

Name: _____

Class: _____

The Most Dangerous Game

By Richard Connell
1924

Richard Connell (1893-1949) was an American author and journalist. This short story, which is his most famous, is an action-adventure tale inspired partly by the big-game safari tours in Africa and South America that were popular in the 1920s. This tale was also influenced by Connell's experience in World War I, which may have contributed to the story's message. As you read this story, take note of the devices the author uses to build suspense.

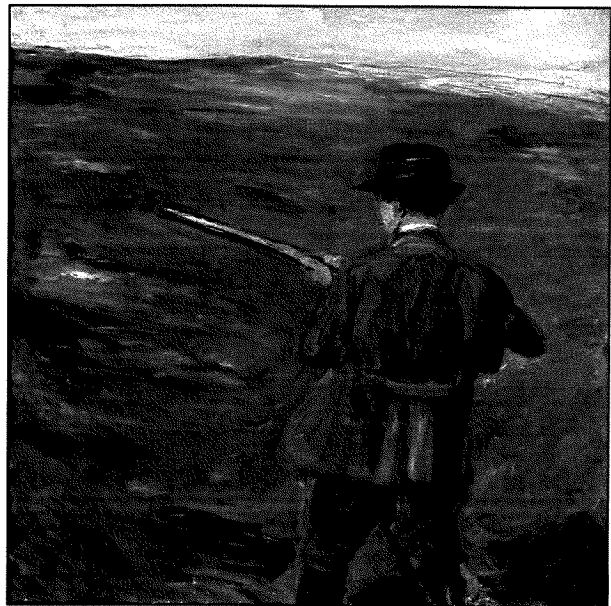
[1] "Off there to the right — somewhere — is a large island," said Whitney. "It's rather a mystery — "

"What island is it?" Rainsford asked.

"The old charts call it 'Ship-Trap Island,'" Whitney replied. "A suggestive name, isn't it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don't know why. Some superstition — "

"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable¹ as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

[5] "You've good eyes," said Whitney, with a laugh, "and I've seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall bush at four hundred yards, but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night."



"A Hunter In The Dunes" by Max Liebermann is in the public domain.

"Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. "Ugh! It's like moist black velvet."

"It will be light in Rio," promised Whitney. "We should make it in a few days. I hope the jaguar guns have come from Purdey's. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting."

"The best sport in the world," agreed Rainsford.

"For the hunter," amended Whitney. "Not for the jaguar."

[10] "Don't talk rot, Whitney," said Rainsford. "You're a big-game² hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar

1. **Palpable** (*adjective*) easily noticed or perceptible

feels?"

"Perhaps the jaguar does," observed Whitney.

"Bah! They've no understanding."

"Even so, I rather think they understand one thing — fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death."

"Nonsense," laughed Rainsford. "This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes — the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are the hunters. Do you think we've passed that island yet?"

[15] "I can't tell in the dark. I hope so."

"Why?" asked Rainsford.

"The place has a reputation — a bad one."

"Cannibals?" suggested Rainsford.

"Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn't live in such a godforsaken place. But it's gotten into sailor lore, somehow. Didn't you notice that the crew's nerves seemed a bit jumpy today?"

[20] "They were a bit strange, now you mention it. Even Captain Nielsen — "

"Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who'd go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was: 'This place has an evil name among seafaring men, sir.' Then he said to me, very gravely: 'Don't you feel anything?' — as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn't laugh when I tell you this — I did feel something like a sudden chill.

"There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the island then. What I felt was a — a mental chill; a sort of sudden dread."

"Pure imagination," said Rainsford. "One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear."

"Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible³ thing — with wavelengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I'm glad we're getting out of this zone. Well, I think I'll turn in now, Rainsford."

[25] "I'm not sleepy," said Rainsford. "I'm going to smoke another pipe up on the afterdeck."

2. "Game" refers to wild animals or birds that are hunted for sport and sometimes cooked and eaten.
3. **Tangible** (*adjective*) capable of being touched

“Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast.”

“Right. Good night, Whitney.”

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there but the muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently⁴ puffed on his favorite brier.⁵ The sensuous⁶ drowsiness of the night was on him. “It’s so dark,” he thought, “that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids — ”

- [30] An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, someone had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain coolheadedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by someone aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly⁷ he swam in that direction, swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes; he could do possibly a hundred more and then —

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish⁸ and terror.

- [35] He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality⁹ he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.¹⁰

4. **Indolently** (*adverb*) lazily
5. a tobacco pipe
6. pleasing to the senses
7. **Dogged** (*adjective*) stubbornly determined
8. **Anguish** (*noun*) severe emotional or physical pain
9. **Vitality** (*noun*) great energy and liveliness
10. Staccato describes a series of sounds that are short and separate.

"Pistol shot," muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

10 minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears — the most welcome he had ever heard — the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness;¹¹ he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor;¹² a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

"Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food," he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and ragged jungle fringed the shore.

[40] He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he landed, he stopped.

Some wounded thing, by the evidence, a large animal, had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated;¹³ one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

"A 22,"¹⁴ he remarked. "That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal too. The hunter had his nerve with him to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find — the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Bleak darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coastline; and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building — a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial¹⁵ chateau;¹⁶ it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.

11. the opposite of transparency; something you can't see through
12. **Vigor** (*noun*) energy and enthusiasm
13. **Lacerate** (*verb*) to cut
14. a type of bullet
15. palace-like
16. a castle-like manor house

[45] "Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker was real enough; yet about it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard steps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford lifted the heavy knocker and let it fall. The door opened then — opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring — and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen — a gigantic creature, solidly made and black-bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barreled revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not change. The revolver pointing as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform — a black uniform trimmed with gray astrakhan.¹⁷

[50] "I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said, "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

[55] Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid¹⁸ white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheekbones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face — the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat.

Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

17. Astrakhan is grey or black curly fur made from lamb skin.

18. **Vivid** (*adjective*) intensely bright

"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack,"¹⁹ said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I."

[60] "Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

It was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory tables where twoscore²⁰ men could sit down to eat. About the hall were mounted heads of many animals — lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

[65] "You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted, the table appointments were of the finest — the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating borsch, the rich, red soup with whipped cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said, "We do our best to preserve the amenities²¹ of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable²² host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognized your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

19. Cossacks are people who come from southern Russia or Ukraine.

20. forty

21. comfortable features

22. **Affable** (*adjective*) friendly and pleasant

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well-cooked filet mignon. "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

[70] "Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile. Then he said slowly, "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

[75] Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."

"Really?"

"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."

"What have you imported, general?" Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"

[80] The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigarette case and offered his guest a long black cigarette with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game — " began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port?"

[85] "Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said, "God makes some men poets. Some He makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man, with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea,²³ and he was an ardent²⁴ sportsman. When I was only five years old he

23. The Crimea is a piece of land in Europe near Russia and Ukraine.

gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear in the Caucasus²⁵ when I was 10. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army — it was expected of noblemen's sons — and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed."

The general puffed at his cigarette.

"After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar²⁶ to stay there. Many noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tearoom in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt — grizzlies in your Rockies, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning. They weren't." The Cossack sighed. "They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America businessmen often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life."

"Yes, that's so," said Rainsford.

[90] The general smiled. "I had no wish to go to pieces," he said. "I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless, that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase."

"No doubt, General Zaroff."

"So," continued the general, "I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer."

"What was it?"

"Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry.²⁷ Always. There is no greater bore than perfection."

[95] The general lit a fresh cigarette.

"No animal had a chance with me anymore. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason. When I thought of this, it was a tragic

24. **Ardent** (*adjective*) passionate

25. The Caucasus is a mountainous region between Europe and Asia.

26. This refers to the Russian emperor. The Russian monarchy was overthrown and replaced with a different form of government at around this time, leaving supporters of the czar in danger.

27. the object of the hunt, the prey

moment for me, I can tell you.”

Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.

“It came to me as an inspiration what I must do,” the general went on.

“And that was?”

[100] The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted it with success. “I had to invent a new animal to hunt,” he said.

“A new animal? You’re joking.”

“Not at all,” said the general. “I never joke about hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes — there are jungles with a maze of trails in them, hills, swamps — ”

“But the animal, General Zaroff?”

“Oh,” said the general, “it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits.”

[105] Rainsford’s bewilderment showed in his face.

“I wanted the ideal animal to hunt,” explained the general. “So I said, ‘What are the attributes of an ideal quarry?’ And the answer was, of course, ‘It must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.’”

“But no animal can reason,” objected Rainsford.

“My dear fellow,” said the general, “there is one that can.”

“But you can’t mean — ” gasped Rainsford.

[110] “And why not?”

“I can’t believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke.”

“Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting.”

“Hunting? Great Guns, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder.”

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. “I refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors romantic ideas about the value of human life. Surely your experiences in the war — ”

[115] “Did not make me condone²⁸ cold-blooded murder,” finished Rainsford stiffly.

Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll²⁹ you are!" he said. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naive, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuffbox in a limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to have had. I'll wager you'll forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."

"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."

"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think I can show you that your scruples³⁰ are quite ill-founded."

"Yes?"

[120] "Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if needs be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth: sailors from tramp ships — lascars,³¹ blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels — a thoroughbred horse or hound is worth more than a score of them."

"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.

"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. They can reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."

"But where do you get them?"

The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship-Trap," he answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."

[125] Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.

