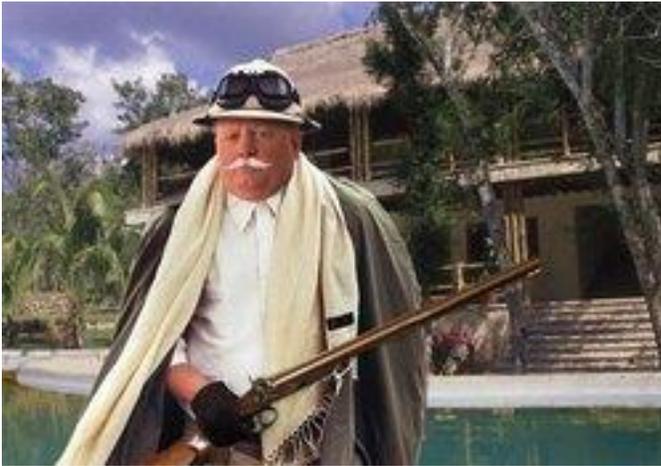


Maverick Hunter's 'Human Beings As Prey' Plan Not As Challenging As Expected

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PERIL ISLAND—Big-game hunter Baron Hugo von Urwitz conceded Tuesday that his theory that human beings are the most cunning and challenging of quarry is seriously flawed.



Von Urwitz outside his island fortress.

"Perhaps I gave my fellow man too much credit," said von Urwitz, looking on as his servants carried three lifeless human beings bound to poles by their hands and ankles. "Admittedly, there are fewer kills today than yesterday, but only because the herd is thinning."

Bored with netting such elusive and dangerous prey as Bengal tigers, white rhinos, and Cape buffalo, the 51-year-old adventurer said he had thought it would be "capital sport" to hunt humans on his uncharted, densely forested private island.

"My huntsman's heart thrilled at the prospect of bringing down a live human, who alone in the animal kingdom has the capacity to outwit and even best his enemies through sheer intellect," von Urwitz said. "What I neglected to consider is that man is also alone in the capacity to tumble straight into quicksand while fleeing from a swarm of yellow jackets after trying to steal honey from their nest."

Von Urwitz chanced upon his stock of prey Saturday, after a chartered luxury yacht ran aground in the shoals surrounding his island. The yacht's 29 passengers and five crew members were promptly invited to lodge in the baron's imposing fortress.

At dawn Sunday, von Urwitz roused his guests to announce his shocking intent to hunt them. Allowing them only small knives and the clothes on their backs, he anticipated that his human prey would elude him in inventive and clever ways—and perhaps even make their hunter the hunted himself.

Yet in the first night alone, eight tourists died of exposure.

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"I'm not sure I even need to be here, really," von Urwitz added.

"At the very least, I assumed they would take to the trees and hills in desperate flight," he said. "Instead, many of them just milled about like peahens within the confines of my estate, periodically rattling the backdoor knob to ensure that it hadn't been unlocked since they last checked."

The baron theorized that the grave danger simply didn't register with most of the humans. "Look at this one," von Urwitz said, as a cellar meat locker revealed an overweight, middle-aged male bearing a single gunshot wound to the forehead. "I bagged him in the courtyard as he sipped vitamin water, after I had given him a four-hour running start. Where's the sport in this?"

Von Urwitz said three vacationers brazenly approached him with strange questions.

"They asked about grand prizes and something they called an 'immunity challenge,'" von Urwitz said. "I had my men slit their throats."

Those who had the wherewithal to hide did so in obvious places, such as in the toolshed, under the car, or behind bushes. Von Urwitz said his hounds "made short work of them."

A few did flee to the jungle, including one man who raced in the direction of a pit trap dug by von Urwitz's men. From a hunting blind close to the trap, von Urwitz said he watched with "immense excitement."

"Would [the man's] eyes catch the carpet of dead, flattened leaves in the clearing, noticing their rather unnatural distribution, and quickly surmise, through reason and intuition alike, that something was dreadfully amiss?" von Urwitz said. "Or would he blindly stumble into the pit and be finished off by our arrows?"

Ultimately, the man did neither. Before coming within 20 yards of the pit, he was knocked cold by a low-hanging tree limb.

With 22 kills by nightfall Tuesday, the baron recognized the need to amend his strategy. "I had snared a couple of tourists, but they were so obviously feeble-minded that I threw them back into the brush," von Urwitz said. "If I leave them alone, perhaps in a few weeks one or two of them will have developed survival tactics besides uncontrolled weeping and involuntary defecation."

Hinting that his ruthlessness was quickly turning to pity for the pathetic, fragile creatures, von Urwitz also mused about rounding them up in an island game preserve. "I am reminded of Theodore Roosevelt, with his hunter's love of nature," von Urwitz said. "Perhaps future generations of von Urwitzes can enjoy the humans' comical antics, and if their numbers increase sufficiently, perhaps hunt some of the—one would hope—increasingly fit adults from time to time."

"On the other hand, I could always put out some large glue traps," von Urwitz added.