
A Look at the Character of the Three Hunters in "The Most Dangerous Game" and "A Sound of Thunder"

Richard Connell and Ray Bradbury introduce the reader to experienced hunters who share three common character traits in their short stories. After comparing and contrasting character traits among Rainsford and Zaroff from Connell's short story "The Most Dangerous Game," and Eckels from Bradbury's, "A Sound of Thunder," one sees that the best hunter of the group is Rainsford. While each character possesses patience, observancy, and the ability to handle pressure, Rainsford uses these traits in the wisest and most proficient manner. Hunters need many different assets, yet patience is one of the most important.

The key to being a successful hunter is being patient. Rainsford demonstrates his patience in many ways during the three days of the most dangerous game. Unlike Rainsford, Eckels shows no patience on his own hunt millions of years prior: "Out of the mist a hundred yards away, came the Tyrannosaurus rex" (Bradbury 84). Rainsford's patience is the key factor that separates him from Eckels, who becomes frantic during the hunt. Through Ship Trap Island, Zaroff is able to portray his patience as well. Eckels, on the contrary, cannot attain the same sense of imperturbability, because he constantly asks questions: "Eckels flushed. Where's our Tyrannosaurus?" (Bradbury 84). Zaroff has the ability to slowly guide a ship to provide more participants in the most dangerous game, unlike Eckels, whose prey comes running at him. Eckels simply has no patience, a sharp contrast to both Zaroff and Rainsford. To demonstrate his dedication and commitment, Zaroff says, "So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. (Connell 21) Eckels' lack of patience is unfit for a task such as the most dangerous game. Rainsford's patience is greater than that of both Zaroff and Eckels. Being patient is a useful trait, but without keen observance, all chances of success are dashed.

While hunting, being observant of your surroundings and enemies can mean the difference between life and death. Rainsford makes use of his senses by observing the environment of Ship Trap Island and using it to his advantage. Eckels however, fails to use the natural environment 60,002,055 years in the past, "A sound on the floor of the time machine stiffened them. Eckels sat there shivering." (Bradbury 86). While Eckels can barely walk through the forest without getting himself killed, Rainsford has the ability to use his surroundings to injure and kill his enemies. Zaroff can be observant as well, but his skills are not honed as precisely as those of Rainsford. While not up to par with Rainsford, Zaroff is still more observant than Eckels, who is constantly corrected by the leaders of the hunt, "Stay on the path. *Stay on the path!*" (Bradbury 84). Zaroff scours the path for bits of information, while Eckels can barely keep on it. Eckels has no skill of observing, nearly meeting death on several occasions. Rainsford is quite

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the opposite, using many parts of nature to his advantage, "... the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow..." (Connell 27). Eckels lack of observancy is the polar opposite of Rainsford, and this puts his life at risk. While Rainsford uses many aspects of the jungle to put him ahead, Zaroff and Eckels fall behind. Despite one's skills of making traps and observing the wild, pressure can make or break a person.

Handling pressure can lead anyone to succeed, but failing to do so can result in disastrous conclusions. Of the three, Rainsford deals with pressure in the most effective manner. Unlike Eckels, who stumbles and almost gets himself killed during the hunt for the tyrannosaurus with Lesperance, Rainsford makes sound decisions in matters of life and death, "Eckels! He took a few steps blinking, shuffling. Not *that* way!" (Bradbury 85). Rainsford is not only able to survive the strikes of those who attack him, but actually manages to kill them under intense pressure. Zaroff is also able to deal with the stress that comes with pressure. Zaroff perseveres through pressure and is able to keep a calm disposition, unlike Eckels, who loses his confidence during the hunt, "'It can't be killed," Eckels pronounced this verdict quietly, as if there could be no argument." (Bradbury 85). Zaroff uses his knowledge of past experiences to stay calm and continue the hunt. Unlike the other two, Eckels cannot handle pressure. Rainsford displays the polar opposite of Eckels untimely actions. "His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he learned in Uganda... "The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed." (Connell 28). While Rainsford uses all of his time to his advantage, Eckels fails to comply. Rainsford uses every second he has to make a positive situation for himself, while Zaroff and Eckels are not as capable of attaining such perfection.

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