"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then, as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none; giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said, casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilized here."

"Civilized? And you shoot down men?"

28. **Condone** (*verb*) to accept or allow

29. If someone is droll, they have an amusing or odd manner.

30. moral principles or beliefs that make you unwilling to do something that seems wrong

31. a sailor from India or Southeast Asia

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second, and he said, in his most pleasant manner, "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself tomorrow."

[130] "What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark³² *San Lucar* that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle." He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest caliber and range. If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him" — the general smiled — "he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had the honor of serving as official knouter³³ to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport. Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

[135] "And if they win?"

The smile on the general's face widened. "To date I have not lost," he said. Then he added, hastily, "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar.³⁴ One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

"This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

[140] "A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. "They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house — or out of it — something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the *Folies Bergère*.³⁵

32. a kind of ship

33. someone hired to use a knout, a Russian whip used for punishment

34. a fearsome or formidable person

"And now," said the general, "I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library?"

"I hope," said Rainsford, "that you will excuse me tonight, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling well."

"Ah, indeed?" the general inquired solicitously. "Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. Tomorrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect — " Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

"Sorry you can't go with me tonight," called the general. "I expect rather fair sport — a big, strong, black. He looks resourceful — Well, good night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope you have a good night's rest."

[145] The bed was good, and the pajamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fiber of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate³⁶ of sleep. He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the château were out now, and it was dark and silent, but there was a fragment of *sallow*³⁷ moon, and by its wan light he could see, dimly, the courtyard; there, weaving in and out in the pattern of shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up, expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous³⁸ about the state of Rainsford's health.

"As for me," sighed the general, "I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford. Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said, "Ennui.³⁹ Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of Crêpes Suzette,⁴⁰ the general explained: "The hunting was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with, and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of Chablis, Mr. Rainsford?"

[150] "General," said Rainsford firmly, "I wish to leave this island at once."

35. a Parisian cabaret

36. a calming drug

37. **Sallow** (*adjective*) an unhealthy pale or yellowish color

38. **Solicitous** (*adjective*) showing anxious concern for someone or something

39. listlessness, boredom

40. a French dish

The general raised his thickets of eyebrows; he seemed hurt. "But, my dear fellow," the general protested, "you've only just come. You've had no hunting — "

"I wish to go today," said Rainsford. He saw the dead black eyes of the general on him, studying him. General Zaroff's face suddenly brightened.

He filled Rainsford's glass with venerable⁴¹ Chablis from a dusty bottle.

"Tonight," said the general, "we will hunt — you and I."

[155] Rainsford shook his head. "No, general," he said. "I will not hunt."

The general shrugged his shoulders and delicately ate a hothouse grape. "As you wish, my friend," he said. "The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's?"

He nodded toward the corner to where the giant stood, scowling, his thick arms crossed on his hogshead of chest.

"You don't mean — " cried Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "have I not told you I always mean what I say about hunting? This is really an inspiration. I drink to a foeman worthy of my steel — at last." The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

[160] "You'll find this game worth playing," the general said enthusiastically. "Your brain against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine. Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?"

"And if I win — " began Rainsford huskily.

"I'll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeated if I do not find you by midnight of the third day," said General Zaroff. "My sloop⁴² will place you on the mainland near a town." The general read what Rainsford was thinking.

"Oh, you can trust me," said the Cossack. "I will give you my word as a gentleman and a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here."

"I'll agree to nothing of the kind," said Rainsford.

[165] "Oh," said the general, "in that case — But why discuss that now? Three days hence we can discuss it over a bottle of Veuve Clicquot, unless — "

The general sipped his wine.

41. **Venerable** (*adjective*) worthy of a great deal of respect, especially because of age, wisdom, or character

42. a type of small ship

Then a businesslike air animated him. "Ivan," he said to Rainsford, "will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest, too, that you avoid the big swamp in the southeast corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There's quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford. I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta⁴³ after lunch. You'll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You'll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don't you think? Au revoir,⁴⁴ Mr. Rainsford, au revoir." General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist.

Rainsford had fought his way through the bush for two hours. "I must keep my nerve. I must keep my nerve," he said through tight teeth.

[170] He had not been entirely clearheaded when the château gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff, and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowels of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation. He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.

"I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck off from the rude path he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative⁴⁵ and he thought, "I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was nearby and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and, stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous⁴⁶ a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But perhaps the general was a devil —

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake, and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning, when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb and, through a screen of leaves almost as thick as tapestry, he watched... That which was approaching was a man.

43. Spanish for "nap"

44. French for "goodbye"

45. **Imperative (adjective)** very important or essential, especially for the success of something

46. **Zealous (adjective)** extremely passionate or enthusiastic in support of a person, object, or cause

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something metallic — a small automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent⁴⁷ incenselike smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.

[175] Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny⁴⁸ powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Rainsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was the cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

[180] He slid down from the tree and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously⁴⁹ on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from its sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on

47. **Pungent** (*adjective*) having a strong, usually bad, smell

48. **Uncanny** (*adjective*) unnatural, eerie

49. **Precariously** (*adverb*) in an insecure or unstable way

the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within the sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay mancatcher. Luckily for me, I too have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that carried him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker,⁵⁰ denser; insects bit him savagely.

[185] Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his foot loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that someone in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in in France when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared to his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the points sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming; he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigarette. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch⁵¹ in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

50. more overgrown

51. Torch is a British word for "flashlight."

[190] At daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying⁵² of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp.

The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a watercourse, not a quarter of a mile away, he could see the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force. Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay⁵³ feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped too. They must have reached the knife.

[195] He shinnied excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford's brain when he climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil⁵⁴ of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again.

"Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could see the gloomy gray stone of the chateau. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea...

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from a silver flask, lit a cigarette, and hummed a bit from *Madame Butterfly*.⁵⁵

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening. With it he had a bottle of Pol Roger and half a bottle of Chambertin. Two slight annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment.

52. "Baying" refers to loud, long cries of an animal.

53. An animal at bay is one that is forced to turn and face its attackers.

54. Recoil is the backward kick of a propulsion machine, like a gun, when fired.

55. an opera

One was the thought that it would be difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course, the American hadn't played the game — so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner liqueur. In his library he read, to soothe himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius.⁵⁶ At 10 he went up to his bedroom. He was deliciously tired, he said to himself as he locked himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called, "Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.

[200] A man, who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there.

"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"

"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."

The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have won the game."

Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "Get ready, General Zaroff."

[205] The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast⁵⁷ for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford."

...

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided.

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56. a Roman Emperor and philosopher

57. a meal

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which TWO of the following best identify the central themes of this story?
 - A. When violence becomes too common, some people no longer take it seriously.
 - B. Pride in one's country makes people feel superior to others based on race.
 - C. The power of love will save people from hurting and harming others.
 - D. Nature provides everything humanity needs and therefore anything else is wasteful.
 - E. Humankind's place in nature is to act with reason, not to become like violent animals.
 - F. The cost of technology is the cost of human life in war.

2. PART B: Which TWO phrases from the text best support the answers to Part A?
 - A. "You're a big-game hunter, not a philosopher." (Paragraph 10)
 - B. "Where there are pistol shots, there are men." (Paragraph 39)
 - C. "hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry." (Paragraph 94)
 - D. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naïve, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view." (Paragraph 116)
 - E. "Civilized? And you shoot down men?" (Paragraph 128)
 - F. "General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening." (Paragraph 199)



Explain how beginning the story with the dialogue between Rainsford and Whitney contributes to both the author's characterization of Rainsford and the story's mood. Cite evidence from the story in your response.

4. PART A: What does the phrase "sporting proposition" most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 94?
 - A. game-like challenge
 - B. hunting license
 - C. available targets
 - D. a simple, easy task

5. PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "businessmen often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life." (Paragraph 88)
 - B. "It had become too easy. I always got my quarry." (Paragraph 94)
 - C. "When I thought of this, it was a tragic moment for me" (Paragraph 96)
 - D. "I had to invent a new animal to hunt" (Paragraph 100)
6. Why does Zaroff think Rainsford is "droll" and "naïve"? (Paragraph 116)
- A. Zaroff thinks it's foolish and old-fashioned that Rainsford values human life even after fighting in the war.
 - B. Zaroff thinks it is childish and immature that Rainsford has never tried to kill another human.
 - C. Zaroff judges Rainsford's American culture because Rainsford feels a religious sense of responsibility.
 - D. Insane Zaroff has been isolated on the island for too long and laughs madly at seeing Rainsford, another civilized man.
7. What does Rainsford's repetition of the word "nerve" in paragraph 169, paragraph 179, and paragraph 197 reveal about his character?
- A. Rainsford's repetition characterizes him as forgetful and blundering, which is why he must repeat the word to remember his mission.
 - B. Rainsford's repetition shows that it is his courage and ability to reason that enables him to survive.
 - C. Rainsford's repetition was probably taught to him in a private school growing up and is a symbol of his class status.
 - D. Rainsford's repetition shows just how scared and cowardly he is, suggesting that he will not survive this hunt.
8. How does Rainsford's opinion on animals change throughout the story?
- A. At first, Rainsford believes only humans can feel, but by the end, he agrees with Whitney that animals can also feel "fear of pain" (Paragraph 13).
 - B. At first, Rainsford thinks that there is only one rational animal, humans, but then he discovers the new animal that Zaroff has "invented" (Paragraph 100).
 - C. At first, Rainsford believes humans are smarter than animals, but then he sees that some humans are actually "a very inferior lot" (Paragraph 131).
 - D. At first, Rainsford sees animals only as prizes for human hunters, but later Rainsford sympathizes with the animal "at bay" when he too becomes the hunted (Paragraph 204).

