

Essay on "the most dangerous game" by richard connell

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" is about a hunter seeking his prey. However, it is the great hunter who ultimately becomes the hunted. For Sanger Rainsford, the protagonist of the story, hunting is "the best sport in the world" (Connell 58). While traveling with his hunting partner Whitney on a boat to Rio de Janeiro, Rainsford gets separated after falling into the water and swimming ashore on Ship-Trap Island that has a mansion on it. Rainsford then encounters General Zaroff, the owner of the island and an avid hunter like him. However, unlike Rainsford, Zaroff hunts for humans. Rainsford is left with no choice to play Zaroff's "outdoor Chess" (Connell) game, and this is how Rainsford is pitted against Zaroff in a game of strength, stamina, and wit. The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" in order to uncover the theme of the story, and other literary devices used by the author.

Connell eliminates the distinctions between animal and human, hunter and prey by pitting Rainsford against General Zaroff, suggesting that unlike what people have conventionally thought (Hodgson), instinct and reason are not contradictory. Conventionally, human intelligence and ability to reason have been placed above animalistic instincts, since they have no moral constraint and satisfying their own needs is their only purpose. Therefore, it is because of reason that humans are able to live and function together in a society. The contrast between instinct and reason is first blurred through Whitney, who claims that animals instinctively feel afraid and then confesses that the way Captain Nelson described Ship-Trap Island had frightened him. Unknowingly, Whitney admits that he felt dreadful by his outlook of the island just like an animal would become afraid after sensing danger.

The setting of the story, i. e. Ship-Trap Island, is shrouded by darkness that makes the shadowy recesses more noticeable and prominent in an eerie way. In the opening passages, the “moist black velvet” of the moonless stifling night surrounds Rainsford and Whitney as they chat on the yacht’s deck. After swimming ashore on Ship-Trap Island after falling overboard, the pitch-black darkness surrounding Rainsford forces him to rely on his other senses to navigate for the first time and for many more to come. The darkness covering the island not only inculcates ominous dread, but it also signifies Zaroff’s lunacy and madness to hunt humans. Connell also contrast’s the darkness with the deceiving lights on the island. For instance, the “glaring golden light” (Connell) from Zaroff’s the mansion lures unsuspecting sailors to the island. He compares this to moths being attracted to a flame. Similarly, Ship-Trap Island is lined with electric lights to warn passing ships of the rocks and shoals, but they actually cause more sails to get shipwrecked. Thus, these fake lights only contribute to the dread of the island’s darkness. Ship-Trap Island, the setting of the story, itself is a symbol of an unexplored territory that is not governed by the laws that normal humans follow. On the island, there is no one to check and impede General Zaroff from playing out his murderous desires. Similarly, the island is nothing like Rainsford’s world where he was leading an easy, comfortable, and luxurious life. The island can be dubbed as an antiutopian society with Zaroff as its tyrannical ruler, who instead of sustaining its uninvited inhabitants, seeks to eliminate them. Much like a tyrannical ruler, Zaroff enjoys being in control of everything, has no respect or sympathy for human life. The island is a secluded realm, where Zaroff is able to rashly and thoughtless pursue his indescribable desires with

no sense of morality. The sense of abstract, dread and intangibility, such as the creepy feeling Whitney has while sailing by the island for the first time, is embodied by the island itself.

Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" is a story filled with blood, gore, violence, and death, and these are highlighted throughout the story by the color red. For instance, when Rainsford falls into the "blood-warm waters" (Connell) at the beginning of the story, it symbolizes that he is going to be the target of a violent fate (Jacobs). After swimming ashore on the island, Rainsford finds a "patch of weeds [that] was stained crimson" (Connell). The color red seems to be more directly linked to Zaroff's desire for bloodshed, as the story progresses. For instance, Ivan, Zaroff's bodyguard, wears a red sash, and Rainsford is served bowls of red borscht at the mansion. Moreover, Zaroff is described as having a "smile [that] showed red lips and pointed teeth" and a "curious red-lipped smile" (Connell). However, when the hunt begins, Connell's emphasis on the color red shifts towards Rainsford's good judgment, which is an indication of his eventual victory.

Another powerful symbol in the story is the swarming, ungoverned, and wild jungle, which symbolizes the chaos on the island, and Zaroff's own demented and twisted psyche. The island is shrouded by the "snarled and ragged" growth, as a result of which Zaroff's despicable hunt is hidden from the rest of the view. The jungle also symbolizes Rainsford's restriction and loss of control since it prevents him from returning to civilization. For instance, the trees and undergrowth prevent Rainsford from seeing a way through when he wakes up the next morning, after swimming ashore on the island. When Zaroff approaches him for the kill, the forest causes Rainsford

to feel claustrophobic. Ultimately, Rainsford favors the sea instead of the jungle and succeeds in escaping this mental and physical space.

In conclusion, Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" centers on the conflict of pitting man against man in the form of the hunt between Rainsford and Zaroff, and even man against nature, as Rainsford struggles against the forest, the ocean, quicksand, and more. Connell skillfully begins the plot with the exposition, where Rainsford and Whitney discuss hunting; Rainsford goes overboard, meets Zaroff on the island and discovers that he hunts humans. The rising action begins when General Zaroff begins hunting Rainsford, the climax occurs when Rainsford jumps into the water, the falling action takes place when Zaroff enjoys his apparent triumph, and finally the resolution takes place when Rainsford kills Zaroff when he comes to bed. Thus, Connell's story has all five elements of a complete plot (Callison), and with the twists and turns that the story contains, makes "The Most Dangerous Game" an interesting yet dark tale.

Work Cited

Callison, Matthew. "Literary Elements of Plot." 37Stars. 37Stars, 13 Oct 2009. Web. 24 Feb 2013. .

Connell, Richard. "The Most Dangerous Game." Fiction The EServer Collection. EServer, n. d. Web. 24 Feb 2013. .

Jacobs, Tom. "Red Alert: The Color of Danger Influences Behavior." Pacific Standard. Pacific Standard Magazine, 22 Apr 2009. Web. 24 Feb 2013. .