Would you like more wine, Mr. Rainsford?”

The general filled both of our wine glasses.

“God makes some men poets,” Zaroff said. “Some, He makes kings, some beggars. Me, He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man, and he loved to hunt. When I was five years old, he gave me my own, little gun. I was supposed to shoot small birds with it for practice. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I shot my first bear when I was ten years old. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I was in the army as a young man, but my passion was always hunting. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. I don’t even know how many animals I have killed.

After the Russian Revolution, I had to run away from Russia. I was a nobleman, and the people would have killed me. Many Russian nobles lost all their money in the Revolution, but not me. I was careful and kept my money invested in America. I will never have to work. Without a job or a home, I went all over the world, hunting every type of animal: grizzly bears in the Rocky Mountains, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinos in East Africa. I was in Africa when the buffalo almost killed me; I was in the hospital for six months. As soon as I was better, I went to the Amazon to hunt jaguars. I heard that jaguars were very smart and exciting to hunt. They weren’t a challenge at all. I was disappointed. I had a terrible thought: hunting was beginning to bore me! Hunting was the most important thing in my life. If I wasn’t a hunter any more, I didn’t know what I would do.

I knew I had to do something. Hunting was too easy for me. I needed to figure out a way to make it challenging again. No animal had a chance with me any more. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason.

That's when I knew what I had to do. I had to invent a new animal to hunt."

"A new animal?" Rainsford asked. "Are you joking?"

"I never joke about hunting," Zaroff said. "I needed a new animal to hunt, and I found one. I bought this island. I built this house. Now, I hunt here. This island is perfect for hunting this type of animal. There are jungles, hills, and swamps--"

"But what animal is it?" Rainsford interrupted.

"I wanted to find the perfect animal to hunt," Zaroff said. "It had to have courage, cunning, and above all, it must be able to reason."

"But no animal can reason," Rainsford said.

"There is *one* that can," Zaroff said.

At first, Rainsford still didn't understand. Then, he understood. Zaroff was talking about hunting *people*.

"This is a bad joke," Rainsford said to Zaroff. "You can't be serious."

"Why wouldn't I be serious?" Zaroff said. "You know I don't joke about hunting."

"This isn't hunting," Rainsford said. "This is murder."

General Zaroff laughed. "You're funny, Mr. Rainsford. I'll bet you forget all about how upset you are once you go hunting with me."

"I don't want to go hunting with you!" Rainsford said. "I'm a hunter, not a murderer!"

Zaroff laughed again.

"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if needs be, taken by the strong," Zaroff said. "The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I have to feel bad for killing 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 students there now. They came from a Spanish ship that crashed on the rocks. I don't think they will be much fun to hunt. It's a game. I ask one of them to go hunting. I give the man food and a good hunting knife. I give the man a three-hour head start. I follow. I only carry a small pistol. If the man can stay alive for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him, he...loses."

"What if the man refuses to let you hunt him?" Rainsford asked.

"Oh, I don't force a man to play," Zaroff said. "If a man doesn't want to hunt, I give him to Ivan. When Ivan was in the Russian army, it was his job to beat prisoners to death. The men usually choose to hunt."

"What happens if a man wins?" Rainsford asked.

Zaroff smiled a huge smile.

"So far, none of them have won," Zaroff said. "I'm not bragging. Most of the men aren't very smart, so they don't make it a challenge. One man almost won. I had to use the dogs in the hunt that time."

"What dogs?" Rainsford asked.

"I'll show you," Zaroff said, taking Rainsford over to the window. Outside, Rainsford saw at least 12 big, black dogs. "I let them out every night at 7:00pm. If anyone tries to get into this house or out of it, the dogs will get him."

"I need to go lie down," Rainsford said. "I feel sick."

"Of course," Zaroff said. "You're tired after that long swim you had. You need to get some sleep. You'll feel

much better tomorrow. Then, we'll hunt. I've got one man who I think will be a good challenge. Get a good night's rest, Mr. Rainsford."