9. "He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided." (Paragraph 207) What is the overall effect of the last line of the story?
- A. The last line leaves the reader to infer that Rainsford has killed Zaroff, contrasting Zaroff's chilling death with Rainsford's rewarding night's sleep.
 - B. The last line leaves the reader to conclude that the events of this story have all been a dream Rainsford had while asleep on the yacht.
 - C. The last line leaves the reader to infer that Rainsford has killed Zaroff, making the ending a triumphant victory for civilization and American values.
 - D. The last line leaves the reader to suppose that Rainsford actually likes the comforts of civilization better than nature and that civilization is man's place above nature.



Compare Zaroff's and Rainsford's points of view on the hunt. How does this tension contribute to the moral stakes of the story? Cite evidence from the story in your response.

Name: _____

Class: _____

God Sees the Truth, But Waits

By Leo Tolstoy translated by Aylmer Maude
1906

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was a famous Russian author, perhaps best known for his novels War and Peace and Anna Karenina. Tolstoy also wrote many short stories, novellas, plays, and philosophical essays. In this short story, a man is convicted of a crime that he didn't commit. As you read, pay attention to how Aksionov's feelings change over the course of his imprisonment.

- [1] In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. He had two shops and a house of his own.

Aksionov was a handsome, fair-haired, curly-headed fellow, full of fun, and very fond of singing. When quite a young man he had been given to drink, and was riotous¹ when he had had too much; but after he married he gave up drinking, except now and then.

One summer Aksionov was going to the Nizhny Fair, and as he bade good-bye to his family, his wife said to him, "Ivan Dmitrich, do not start to-day; I have had a bad dream about you."

Aksionov laughed, and said, "You are afraid that when I get to the fair I shall go on a spree."

- [5] His wife replied: "I do not know what I am afraid of; all I know is that I had a bad dream. I dreamt you returned from the town, and when you took off your cap I saw that your hair was quite grey."

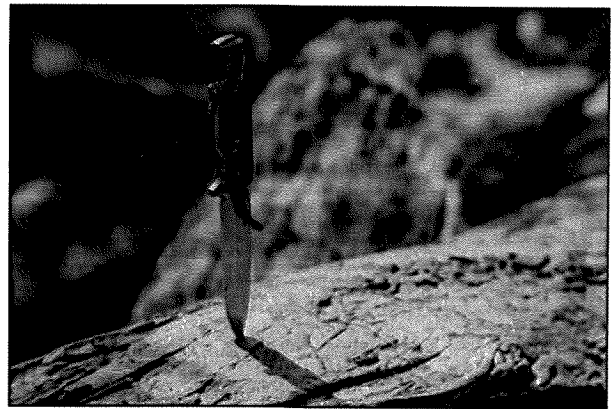
Aksionov laughed. "That's a lucky sign," said he. "See if I don't sell out all my goods, and bring you some presents from the fair."

So he said good-bye to his family, and drove away.

When he had travelled half-way, he met a merchant whom he knew, and they put up at the same inn for the night. They had some tea together, and then went to bed in adjoining rooms.

It was not Aksionov's habit to sleep late, and, wishing to travel while it was still cool, he aroused his driver before dawn, and told him to put in the horses.

1. **Riotous** (*adjective*) characterized by wild and uncontrolled behavior



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[10] Then he made his way across to the landlord of the inn (who lived in a cottage at the back), paid his bill, and continued his journey.

When he had gone about twenty-five miles, he stopped for the horses to be fed. Aksionov rested awhile in the passage of the inn, then he stepped out into the porch, and, ordering a samovar² to be heated, got out his guitar and began to play.

Suddenly a troika³ drove up with tinkling bells and an official alighted, followed by two soldiers. He came to Aksionov and began to question him, asking him who he was and whence he came. Aksionov answered him fully, and said, "Won't you have some tea with me?" But the official went on cross-questioning him and asking him. "Where did you spend last night? Were you alone, or with a fellow-merchant? Did you see the other merchant this morning? Why did you leave the inn before dawn?"

Aksionov wondered why he was asked all these questions, but he described all that had happened, and then added, "Why do you cross-question me as if I were a thief or a robber? I am travelling on business of my own, and there is no need to question me."

Then the official, calling the soldiers, said, "I am the police-officer of this district, and I question you because the merchant with whom you spent last night has been found with his throat cut. We must search your things."

[15] They entered the house. The soldiers and the police-officer unstrapped Aksionov's luggage and searched it. Suddenly the officer drew a knife out of a bag, crying, "Whose knife is this?"

Aksionov looked, and seeing a blood-stained knife taken from his bag, he was frightened.

"How is it there is blood on this knife?"

Aksionov tried to answer, but could hardly utter a word, and only stammered: "I — don't know — not mine." Then the police-officer said: "This morning the merchant was found in bed with his throat cut. You are the only person who could have done it. The house was locked from inside, and no one else was there. Here is this blood-stained knife in your bag and your face and manner betray you! Tell me how you killed him, and how much money you stole?"

Aksionov swore he had not done it; that he had not seen the merchant after they had had tea together; that he had no money except eight thousand rubles⁴ of his own, and that the knife was not his. But his voice was broken, his face pale, and he trembled with fear as though he were guilty.

[20] The police-officer ordered the soldiers to bind Aksionov and to put him in the cart. As they tied his feet together and flung him into the cart, Aksionov crossed himself⁵ and wept. His money and goods were taken from him, and he was sent to the nearest town and imprisoned there. Enquiries as to his character were made in Vladimir.

2. a decorated container for heating water and making tea
3. a Russian vehicle pulled by horses
4. currency units in Russia
5. a ritual blessing of oneself

The merchants and other inhabitants of that town said that in former days he used to drink and waste his time, but that he was a good man. Then the trial came on: he was charged with murdering a merchant from Ryazan, and robbing him of twenty thousand rubles.

His wife was in despair, and did not know what to believe. Her children were all quite small; one was a baby at her breast. Taking them all with her, she went to the town where her husband was in jail. At first she was not allowed to see him; but after much begging, she obtained permission from the officials, and was taken to him. When she saw her husband in prison-dress and in chains, shut up with thieves and criminals, she fell down, and did not come to her senses for a long time. Then she drew her children to her, and sat down near him. She told him of things at home, and asked about what had happened to him. He told her all, and she asked, "What can we do now?"

"We must petition the Czar⁶ not to let an innocent man perish."

His wife told him that she had sent a petition to the Czar, but it had not been accepted.

Aksionov did not reply, but only looked downcast.

- [25] Then his wife said, "It was not for nothing I dreamt your hair had turned grey. You remember? You should not have started that day." And passing her fingers through his hair, she said: "Vanya dearest, tell your wife the truth; was it not you who did it?"

"So you, too, suspect me!" said Aksionov, and, hiding his face in his hands, he began to weep. Then a soldier came to say that the wife and children must go away; and Aksionov said good-bye to his family for the last time.

When they were gone, Aksionov recalled what had been said, and when he remembered that his wife also had suspected him, he said to himself, "It seems that only God can know the truth; it is to Him alone we must appeal, and from Him alone expect mercy."

And Aksionov wrote no more petitions, gave up all hope, and only prayed to God.

Aksionov was condemned to be flogged⁷ and sent to the mines. So he was flogged with a knot,⁸ and when the wounds made by the knot were healed, he was driven to Siberia with other convicts.

- [30] For twenty-six years Aksionov lived as a convict in Siberia. His hair turned white as snow, and his beard grew long, thin, and grey. All his mirth⁹ went; he stooped; he walked slowly, spoke little, and never laughed, but he often prayed.

In prison Aksionov learnt to make boots, and earned a little money, with which he bought *The Lives of the Saints*. He read this book when there was light enough in the prison; and on Sundays in the prison-church he read the

6. an emperor of Russia

7. to beat someone as punishment

8. a very heavy whip made from rawhide

9. **Mirth** (*noun*) amusement, especially expressed through laughter

lessons and sang in the choir; for his voice was still good.

The prison authorities liked Aksionov for his meekness, and his fellow-prisoners respected him: they called him "Grandfather," and "The Saint." When they wanted to petition the prison authorities about anything, they always made Aksionov their spokesman, and when there were quarrels among the prisoners they came to him to put things right, and to judge the matter.

No news reached Aksionov from his home, and he did not even know if his wife and children were still alive.

One day a fresh gang of convicts came to the prison. In the evening the old prisoners collected round the new ones and asked them what towns or villages they came from, and what they were sentenced for. Among the rest Aksionov sat down near the newcomers, and listened with downcast air to what was said.

- [35] One of the new convicts, a tall, strong man of sixty, with a closely-cropped grey beard, was telling the others what he had been arrested for.

"Well, friends," he said, "I only took a horse that was tied to a sledge, and I was arrested and accused of stealing. I said I had only taken it to get home quicker, and had then let it go; besides, the driver was a personal friend of mine. So I said, 'It's all right.' 'No,' said they, 'you stole it.' But how or where I stole it they could not say. I once really did something wrong, and ought by rights to have come here long ago, but that time I was not found out. Now I have been sent here for nothing at all... Eh, but it's lies I'm telling you; I've been to Siberia before, but I did not stay long."

