

When the Hunter Becomes the Hunted

In “The Most Dangerous Game,” a short story by Richard Connell, Rainsford proves to be the ideal quarry when he displays courage, cunning, and reasoning during his horrific stay on Ship-Trap Island. Through Rainsford’s many acts of courage, he proves that his life will not be taken easily. For example, in the final confrontation between the General and his quarry, Rainsford demonstrates how much courage he truly possesses. When General Zaroff sees Rainsford jump into the sea, he assumes him dead and returns to his chateau, “A man who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there,” shocking the General (Connell 34). Because Rainsford confronts the man he fears most instead of hiding, he triumphs over the General and his game. Not only is Rainsford courageous, he proves to be more of a challenge than Zaroff expects through his cunning nature. For instance, to slow down his hunter, Rainsford uses his own skills to set many different traps. Escaping one of the snares with only an injured shoulder, the General, with a mocking laugh, says to his prey, “not many men know how to make a Malay man-catcher. Luckily for me, I too have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting Mr. Rainsford” (Connell 30). Rainsford’s cunning nature may not have ended the game right then and there, but it did temporarily stop the hunt. Even with the General’s set back, the game continues. Finally, Rainsford proves that the ideal quarry not only possesses courage and a cunning nature but also has the ability to reason. He never lets his fear control him; he always thinks before acting. On the first morning of the hunt, Rainsford demonstrates that “instinct is no match for reason” (Connell 18). His first “impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw the General’s right hand held something metallic—a small automatic pistol” (Connell 28), thinking of the certain death that is sure to come. However, the General lets his prey live that morning; consequently, Rainsford still has a chance to win the game. Ultimately, General Zaroff hopes that Rainsford will end up as another head in his trophy room, but he soon discovers that Rainsford is the most dangerous game. By choosing a quarry that is cunning, courageous, and able to reason, he sets himself up to be defeated by the “ideal” animal that he enjoys hunting so much.