Notes: “The Most Dangerous Game”

Main Characters: Rainsford (protagonist; round; dynamic), General Zaroff (antagonist; round; static)
Subordinate Characters: Whitney (flat), Ivan (flat)

Setting (exposition): on a boat at night in Caribbean Sea; island surrounded by jagged rocks nearby (Ship Trap Island)

- Whitney believes animals have emotions/can feel; Rainsford does not.
- Rainsford hears cries of agonizing pain, but doesn’t recognize them. This is odd because he is a skilled and experienced hunter, so he should recognize the sound.

Mood: suspenseful, eerie (supported by the setting and diction)

Inciting Moment: Rainsford hears 3 gunshots and tries to pinpoint the location of the shots. He leans over too far and falls in the water (Oops!)

Foreshadowing: Rainsford finds a bullet shell—a 22 caliber. 22’s aren’t used for large animals because they’re small bullets.

Ship Trap Island:
- Boats often crash into jagged rocks during bad storms. The survivors become prey.
- If “supply” is running low → Zaroff traps boats/traps his future prey. This is both uncivilized and unfair.

Zaroff’s “Game”:
- Prey is well-fed and well-rested, to ensure a “fair” fight. Allows prey a 3-hour head start, food, and a hunter’s knife.
- Zaroff carries a pistol.
- Dogs are released at 7pm each night, so if the prey is not yet dead—they will be.
- Zaroff has never lost.
- If prisoner does not want to “play”, Ivan kills them.

Irony: Zaroff describes & presents himself as civilized, yet, he hunts people (uncivilized).

“Civilized” and “barbarous” (26) are used by Zaroff. These words are paradoxical, meaning they contradict in meaning and the context in which they are used.

- When Z propositions R to hunt with him, R initially thinks that Z wants them to be hunting “buddies”, when in reality Z wants to hunt R. R does not agree at first, but asks what will happen if he wins. Z says he will drop him off at the main land as long as R keeps his mouth shut. R says “no way, Jose” (duh!).
- Rainsford is giving a knife with which to hunt.

The “Game” begins on p. 30:
1. R hides in a tree after leaving faux trails everywhere. Z stops underneath the tree and lights a cigarette, blowing smoke upward toward Rainsford. R nearly gags and reveals his location (except Z actually knows he is up there; he’s playing with him – p. 31)
2. Malay man-catcher: dead tree propped on live tree; Z sets off trap and the dead tree hits Z in the shoulder, wounding him.
3. **Death Swamp**: R escapes the quicksand and is inspired to create a new trap. Digs a hole 12’ away from Death Swamp.

4. **Burmese Tiger Pit**: sharpens tree branches and sets up pointed stakes inside the 5’ hole; kills one of Z’s best dogs.
   
   → “He lived a year in a minute” (32) = one very long minute!

5. **Knife on stick kills Ivan**: Z is still alive

6. **Climax**: R jumps off the cliff into the sea; Z thinks he has killed himself

7. **Z is in his bedroom reading Marcus Aurelius (sociopath)** when R reveals himself. They fight; R kills Z. Winning!