"Where are you from?" asked some one.

"From Vladimir. My family are of that town. My name is Makar, and they also call me Semyonich."

Aksionov raised his head and said: "Tell me, Semyonich, do you know anything of the merchants Aksionov of Vladimir? Are they still alive?"

- [40] "Know them? Of course I do. The Aksionovs are rich, though their father is in Siberia: a sinner like ourselves, it seems! As for you, Gran'dad, how did you come here?"

Aksionov did not like to speak of his misfortune. He only sighed, and said, "For my sins I have been in prison these twenty-six years."

"What sins?" asked Makar Semyonich.

But Aksionov only said, "Well, well — I must have deserved it!" He would have said no more, but his companions told the newcomers how Aksionov came to be in Siberia; how some one had killed a merchant, and had put the knife among Aksionov's things, and Aksionov had been unjustly condemned.

When Makar Semyonich heard this, he looked at Aksionov, slapped his own knee, and exclaimed, "Well, this is wonderful! Really wonderful! But how old you've grown, Gran'dad!"

- [45] The others asked him why he was so surprised, and where he had seen Aksionov before; but Makar Semyonich did not reply. He only said: "It's wonderful that we should meet here, lads!"

These words made Aksionov wonder whether this man knew who had killed the merchant; so he said, "Perhaps, Semyonich, you have heard of that affair, or maybe you've seen me before?"

"How could I help hearing? The world's full of rumours. But it's a long time ago, and I've forgotten what I heard."

"Perhaps you heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksionov.

Makar Semyonich laughed, and replied: "It must have been him in whose bag the knife was found! If someone else hid the knife there, 'He's not a thief till he's caught,' as the saying is. How could anyone put a knife into your bag while it was under your head? It would surely have woke you up."

[50] When Aksionov heard these words, he felt sure this was the man who had killed the merchant. He rose and went away. All that night Aksionov lay awake. He felt terribly unhappy, and all sorts of images rose in his mind. There was the image of his wife as she was when he parted from her to go to the fair. He saw her as if she were present; her face and her eyes rose before him; he heard her speak and laugh. Then he saw his children, quite little, as they were at that time: one with a little cloak on, another at his mother's breast. And then he remembered himself as he used to be — young and merry. He remembered how he sat playing the guitar in the porch of the inn where he was arrested, and how free from care he had been. He saw, in his mind, the place where he was flogged, the executioner, and the people standing around; the chains, the convicts, all the twenty-six years of his prison life, and his premature old age. The thought of it all made him so wretched that he was ready to kill himself.

"And it's all that villain's doing!" thought Aksionov. And his anger was so great against Makar Semyonich that he longed for vengeance, even if he himself should perish for it. He kept repeating prayers all night, but could get no peace. During the day he did not go near Makar Semyonich, nor even look at him.

A fortnight passed in this way. Aksionov could not sleep at night, and was so miserable that he did not know what to do.

One night as he was walking about the prison he noticed some earth that came rolling out from under one of the shelves on which the prisoners slept. He stopped to see what it was. Suddenly Makar Semyonich crept out from under the shelf, and looked up at Aksionov with frightened face. Aksionov tried to pass without looking at him, but Makar seized his hand and told him that he had dug a hole under the wall, getting rid of the earth by putting it into his highboots, and emptying it out every day on the road when the prisoners were driven to their work.

"Just you keep quiet, old man, and you shall get out too. If you blab, they'll flog the life out of me, but I will kill you first."

[55] Aksionov trembled with anger as he looked at his enemy. He drew his hand away, saying, "I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! As to telling of you — I may do so or not, as God shall direct."

Next day, when the convicts were led out to work, the convoy soldiers noticed that one or other of the prisoners emptied some earth out of his boots. The prison was searched and the tunnel found. The Governor came and questioned all the prisoners to find out who had dug the hole. They all denied any knowledge of it. Those who knew would not betray Makar Semyonich, knowing he would be flogged almost to death. At last the Governor turned to Aksionov whom he knew to be a just man, and said:

"You are a truthful old man; tell me, before God, who dug the hole?"

Makar Semyonich stood as if he were quite unconcerned, looking at the Governor and not so much as glancing at Aksionov. Aksionov's lips and hands trembled, and for a long time he could not utter a word. He thought, "Why should I screen him who ruined my life? Let him pay for what I have suffered. But if I tell, they will probably flog the life out of him, and maybe I suspect him wrongly. And, after all, what good would it be to me?"

"Well, old man," repeated the Governor, "tell me the truth: who has been digging under the wall?"

[60] Aksionov glanced at Makar Semyonich, and said, "I cannot say, your honour. It is not God's will that I should tell! Do what you like with me; I am in your hands."

However much the Governor tried, Aksionov would say no more, and so the matter had to be left.

That night, when Aksionov was lying on his bed and just beginning to doze, some one came quietly and sat down on his bed. He peered through the darkness and recognised Makar.

"What more do you want of me?" asked Aksionov. "Why have you come here?"

Makar Semyonich was silent. So Aksionov sat up and said, "What do you want? Go away, or I will call the guard!"

[65] Makar Semyonich bent close over Aksionov, and whispered, "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!"

"What for?" asked Aksionov.

"It was I who killed the merchant and hid the knife among your things. I meant to kill you too, but I heard a noise outside, so I hid the knife in your bag and escaped out of the window."

Aksionov was silent, and did not know what to say. Makar Semyonich slid off the bedshelf and knelt upon the ground. "Ivan Dmitrich," said he, "forgive me! For the love of God, forgive me! I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home."

"It is easy for you to talk," said Aksionov, "but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years. Where could I go to now?... My wife is dead, and my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go..."

[70] Makar Semyonich did not rise, but beat his head on the floor. "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!" he cried. "When they flogged me with the knot it was not so hard to bear as it is to see you now... yet you had pity on me, and did not tell. For Christ's sake forgive me, wretch that I am!" And he began to sob.

When Aksionov heard him sobbing he, too, began to weep. "God will forgive you!" said he. "Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you." And at these words his heart grew light, and the longing for home left him. He no longer had any desire to leave the prison, but only hoped for his last hour to come.

In spite of what Aksionov had said, Makar Semyonich confessed his guilt. But when the order for his release came, Aksionov was already dead.

"God Sees the Truth, But Waits" by Leo Tolstoy (1906) is in the public domain.
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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses the theme of the short story?
 - A. Showing someone mercy and granting them forgiveness can be a freeing experience.
 - B. Holding onto the anger you have for another person hurts you more than it hurts them.
 - C. It's important to make the best of a difficult situation and find value in it.
 - D. Life isn't always fair and sometimes good people are punished for no reason.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Here is this blood-stained knife in your bag and your face and manner betray you! Tell me how you killed him, and how much money you stole?" (Paragraph 18)
 - B. "The prison authorities liked Aksionov for his meekness, and his fellow-prisoners respected him: they called him 'Grandfather,' and 'The Saint.'" (Paragraph 32)
 - C. "the chains, the convicts, all the twenty-six years of his prison life, and his premature old age. The thought of it all made him so wretched that he was ready to kill himself." (Paragraph 50)
 - D. "'God will forgive you!' said he. 'Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you.' And at these words his heart grew light, and the longing for home left him." (Paragraph 71)

3. How does being sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit most affect Aksionov?
 - A. He becomes obsessed with proving his innocence to his fellow prisoners.
 - B. He lets go of the anger and bitterness he has for the person who framed him.
 - C. He commits himself to studying religion and praying to his god.
 - D. He falls into a deep depression and is unable to find meaning in anything.

4. PART A: How does the narrator's description of the arrival of Makar help build tension?
 - A. The narrator reveals to the reader that Makar is the man who framed Aksionov, while Aksionov's character is still unsure.
 - B. The narrator provides details that hint to Aksionov and the reader that Makar could be the one who framed him.
 - C. The narrator describes Makar and his arrival in a way that causes Aksionov and the reader to believe that someone else framed Aksionov.
 - D. The narrator provides details that prove, without a doubt to the reader and Aksionov, that Makar is the one responsible for framing him.

5. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A (Paragraphs 35-43)?
- A. "One of the new convicts, a tall, strong man of sixty, with a closely-cropped grey beard, was telling the others what he had been arrested for." (Paragraph 35)
 - B. "I once really did something wrong, and ought by rights to have come here long ago, but that time I was not found out." (Paragraph 36)
 - C. "The Aksionovs are rich, though their father is in Siberia: a sinner like ourselves, it seems! As for you, Gran'dad, how did you come here?" (Paragraph 40)
 - D. "He would have said no more, but his companions told the newcomers how Aksionov came to be in Siberia... and Aksionov had been unjustly condemned." (Paragraph 43)



How does his realization that Makar framed him for murder most affect Aksionov? Cite evidence from the story to support your answer.

