The Most Dangerous Game

A Thriller in One Act

By Burton Bumgarner

Inspired from the short story by Richard Connell

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STORY OF THE PLAY

In this updated version of a classic thriller, corporate "headhunters" give new meaning to the term "hunting." Throughout the Zaroff Corporation's long history, success is based on finding the right employees. Four professionals are invited for an "interview" at Zaroff's headquarters. After a gourmet meal and cordial introductions, the potential employees realize that this would be the perfect job with the perfect salary. The human resource manager of Zaroff then tells the potential employees that they are all competing for one opening. They are going to be locked in the luxury condominium with no way to escape. The one who gets the job is the one who can survive the evening. What better way to test loyalty, resourcefulness, and resolve? At first, the four are frightened and horrified and refuse to have any part of the game. Then they begin to consider "the perfect job."

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 3 w)

MR. WHITNEY: Human resources manager for the corporation.

IVANA: Mr. Whitney's assistant.

MR. RAINES: Job applicant, somewhat of a tough guy.

MR. FORD: Job applicant, an accountant.

MISS RICHARDS: Job applicant, a biologist.

MISS SANGER: Job applicant, a computer programmer.

SETTING

"The Most Dangerous Game" is set in the living room of a posh New York apartment. Sofas, love seats, chairs, tables and lamps all imply luxury. The door to the outside hallway is left, a doorway to the rest of the apartment is right. An ice pick, screwdriver, and other dangerous tools are hidden in and beneath the furniture. The time is the near future.

PROPS

Coffee cups, briefcase, 4 files, cell phone, plates (glass), lemon meringue pie, forks, broken plate (glass), drinking glass, ice pick, screwdriver, serving tray, coffee pot, cream/sugar set.

COSTUMES

All characters wear strict business attire.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: MR. WHITNEY and MISS IVANA enter right, carrying coffee cups. They are followed by MR. RAINES, MR. FORD, MISS RICHARDS, and MISS SANGER. They have just finished a nice dinner. All take seats, except Miss Ivana. A briefcase is near Whitney's chair.)

WHITNEY: I trust you all enjoyed your meal?
RAINES: Man, that was the best meal I ever ate!
FORD: The prime rib was incredible! And the lobster bisque! Your chef is a genius!
RICHARDS: Is this typical of the dinner parties at Zaroff?
WHITNEY: To be sure. We employ the finest chefs in the world. They work for us, and us alone.
IVANA: Would anyone care for anything else? The chef left more lemon meringue pie in the kitchen.
OTHERS: No thanks. Thanks anyway. It's wonderful. *(Etc.)*
RAINES: I could go for some more coffee.

(IVANA takes HIS coffee cup.)

IVANA: Of course, Mr. Raines.
RAINES: That's the best coffee I've ever tasted.
WHITNEY: It's a special Colombian bean grown only for us. The Zaroff Corporation insists on the best.
RAINES: Man, I'm impressed.
IVANA: I'll be right back with your coffee, Mr. Raines.
RAINES: This is one sweet setup you got here. Your company must be loaded.
WHITNEY: Zaroff has enjoyed many years of success.
FORD: I, for one, enjoyed not only the dinner but also the conversation. It's rare to find human resource personnel who are so knowledgeable in the areas of art and music.
WHITNEY: Thank you, Mr. Ford. We like for our people to be well-versed in the cultural arts.
RAINES: Hey, I like drawings and tunes myself.

RICHARDS: Me, too. I just love Yanni [*or other un-classical type of music*].

WHITNEY: *(To SANGER.)* You seem to know a lot about modern art, Miss Sanger.

SANGER: I took a lot of art history in college. I thought I'd like to work in a museum at one time.

WHITNEY: It's a difficult field in which to find work, I understand.

SANGER: I ended up in computer science.

WHITNEY: I'm sorry you couldn't follow your dream.

SANGER: Computer science suits me.

RICHARDS: I'd never heard of your company until I got your phone call last week.

WHITNEY: We like to keep a very low profile. Secrecy is our secret, we like to say. *(Polite laughter from OTHERS.)*

FORD: I find it odd that you're not listed on the New York Stock Exchange, the American Exchange, or the NASDAQ.

WHITNEY: We are a private company. Our employees are our shareholders.

RAINES: I think it's kind of weird that I'd get a phone call out of the blue offering me an interview. I don't think I ever interviewed nowhere before.

WHITNEY: Zaroff has corporate head-hunting down to a science. We know what we're doing when it comes to our employees.

RAINES: Yeah, well, I'm grateful and everything. Don't get me wrong.

WHITNEY: There's not a chance of that, Mr. Raines. No chance at all. You were all invited here because we know what we need, and we know how to find it. It's as simple as that. We're the very best.

SANGER: Are we interviewing for the same position? Each one of us seems so different.

WHITNEY: You are each interviewing for the same position. You exhibit strengths we think we can use. Miss Richards has a scientific background. Mr. Ford is the business man. Mr. Raines is resourceful and down-to-earth.

SANGER: What about me?

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