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The bed in Rainsford's room was good. The pajamas were made of soft silk. Rainsford was exhausted, but he couldn't sleep. He thought he heard someone walking in the hall outside his room, so he tried to open the door. It was locked. Rainsford thought maybe he could escape out the window, but his room was too high up for that. Right before dawn, Rainsford finally fell asleep. The sound of a pistol shot somewhere in the jungle woke him up. He didn't go back to sleep after that.

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General Zaroff slept late. He didn't come out of his room until lunch. He was very polite and asked Rainsford how he was feeling.

"I don't feel well," Zaroff sighed. "Last night, I went hunting, and I started to have that old, bored feeling again. Last night, the man didn't even try. He left a straight trail that was too easy to follow. Sailors are so stupid. It's very annoying."

"I want to leave this island right now," Rainsford said.

General Zaroff looked like Rainsford had hurt his feelings.

"But you just got here!" Zaroff said. "You haven't even gone hunting yet!"

"I want to leave today," Rainsford said.

General Zaroff was staring at Rainsford. Zaroff's face suddenly looked excited.

"Tonight, you and I will hunt together!" Zaroff said.

"No," Rainsford said. "I will not hunt."

“That’s your choice,” Zaroff said, shrugging his shoulders like he didn’t care. “But hunting with me will be a lot more fun than dealing with Ivan.”

“You didn’t mean that you and I would hunt someone together, did you?” Rainsford said. “You meant that YOU would hunt ME like you have the other men!”

“I thought I was very clear,” Zaroff said. “This is going to be a great game! Your hunting skills against my hunting skills. It’s like a game of chess, but the prize is better than just winning a chess game.”

“What happens if I win?” Rainsford asked.

“If you are still alive at midnight on the third day, I will admit that I lost the game,” Zaroff said. “My boat will take you back to the mainland. You can trust me to do what I say. I give you my word. In return, you have to promise not to tell anyone what happened here.”

“I won’t promise you that!” Rainsford said.

“It doesn’t really matter yet, anyway,” Zaroff said. “We can talk about that in three days if we need to.”

Zaroff took a sip of wine.

“Ivan will get you hunting clothes, food, and a knife,” Zaroff said to Rainsford. “You should wear moccasins for shoes; they don’t leave such deep footprints. Stay out of the big swamp; there’s quicksand there. We call that place the Death Swamp. One man tried to hide in the swamp. He died, and one of my favorite dogs died going after him. The dog’s name was Lazarus; I was very upset to lose that dog.

I’m going to go take a nap; I always take a nap after lunch. You need to get started! I won’t follow you until it starts to get dark tonight. Hunting at night is so much more exciting. Goodbye, Mr. Rainsford, and good luck.”

It was time for Rainsford to begin the hunt.

* * * * *

Rainsford had been running through jungle for two hours. When he left Zaroff’s house, he wasn’t thinking clearly. He wanted to get as far from Zaroff as he could, and he knew he had left an easy trail for Zaroff to follow. Rainsford was calmer now, and he was able to think more clearly. He knew that just running as far and fast as he could would not save his life. Rainsford would have to be smart to survive. He had an idea.

“I’ll give Zaroff a trail to follow!” Rainsford said to himself. He left the straight path and made loops and circles in the jungle, leaving a path that was confusing and almost impossible to follow. Rainsford did this for hours. By the time night came, he was tired. He knew that trying to move around at night was a bad idea. He needed someplace safe to hide for the night and sleep.

Rainsford climbed up into the branches of a big tree. He tried to rest, but he couldn’t stop worrying. He didn’t sleep all night.

When it was almost morning, Rainsford heard footsteps. Someone was coming. It was Zaroff. Zaroff was walking very slowly, looking very carefully at the ground. Zaroff stopped beneath the tree. Rainsford wanted to throw his body down on top of Zaroff, attacking him, but he knew he needed to stay quiet. Zaroff smiled; Rainsford felt sick. Zaroff looked all around, then started to slowly look up at the tree. Rainsford held his breath. Somehow, Zaroff didn’t see him and walked away.