Name: _____

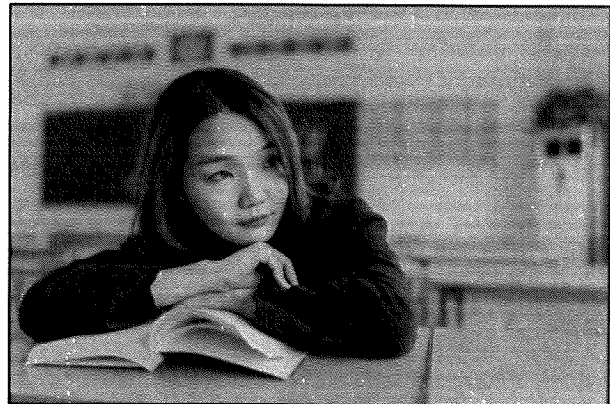
Class: _____

Safety of Numbers

By Lucy Tan
2015

Lucy Tan is a contemporary author whose writing often explores the meaning of home and family. In this story, a daughter learns some surprising information about her mother's past. As you read, take notes on how the mother's actions and beliefs impact her daughter.

- [1] When my friend Bobby Klein didn't make it into the gifted program back in fifth grade, Mom said, "What's so hard about IQ? There's nothing you can't study for." She's right, in my case. There is nothing she can't make me study for. She keeps a schedule that she brings out whenever I'm not where I'm supposed to be. On Saturdays, for example, when she catches me leaving through the kitchen door, she points to the red letters that read, SAT. I say, "Yeah Ma, I know it's a Saturday!" and Dad chuckles, which is his way of commiserating.¹



"Untitled" by Sean Kong is licensed under CC0.

My mother is from northern China, a woman with a small face and a big voice and hair that springs from her head so fiercely you're sure it's about to have a word with you. She walks home for lunch every day because she believes in moderate exercise and the health hazards of plastic food containers. She is petrified² of credit theft, house theft, car theft, and AIDS; uncomfortable around emotional confrontation and underachievement.

By the time other kids in my year start prepping for the SAT, I have already taken nine months of classes. Twelve, if you count algebra drills. Most of Mom's child-rearing energy is spent on my education, and she's impatient for results. She likes the kinds of success you can plot and graph, reports you can hold in your hand. This makes the SAT the score of all academic scores, representing both a return on one investment³ and the principal for the next.

"Like the Americans say," she muses, "safety of numbers. That's what colleges want to see."

- [5] "You mean 'safety in numbers',"⁴ I tell her. "And that's something completely different."

1. **Commiserate** (*verb*) to express or feel sympathy or pity
2. **Petrified** (*adjective*) extremely frightened; terrified
3. When someone invests money, they hope to get a "return" when it increases in value.
4. "Safety in numbers" is a figure of speech, meaning that you are safer doing something with a group of people than doing it alone.

She lets out a little laugh. “You think you know everything? The main word there is safety. What do you know about safety?”

“What do you mean?”

“Exactly,” she says, as if that answers anything.

Mom works in the Procurement Department of a Sears satellite office, where she orders desk chairs and tracks the average lifespan of IBM laptops. They’re big into motivation⁵ over at Sears. Every so often Mom goes on a company retreat and comes back with posters that say things like CONQUER IT and OPPORTUNITY. She hangs a select few up in the study, but recently, a poster called ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS moved her enough to earn a spot on the kitchen wall. That poster has an image of a running track, where a white hand passes a baton off to a brown hand. I have seen this same picture in our college advisor’s office, except that one said DIVERSITY. I find it troubling that these photos are used for more than one type of motivation, but my best friend Caterina thinks it’s funny. “Your mom and Mrs. Staedtler have the same taste in decorating,” she says. I don’t tell her that there are still more posters in the garage that haven’t made it onto the walls, lesser motivations, like TEAMWORK and ACCEPTANCE. I don’t say that the total supply of motivation in our house could put Mrs. Staedtler out of a job.

- [10] During the afternoons, while Mom is still at work, I invite friends over to watch TRL on MTV. Cat gets up to reenact the music videos, and everyone gives her performance points on a scale of one to ten. We write the scores on sticky notes and fix them to ping-pong paddles scavenged⁶ from the basement. Then we wave the paddles around and yell and sometimes someone turns to me and says, “I don’t know what you’re talking about — your house is fun!”

After Total Request Live, the reruns of Road Rules and The Real World come on, as well as a relationship show called The Blame Game, in which couples go on TV to expose⁷ each other’s flaws. There’s a lot of shouting involved, and it always ends with a karaoke segment. Most of my friends leave before this point, but I watch the whole thing. I love the elements of surprise and power play. Just when you think one person is winning the hearts of the audience, bam! He expects her to hand-wash his underwear! At a quarter to five, I switch the TV back to one of Dad’s channels before turning it off. In my room, I arrange binders around my desk and fabricate fresh eraser dust. By the time Mom gets home, my eyes look bleary from studying instead of watching Ruthie Alcaide run around naked on TV all afternoon.

Some nights, after my parents have gone to bed, Cat rides over on her brother’s bike and parks it under my window. We live in a ranch-style house, so it’s only a four-foot drop from my room, but the window screen isn’t removable. At least, not in the sense that you can put it back afterward. The first time I sneaked out, it was winter. We pulled and pushed on the screen until it started to crack. For every three minutes spent pulling and pushing, we waited one, just in case someone was awake and listening. When it finally came off, Cat propped it up against the house, like a portrait ready to be hung. It stayed there until the spring, when Dad found it while clearing the backyard.

5. **Motivation** (*noun*) the desire to do something; enthusiasm; determination
6. **Scavenge** (*verb*) to collect items that have been thrown away
7. **Expose** (*verb*) to uncover or reveal

"What happened here?" he called from outside.

"I think the wind blew it off."

[15] "Where are we, Kansas?"

"Probably a raccoon then."

"Yeah, that sounds about right," he said. "A raccoon. Or, you know, a stray Cat." He held my gaze just a moment longer than he had to. Then he dragged the screen out front to the garage.

The garage is Dad's hobby shop — full of our neighbors' discarded furniture and lawn equipment lined up and shining like overgrown insects. Crouched next to him out there, and in pauses between the buzzing of his electric sander, I can sometimes get him to talk about Mom's crazy.

"Back in China, college entrance exams were serious stuff," he says. "We had one shot — the gaokao — and that test meant the difference between becoming a scholar and a laborer, between a chance at America and no chance at all. Those scores? They mattered."

[20] There were other scores that mattered. Seventeen million of Mao's youth were sent to the countryside for reeducation. Ten thousand arrested in connection with the June fourth movement.⁸ Hundreds to thousands killed at Tiananmen Square.⁹ "Isn't that the scariest thing," he says, "the fact that those death-toll numbers are missing?"

"Yeah," I say, but the truth is that I don't really know. I can't imagine the difference between ten thousand and seventeen million. I can't imagine something so abstract as death, or so concrete as Mom's involvement in all this.

"Wait here," he says. He puts down the sander and goes over to the metal shelves that line the back of the garage. Motivational posters land on the floor, and on top of them, the lids of cardboard document boxes. When he comes back, he's holding a faded photo of people standing together in a half circle in front of a school. Mom is there in the center, her head turned and eyes just barely catching the camera, as though distracted in mid-speech.

"She was an activist,"¹⁰ he says. "This was taken in May of 1989. If you think about it, you're in this picture too." I imagine myself over on the other side of the world, a tiny embryo stuck to the inside of her, like a snail.

"You're more like her than you think," he says.

[25] "Yeah, right. How?"

8. The June fourth movement refers to student-led protests against the Chinese government in 1989.

9. Thousands of protesters were killed or wounded when the Chinese military fired on protesters in Tiananmen Square.

10. **Activist** (*noun*) a person who works to bring about political or social change

"You're fearless."

He hands me a can of Mountain Dew from the stash he keeps hidden in the garage. Mom says Mountain Dew is the color of cancer, and even though I know that cancer doesn't have a color, the thought has put me off Mountain Dew. I drink the soda anyway, and it's not as bad as I remember.

I'm sure Mom has reasons for running our lives the way she does, even if they only hold up in her own mind. Call them superstitions then, or the practices of a self-made faith. Somewhere there is a god that demands double-locking doors and triple-checking my homework. What I want to know is how the politics and the soda connect. In other words, at what point did she become so small in her living of life?

I don't say any of this, but it's as if Dad hears anyway. "They're her stories," he says softly. "I can't tell them."

- [30] Later that week, as I am going through my Reading Comprehension study pile, I find that Dad has slipped in a few articles on modern Chinese history. In one of them, there is a picture of twenty or so tanks headed single-file down a broad avenue. At the very corner of the frame, a person stands right up against the first tank. It almost looks as though he or she is directing the artillery,¹¹ but the caption below reads "Tiananmen Square, June 4, 1989: Civil Disobedience." This person, I think, could be Mom. And the more I stare, the more I'm convinced it is her. The picture is grainy, but I can almost recognize her ferocious hair.

The closer the SAT gets, the more little red letters appear on my schedule. Mom thinks she's being very American by making a baseball metaphor about "going to third base" and then doesn't want to know why I'm laughing. She works from home one day a week so that she can help me with drills after school. Without my friends there, the house feels empty and unfamiliar. Mom counts vocabulary flashcards while I stare into my lap, or at the napkin holder, or at a nearby stack of newspapers on the kitchen table. I wish she would pour herself a drink, the way Cat's mother does when she comes home from work. I wish she would get drunk on sorghum wine like the Chinese families that used to stay with us sometimes. Just off the plane, they had a weird dusty smell on them, as if they'd been shipped straight from Mom's past. They snacked on whole fruits — apples and oranges and round pears with flesh so light it looked translucent. When they drank, they started speaking about the eighties in a way that made Mom go pssspss with her lips. Not in front of the kid.

"Alacrity," Mom says, flipping through the cards. Her tone reminds me of old people playing bingo. "Esoteric."

