

Choices made in the dangerous game

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Choices Made in The Dangerous Game Can a man be driven from humble humanity to gross inhumanity by circumstance or situation? What effect do one's choices and training have on his morals? At some point in our lives we will all be forced to answer questions similar to these, and two characters in Connell's story "The Most Dangerous Game" are not exempt from these life decisions. Sanger Rainsford and General Zaroff are both wealthy, both are hunters, and eventually both men are put into situations where critical choices must be made. The choices the men make are derived from different situations, but both have similar results. Initially the setting of the story is on a yacht in the Caribbean. Rainsford is involved in small talk with his friend, Whitney, and the conversation is about their favorite hobby, hunting big game. The fact that these men could afford a hunting trip to the Amazon speaks of their wealth, and these men have apparently taken several trips together. General Zaroff is not unlike Rainsford in this respect. From his childhood, Zaroff has been living in the lap of luxury. The General's father owned "a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea," and gave his son a gun when his son was only five years old. From this early indoctrination into the hunt, the General became a man that not only enjoyed hunting, but his fulfillment in life depended on the hunt. Both Rainsford and Zaroff are wealthy, and both love hunting, but their views of the subject are radically different. Rainsford is still totally thrilled by the hunt. He has had so much experience in hunting that his experiences have led him to write a book on hunting. Rainsford is willing to spend time, and apparently large sums of money, to pursue his game. Rainsford sees himself as the strong, and he sees the animal as weak, non-intelligent target of his hobby. Zaroff, though

he considers himself strong, sees hunting not just as a hobby, but as a way of life. The General depends heavily on hunting for reason in his world. The thought of not hunting will not register in his mind, nor will he let the thought prevail. Zaroff had hunted so much and had become so skilled in this vocation that this lifestyle was no longer "a sporting proposition." The General could not change his lifestyle now; he had to take matters into hand to preserve his existence. The element that drives the General in hunting is the existence of danger. Just bagging his quarry is not good enough for Zaroff; he has to feel a tinge of threat to be truly satisfied. No animal is a threat to Zaroff. He has tracked and outsmarted them all; that is, all but one. Zaroff desired an animal that could match his intellect, an animal that could reason, and there is only one animal of this sort. Rainsford's hunts were not truly dangerous, as were the hunts of the General. There was an uneven advantage in the favor of Rainsford during his hunts that he was perfectly satisfied with, until the tables are turned on him. Rainsford views the General as a murderer when initially introduced to his new game. Now Rainsford is the game. This is the first hunt in which Rainsford truly feels fear. The fear he experiences drives him to think as he has never thought before, and it drives him to do things that were at one time inconceivable to him. This fear changes the mind of Rainsford, he enjoys being the "beast at bay," and he would kill to survive. How far does one have to be pushed before it alters his thinking? All people have their limits, and when pushed beyond them, their morals will change. For Zaroff, sheer boredom is all it takes to drive him to the inhumane act of murder. Rainsford has to be put into the place of his game to understand its fear, and this fear pushes Rainsford past his morals

and changes his view of hunting. To these men, Rainsford and Zaroff, we are all just animals. It makes no difference if we are the hunted or the hunters. For Rainsford and Zaroff, both options are equally thrilling.