Rainsford could finally breathe. He felt sick. Zaroff was a very good hunter. The trail Rainsford had made was very confusing, but Zaroff had still managed to follow it right to the tree where he was hiding. Only luck had saved Rainsford from being found.

Rainsford had a terrible thought.

Zaroff had smiled. He had known that Rainsford was in the tree. Zaroff *could* have killed him, but he hadn’t wanted to. Zaroff wasn’t ready for the game to be over yet. **The general was playing with him! The general was**

saving him for another day's sport! Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

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Rainsford climbed down from the tree and started to walk through the jungle again. He forced himself to stay calm. He could not let fear control him. Rainsford saw a huge, dead tree leaning up against a smaller, living tree. The dead tree could fall over at any minute.

Rainsford had an idea. He got out his knife and went to work.

When Rainsford was done, he ran and hid behind a fallen log about 100 feet away to wait. He didn't have to wait very long.

Rainsford heard Zaroff and one of his dogs coming. Zaroff was so busy following Rainsford's trail that he didn't notice the trap until it was too late. Zaroff's foot touched the tree branch Rainsford had carved into a trigger. As soon as the trigger was touched, Zaroff knew something was wrong. He jumped out of the way just before the huge, dead tree fell on him. The tree only hit his shoulder. Zaroff staggered but didn't fall. Zaroff never let go of his pistol. Zaroff laughed an angry laugh.

"Rainsford!" shouted Zaroff. "I know you can hear me! Good job making that Malay mancatcher. Too bad I've also been hunting and Malaca and knew what you were doing. I'm going to go get my shoulder looked at. It's only a small injury. I'll be back soon."

* * * * *

Once he was sure Zaroff was gone, Rainsford ran. He was scared and desperate, not paying attention to where he was going. It started to get dark. Rainsford felt the ground under his feet get soft and squishy. Bugs were biting him everywhere. His foot sunk into something very soft. Quicksand. Rainsford stopped. He barely managed to pull his foot out of the quicksand. He was in the Death Swamp.

Rainsford pushed his panic deep inside himself. Stepping in the quicksand had given him an idea. Rainsford very carefully walked back about 12 feet from where his foot had sunk in. He started to dig into the ground with both hands. When the pit was as deep as his shoulders, he climbed out of the hole. He cut down five, small trees with his knife and sharpened one end of each tree to a deadly point. He planted the trees in the hole with their points facing up. Rainsford covered the hole with weeds and branches until it was hard to see the hidden pit. He hid behind a large tree and waited.

Rainsford heard Zaroff coming. He could hear Zaroff's footsteps and smell his cigarette smoke. Zaroff was moving fast. From where he was hiding, Rainsford could not see anything, but he heard the snap of breaking branches. There was a scream of pain. Rainsford wanted to shout with joy. He jumped up out of his hiding place and stopped himself just in time to avoid being seen. Zaroff was standing next to the pit with a flashlight in his hand. He hadn't fallen in.

"Well done, Rainsford," Zaroff shouted into the darkness. "Your Burmese tiger pit killed one of my best dogs. I think I'll bring the rest of the dogs with me next time. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a very exciting evening."

Rainsford was exhausted. He fell asleep next to the swamp.

* * * * *

Early in the morning, Rainsford woke up to the sound of many dogs barking in the distance.

Rainsford knew he had two choices. He could stay where he was and wait, but that would be suicide. He could run, but that would just mean death a few minutes later. Rainsford had another idea.

Rainsford starting running away from the swamp. He could hear the dogs getting closer and closer. When he got to the top of a hill, Rainsford climbed up into a tree.

In the valley below, he could see Zaroff in front and Ivan behind him, holding the dogs' leashes.

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.

* * * * *

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

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.