Sometimes I test her vocabulary too. For instance, I know that on the back of the card that reads "brusque,"¹² there is written only the word "short," so I answer, "vertically challenged," to see if she knows the difference. When she doesn't, I shout in my head Aha! You lose! and squint one eye shut to picture her face on the Blame Game Wall of Shame. Other times, I define words in French or Ebonics. "la mode de ma mère."¹³ "Vexed,"¹⁴ she reads, and I answer, "When b— be all up in yo' steez." At this, she drops the deck and glares. "Concentrate on your first language. You can be funny after you get into Harvard."

11. large guns or cannons used in warfare
12. **Brusque** (*adjective*) responding with few words in a rude way. If someone speaks to you in a "brusque" way, you can also say that person is being "short" with you
13. This French phrase means "my mother's style."
14. **Vex** (*verb*) to make someone feel annoyed, frustrated, or worried

One day, I forget my class project and my keys at home. During sixth period, Cat rides me back to my house on her bike and we try each window, including the one without the screen, but they are locked — all except one. We have to look up to see it. It's two feet high, three feet wide, and positioned six feet off the ground, in the corner of my parents' bedroom. With the help of a garbage bin and a boost from Cat, I wriggle my way through the opening and land on Mom's bureau-top, knocking several things over in the process. But there's no time to clean up, so I grab what I need and leave through the front door.

[35] That afternoon, there is a cop car parked in the driveway. I walk in to find my mom in the living room with two policemen. When she sees me, she yells, "Someone robbed our house!"

One of the cops standing in our living room is Bobby Klein's dad, and he winks at me discreetly.¹⁵

"Ma'am," he says, putting a hand on Mom's shoulder, "nothing is missing."

"Yes, yes, but..." She points to the hallway and gives him the look of exasperation she usually saves for supermarket managers and DMV reps. "I came home early. Maybe I scared them away."

Through the doorway of the bedroom, I can see the open window, a felled plant, a trail of soil, and a few bottles of Clinique Moisture-Lock lying on their sides among the rest of the bureau-top battalion.

[40] "We've searched the house and everything's fine. Maybe a wild animal came in for a little visit, that's all."

At "little visit," Mom glares at Mr. Klein as if he has extended this invitation himself.

"And the missing screen on my daughter's window?" she finishes. "Was that an animal too?"

Now, each morning before she leaves for work, Mom checks to make sure every window and door in our house is locked. "What period is your Euro exam?" (Click.) "And did you finish the second draft of your Tom Stoppard essay?" (Click.) I sip on my orange juice and wait until she leaves. Then I go into her bedroom, unlock the tiny window, and leave it open just an inch.

Seeing Mom panic thrills me. She doesn't call the cops again, but late at night I can hear her talking to Dad about moving money between banks and getting fancy alarm systems installed. Sometimes, in the middle of chopping vegetables or writing a letter, she suddenly closes a hand over her neck to check that her gold chain is still there, or brushes a thumb against her ring finger to feel for her wedding band. One night, I overhear a conversation in their bedroom:

[45] "You don't believe in spirits, do you?" she asks Dad.

"There aren't any spirits," Dad replies, no follow-up questions asked. He is used to her habit of starting conversations out loud in the middle of the ones already going on inside her head.

I'm not evil, I swear it. But once I start, I can't stop. Cat says this is because there is something lacking in me, a

15. **Discreet** (*adjective*) careful or low-key; not drawing attention

form of drama that is missing from my life. “It’s like you live in a bad indie movie,” she says. “All mood, no conflict.” What she means is, why don’t I reason with my mother? Why don’t I bring issues to light? Cat doesn’t understand what it’s like to deal with a parent like mine. She has four older brothers, and it’s a rare day if their mom can call them all by the right names. Her family practices Delegated¹⁶ Discipline, which means each kid is in charge of keeping the next youngest in line. Any “reasoning” done by her brothers is carried out through use of their fists.

I’m not good at math. The verbal analogies¹⁷ and sentence completions are easy, but the math gets me every time. “X and Y are not interchangeable,” Mom says. “You have to assign things value.” She stands behind me with a stopwatch as I drill, peering at my pencil marks and blocking the overhead light. “One minute forty-two seconds per question,” she says, doing quick division in her head. “Not fast enough.” After I finish a section, she checks it to identify the types of problems that take me the longest to complete. I like to watch her work for a change, to see the crease between her eyebrows grow into the shape of a butt crack.

That final week of preparations, I barely leave the house at all. Mom has me in bed by nine thirty every night and taking Vitamin C pills every day, just in case. On the Friday before the test, I am concentrating — for once, really concentrating — when she comes into my room and throws bits of colored paper on my desk.

[50] “What is this?” she asks. “8.5? 9.1? 10? ‘I’d do you!’?”

Cat’s performance Post-Its lie there looking defeated, having been crumpled and then smoothed out again. Mom’s hair is bigger than usual, and suddenly I feel my own stand up at the back of my neck, as if some gene of hers has just decided to assert itself, to remind me whose daughter I am.

“You go through my trash?”

Mom blinks a couple times and stands up straight, as if she has been asked a difficult theoretical question. In that moment of triumph, I feel my chest expand and my eyebrows rise a fraction of an inch — this, too, is an expression of hers. The shock of reacting like her twice in twenty seconds makes me look away, and by the time I look back, she is pretending that she hasn’t heard me at all.

“I don’t want you around that girl anymore,” she says quietly.

[55] When I realize she is talking about Cat, my face grows hot. I think of all the words I could use to say how I’m feeling now: irate, livid, incensed. I am one adjective away from bellicose.¹⁸ But they are all too neat to describe the mix of emotions going through me.

“She’s my best friend. You don’t have a say in it.”

Mom blinks at me, leans in.

16. **Delegate (verb)** to assign a task or responsibility to another person

17. **Analogy (noun)** a comparison between two things

18. “Irate,” “livid,” “incensed,” and “bellicose” are all words that mean “extremely angry.”

"You think I've never been wild? You think I've never left through a window? Ask me about the last time I tried to leave through a window."

I stare back and say nothing.

[60] "Ask me."

"Fine. What happened the last time you left through a window?"

"My father caught me. I was on my way to Tiananmen Square for a protest. He locked the window from the outside and pushed two cabinets up against the door to keep me in. By the time he let me out, four of my best friends were dead."

The light from my desk lamp glances off her nose and cheekbones in a way that makes her eyes look darker than usual. Then her lips pull back and her chin bunches up. I have never seen her cry, and the fact that she almost does comes as a surprise. But there is nothing surprising to me about her facial expression of pain. I recognize it in a way that feels congenital,¹⁹ that must have something to do with bloodlines. Oh, I think. Of course she would look like that.

"It was supposed to be peaceful," she says. "No one ever thought they would open fire on students. When you're young, you think everyone is on your side. You can't imagine everything you have to lose."

[65] It occurs to me then that there are things about my mom that I know without being told or shown. I know them just because I am her daughter. For example, Dad thinks she's haunted by what could have happened to her at Tiananmen Square. But I know that she's just as haunted by the fact that it didn't.

"I'm sorry about your friends," I say.

She fiddles with the Post-Its on my desk, lines them up in a row. She looks suddenly worn — the exact opposite of her expression from that old photo taken in front of the school. One by one, Mom gathers the bits of paper back up into her palm. She doesn't look at me again until she's at the door. "Time for sleep," she says. "Tonight, rest is your first priority."²⁰

The school parking lot is filled with parents and kids passing books, pencils, and calculators between them. My parents stand on the lawn facing the entrance, staring over my shoulder at the registration table.

"I'm OK now," I say, starting to back away.

[70] Mom has forgotten to change out of her flip-flops when leaving the house, and her toes are clenched away from the morning dew.

"You see, honey? She's fine." Dad tugs the flashcards out of her hands. After they send me off, they are headed

19. **Congenital** (*adjective*) having a trait that is present from birth or inherited from your parents

20. **Priority** (*noun*) something that is more important than other things

to the Ritz Diner for brunch with some of the other nervous parents. I feel bad for Dad. I picture him sitting there, one hand cupping a mug of Lipton tea, the other working the worry out of Mom's fingers.

As she turns to look at me, her brows separate and her nostrils flare. This is her "pep talk" face. She wore it on my first day of ninth grade, and the time I refused to submerge my head during a YMCA swimming lesson, and the time I stood five terrifying feet from my bedroom door, its handle connected to my tooth by a string. Despite her exposure to motivational posters, Mom's pep talks never fail to sound like eulogies.²¹

"I have to go," I say before she can begin.

Mom nods and reaches over to give my arm a squeeze. In that moment, she suddenly looks at me differently, and I look back at her differently. I can't say what's changed, except that it reminds me of an online test that's supposed to tell you whether you're more left-brained or right-brained.²² There is an image of a dancing girl, and whichever direction you see her turning indicates the way you think. Usually, you can only see her going one way, but occasionally a collection of nerves relaxes in your mind — you become not so you, and then the dancer starts to spin the other way. Something just as delicate is turning between my mother and me. It has been there all along, but for the first time in a long time, we are watching it go in the same direction.

[75] "If you mess up, you can always take it again in June," she says.

So then we're back to normal.

Here's the verbal analogy I've come up with: The SAT is to my future as my future is to Mom's past. The outcome of the first will inform how we feel about the second, even though these connections seem tenuous at best.

If it will make her happy, I will play by these rules. I will suffer the security procedure required — hand over my calculator, my admission ticket, my two IDs. I will write down the codes they assign, bubble in the letters that spell out my name. I am prepared to fly through the verbal sections, pick off math problems in order of difficulty, and rediagram the ones that give me trouble the first time around. I will tell X from Y. I will assign value to all the unknowns.

But after we hand in our papers, while everyone is heading toward the front exit, where the parents are waiting, I will leave through the back. I will run down the empty halls, my fingers trailing along the locker gills, and blast through the gymnasium, out past those heavy doors. There will be no one there except for Cat, waiting at the curb, spinning one bike pedal with her foot. "Get in front," I'll tell her, even though I'm blind with sunshine. "I'll drive."

[80] We avoid the main roads, ride along side streets and through empty elementary-school playgrounds. We cut between two lawns at the end of my cul-de-sac and cross a wooden bridge. Speed picks up as we come down the road — we're holding on with four hands, and then two hands, and then none. At the entrance to the bike trail, our tires snag on a branch, launching us into the air, but Cat's weight on the handlebars keeps our course

21. **Eulogy** (*noun*) a speech that praises someone who has died

22. People who are logical and like order are considered "right-brained"; people who are creative and artistic are considered "left-brained."

when we land.

"Stunning performance!" she shouts over her shoulder. "Ten out of ten!"

In my bag are a toothbrush and a change of clothes. We are not sure where we're going yet, but we have always wanted to see MTV Studios in New York City. We have dreams of getting on a bus bound for Port Authority and joining the crowd at Times Square. There are neon signs we will wave, cheers we will yell in hopes of being let up to Total Request Live. Cat keeps reminding me how much trouble I'll be in when we get back, but I'm not scared of getting in trouble. What I'm scared of is growing up to be scared. She ducks forward so I can pedal standing, to gain momentum.²³ For one wild moment, as we hurl through the woods, I think I see my mom's face streak between the trees alongside us, trying to keep up.

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23. **Momentum** (*noun*) the force of something that is in motion

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. In paragraphs 19-29, how does the conversation with her dad affect the narrator?
 - A. It causes the narrator to wonder why her mother became an activist.
 - B. It causes the narrator to wonder how her mother lost her fearless nature.
 - C. It causes the narrator to challenge her dad's description of her mother as fearless.
 - D. It causes the narrator to believe that she will never live up to her mother's standards.

2. In paragraphs 49-56, what causes the conflict between the narrator and her mother?
 - A. The mother realizes the narrator uses post-it notes to cheat.
 - B. The mother disapproves of the narrator's relationship with Cat.
 - C. The mother blames Cat for the narrator's reluctance to study for the SAT.
 - D. The mother disapproves of the narrator spending her time watching television.

3. How does the repetition of "I will" in paragraph 78 contribute to the development of the story?
 - A. It shows the narrator's rejection of what her mother wants.
 - B. It shows that the narrator has given up on being her own person.
 - C. It shows the narrator's willingness to go along with what her mother wants.
 - D. It shows that the narrator's one true desire is to go to college and be successful.

4. Which detail from the story best demonstrates how the mother has affected the narrator?
 - A. "I feel bad for Dad. I picture him sitting there, one hand cupping a mug of Lipton tea, the other working the worry out of Mom's fingers." (Paragraph 71)
 - B. "Mom nods and reaches over to give my arm a squeeze. In that moment, she suddenly looks at me differently" (Paragraph 74)
 - C. "There will be no one there except for Cat, waiting at the curb, spinning one bike pedal with her foot. 'Get in front,' I'll tell her, even though I'm blind with sunshine. 'I'll drive.'" (Paragraph 79)
 - D. "Cat keeps reminding me how much trouble I'll be in when we get back, but I'm not scared of getting in trouble. What I'm scared of is growing up to be scared." (Paragraph 82)

Name: _____

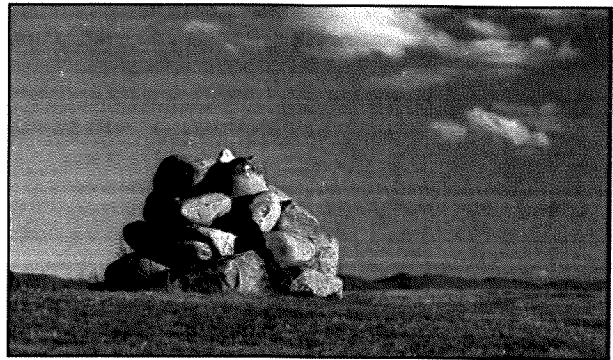
Class: _____

The Lottery

By Shirley Jackson
1948

*Shirley Jackson (1916-1965) was an American novelist and memoirist best known for her horror novel The Haunting of Hill House and "The Lottery," one of the best-known and most frequently taught short stories in American literature. **Purpose for Reading:** To understand how an author reveals a message about following the crowd by using the story's setting and structure to foreshadow important events.*

- [1] The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took less than two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.



"The Cairn. Tekapo golf course." by Bernard Spragg. NZ is in the public domain.

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands. Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Delacroix — the villagers pronounced this name "Dellacroy" — eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.

The lottery was conducted — as were the square dances, the teen club, the Halloween program — by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic ¹activities. He was a round-faced, jovial ²man and he ran the coal business, and people were sorry for him because he had no children and his wife was a scold. When he arrived in the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a murmur of conversation among the villagers, and he waved and called. "Little late today, folks." The postmaster, Mr. Graves, followed him, carrying a three-legged stool, and the stool was put in the center of the square and Mr. Summers set the black box down on it.

The villagers kept their distance, leaving a space between themselves and the stool, and when Mr. Summers said, "Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?" there was a hesitation before two men, Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, came forward to hold the box steady on the stool while Mr. Summers stirred up the papers inside it.

- [5] The original paraphernalia³ for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born. Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box. There was a story that the present box had been made with some pieces of the box that had preceded it, the one that had been constructed when the first people settled down to make a village here. Every year, after the lottery, Mr. Summers began talking again about a new box, but every year the subject was allowed to fade off without anything's being done. The black box grew shabbier each year; by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained.

Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, held the black box securely on the stool until Mr. Summers had stirred the papers thoroughly with his hand. Because so much of the ritual had been forgotten or discarded, Mr. Summers had been successful in having slips of paper substituted for the chips of wood that had been used for generations. Chips of wood, Mr. Summers had argued, had been all very well when the village was tiny, but now that the population was more than three hundred and likely to keep on growing, it was necessary to use something that would fit more easily into the black box. The night before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slips of paper and put them in the box, and it was then taken to the safe of Mr. Summers' coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers was ready to take it to the square next morning. The rest of the year, the box was put away, sometimes one place, sometimes another; it had spent one year in Mr. Graves's barn and another year underfoot in the post office, and sometimes it was set on a shelf in the Martin grocery and left there.

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up — of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official⁴ of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse.⁵ There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box,⁶ but this also had changed with time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. Mr. Summers was very good at all this; in his clean white shirt and blue jeans, with one hand resting carelessly on the black box, he seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins.

1. **Civic** (*adjective*) having to do with local (town, city, village) activities or government
2. **Jovial** (*adjective*) very cheerful
3. **Paraphernalia** (*noun*) the equipment needed for a particular activity
4. **Official** (*noun*) a person holding public office or having important duties at a particular event
5. **Lapse** (*verb*) to come slowly to an end; to run out (such as a lease or contract)
6. To "draw from the box" means to pull out one of the slips of paper that are contained inside it.

Just as Mr. Summers finally left off talking and turned to the assembled villagers, Mrs. Hutchinson came hurriedly along the path to the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place in the back of the crowd. "Clean forgot what day it was," she said to Mrs. Delacroix, who stood next to her, and they both laughed softly. "Thought my old man was out back stacking wood," Mrs. Hutchinson went on, "and then I looked out the window and the kids was gone, and then I remembered it was the twenty-seventh and came a-running." She dried her hands on her apron, and Mrs. Delacroix said, "You're in time, though. They're still talking away up there."

Mrs. Hutchinson craned her neck to see through the crowd and found her husband and children standing near the front. She tapped Mrs. Delacroix on the arm as a farewell and began to make her way through the crowd. The people separated good-humoredly to let her through; two or three people said, in voices just loud enough to be heard across the crowd, "Here comes your Missus, Hutchinson," and "Bill, she made it after all." Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers, who had been waiting, said cheerfully, "Thought we were going to have to get on without you, Tessie." Mrs. Hutchinson said, grinning, "Wouldn't have me leave m'dishes in the sink, now would you, Joe?," and soft laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back into position after Mrs. Hutchinson's arrival.

[10] "Well, now," Mr. Summers said soberly, "guess we better get started, get this over with, so's we can go back to work. Anybody ain't here?"

"Dunbar," several people said. "Dunbar. Dunbar."

Mr. Summers consulted his list. "Clyde Dunbar," he said. "That's right. He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's drawing for him?"

"Me, I guess," a woman said, and Mr. Summers turned to look at her. "Wife draws for her husband," Mr. Summers said. "Don't you have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey?" Although Mr. Summers and everyone else in the village knew the answer perfectly well, it was the business of the official of the lottery to ask such questions formally. Mr. Summers waited with an expression of polite interest while Mrs. Dunbar answered.

"Horace's not but sixteen yet," Mrs. Dunbar said regretfully. "Guess I gotta fill in for the old man this year."

[15] "Right," Mr. Summers said. He made a note on the list he was holding. Then he asked, "Watson boy drawing this year?"

A tall boy in the crowd raised his hand. "Here," he said. "I'm drawing for m'mother and me." He blinked his eyes nervously and ducked his head as several voices in the crowd said things like "Good fellow, Jack," and "Glad to see your mother's got a man to do it."

"Well," Mr. Summers said, "guess that's everyone. Old Man Warner make it?"

"Here," a voice said, and Mr. Summers nodded.

A sudden hush fell on the crowd as Mr. Summers cleared his throat and looked at the list. "All ready?" he called. "Now, I'll read the names — heads of families first — and the men come up and take a paper out of the box. Keep the paper folded in your hand without looking at it until everyone has had a turn. Everything clear?"

[20] The people had done it so many times that they only half listened to the directions; most of them were quiet,

wetting their lips, not looking around. Then Mr. Summers raised one hand high and said, "Adams." A man disengaged himself from the crowd and came forward. "Hi, Steve," Mr. Summers said, and Mr. Adams said, "Hi, Joe." They grinned at one another humorlessly and nervously. Then Mr. Adams reached into the black box and took out a folded paper. He held it firmly by one corner as he turned and went hastily back to his place in the crowd, where he stood a little apart from his family, not looking down at his hand.

"Allen," Mr. Summers said. "Anderson... Bentham."

"Seems like there's no time at all between lotteries any more," Mrs. Delacroix said to Mrs. Graves in the back row. "Seems like we got through with the last one only last week."

"Time sure goes fast," Mrs. Graves said.

"Clark... Delacroix."

[25] "There goes my old man," Mrs. Delacroix said. She held her breath while her husband went forward.

"Dunbar," Mr. Summers said, and Mrs. Dunbar went steadily to the box while one of the women said, "Go on, Janey," and another said, "There she goes."

"We're next," Mrs. Graves said. She watched while Mr. Graves came around from the side of the box, greeted Mr. Summers **gravely**, and selected a slip of paper from the box. By now, all through the crowd there were men holding the small folded papers in their large hands, turning them over and over nervously. Mrs. Dunbar and her two sons stood together, Mrs. Dunbar holding the slip of paper.

"Harburt... Hutchinson."

"Get up there, Bill," Mrs. Hutchinson said, and the people near her laughed.

[30] "Jones."

"They do say," Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, "that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery."

Old Man Warner snorted. "Pack of crazy fools," he said. "Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for them. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work any more, live that way for a while. Used to be a saying about 'Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon.' First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always been a lottery," he added petulantly.⁷ "Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody."

"Some places have already quit lotteries," Mrs. Adams said.

"Nothing but trouble in that," Old Man Warner said stoutly. "Pack of young fools."

7. **Petulantly** (*adverb*) done in a sulky, bad-tempered way; often used to describe children

[35] "Martin." And Bobby Martin watched his father go forward. "Overdyke... Percy."

"I wish they'd hurry," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son. "I wish they'd hurry."

"They're almost through," her son said.

"You get ready to run tell Dad," Mrs. Dunbar said.

Mr. Summers called his own name and then stepped forward precisely and selected a slip from the box. Then he called, "Warner."

[40] "Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery," Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. "Seventy-seventh time."

"Watson." The tall boy came awkwardly through the crowd. Someone said, "Don't be nervous, Jack," and Mr. Summers said, "Take your time, son."

"Zanini."

After that, there was a long pause, a breathless pause, until Mr. Summers, holding his slip of paper in the air, said, "All right, fellows." For a minute, no one moved, and then all the slips of paper were opened. Suddenly, all the women began to speak at once, saying, "Who is it?," "Who's got it?," "Is it the Dunbars?," "Is it the Watsons?" Then the voices began to say, "It's Hutchinson. It's Bill." "Bill Hutchinson's got it."

"Go tell your father," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son.

[45] People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers, "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn't fair!"

"Be a good sport, Tessie," Mrs. Delacroix called, and Mrs. Graves said, "All of us took the same chance."

"Shut up, Tessie," Bill Hutchinson said.

"Well, everyone," Mr. Summers said, "that was done pretty fast, and now we've got to be hurrying a little more to get done in time." He consulted his next list. "Bill," he said, "you draw for the Hutchinson family. You got any other households in the Hutchinsons?"

"There's Don and Eva," Mrs. Hutchinson yelled. "Make them take their chance!"

[50] "Daughters draw with their husbands' families, Tessie," Mr. Summers said gently. "You know that as well as anyone else."

"It wasn't fair," Tessie said.

"I guess not, Joe," Bill Hutchinson said regretfully. "My daughter draws with her husband's family, that's only fair. And I've got no other family except the kids."

"Then, as far as drawing for families is concerned, it's you," Mr. Summers said in explanation, "and as far as drawing for households is concerned, that's you, too. Right?"

"Right," Bill Hutchinson said.

[55] "How many kids, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked formally.

"Three," Bill Hutchinson said. "There's Bill, Jr., and Nancy, and little Dave. And Tessie and me."

"All right, then," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you got their tickets back?"

Mr. Graves nodded and held up the slips of paper. "Put them in the box, then," Mr. Summers directed. "Take Bill's and put it in."

"I think we ought to start over," Mrs. Hutchinson said, as quietly as she could. "I tell you it wasn't fair. You didn't give him time enough to choose. Everybody saw that."

[60] Mr. Graves had selected the five slips and put them in the box, and he dropped all the papers but those onto the ground, where the breeze caught them and lifted them off.

"Listen, everybody," Mrs. Hutchinson was saying to the people around her.

"Ready, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked, and Bill Hutchinson, with one quick glance around at his wife and children, nodded.

"Remember," Mr. Summers said, "take the slips and keep them folded until each person has taken one. Harry, you help little Dave." Mr. Graves took the hand of the little boy, who came willingly with him up to the box. "Take a paper out of the box, Davy," Mr. Summers said. Davy put his hand into the box and laughed. "Take just one paper," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you hold it for him." Mr. Graves took the child's hand and removed the folded paper from the tight fist and held it while little Dave stood next to him and looked up at him wonderingly.

"Nancy next," Mr. Summers said. Nancy was twelve, and her school friends breathed heavily as she went forward, switching her skirt, and took a slip daintily from the box. "Bill, Jr.," Mr. Summers said, and Billy, his face red and his feet over-large, nearly knocked the box over as he got a paper out. "Tessie," Mr. Summers said. She hesitated for a minute, looking around defiantly, and then set her lips and went up to the box. She snatched a paper out and held it behind her.

[65] "Bill," Mr. Summers said, and Bill Hutchinson reached into the box and felt around, bringing his hand out at last with the slip of paper in it.

The crowd was quiet. A girl whispered, "I hope it's not Nancy," and the sound of the whisper reached the edges of the crowd.

"It's not the way it used to be," Old Man Warner said clearly. "People ain't the way they used to be."

"All right," Mr. Summers said. "Open the papers. Harry, you open little Dave's."

Mr. Graves opened the slip of paper and there was a general sigh through the crowd as he held it up and

everyone could see that it was blank. Nancy and Bill, Jr., opened theirs at the same time, and both beamed and laughed, turning around to the crowd and holding their slips of paper above their heads.

[70] "Tessie," Mr. Summers said. There was a pause, and then Mr. Summers looked at Bill Hutchinson, and Bill unfolded his paper and showed it. It was blank.

"It's Tessie," Mr. Summers said, and his voice was hushed. "Show us her paper, Bill."

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal company office. Bill Hutchinson held it up, and there was a stir in the crowd.

"All right, folks," Mr. Summers said, "let's finish quickly."

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made earlier was ready; there were stones on the ground with the blowing scraps of paper that had come out of the box. Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands and turned to Mrs. Dunbar. "Come on," she said. "Hurry up."

[75] Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in both hands, and she said, gasping for breath, "I can't run at all. You'll have to go ahead and I'll catch up with you."

The children had stones already. And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles.

Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.

Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. The description of the lottery in paragraph 1 is meant to make the reader feel —
 - A. suspicious about the true meaning of the lottery.
 - B. that the lottery is a pleasant tradition.
 - C. certain something bad will happen.
 - D. that the lottery is very important.

2. Which of the following describes a theme of the text?
 - A. Even if something is cruel, people have the tendency to follow the crowd and participate.
 - B. Sometimes a few people must be sacrificed to ensure the group's survival.
 - C. Important decisions should not be made by lotteries.
 - D. Traditions help people understand the past.

3. PART A: What purpose does Old Man Warner's character best serve in the story?
 - A. He represents the value of overcoming hardship.
 - B. He represents the importance of respecting one's elders.
 - C. He represents the acceptance of change in traditions over time.
 - D. He represents the fear of change and desire to follow traditions.

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born." (Paragraph 5)
 - B. "'They do say,' Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, 'that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery.'" (Paragraph 31)
 - C. "'There's always been a lottery,' he added petulantly. 'Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody.'" (Paragraph 32)
 - D. "'Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery,' Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. 'Seventy-seventh time.'" (Paragraph 40)

5. How does the detail "And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles" contribute to the text (Paragraph 76)?
 - A. It emphasizes that the children no longer understand the violence of the lottery.
 - B. It shows that Davy doesn't like his mother and wishes to hurt her.
 - C. It reveals that no one expects Davy to seriously injure his mother.
 - D. It stresses that everyone participates in the lottery, even Mrs. Hutchinson's son.