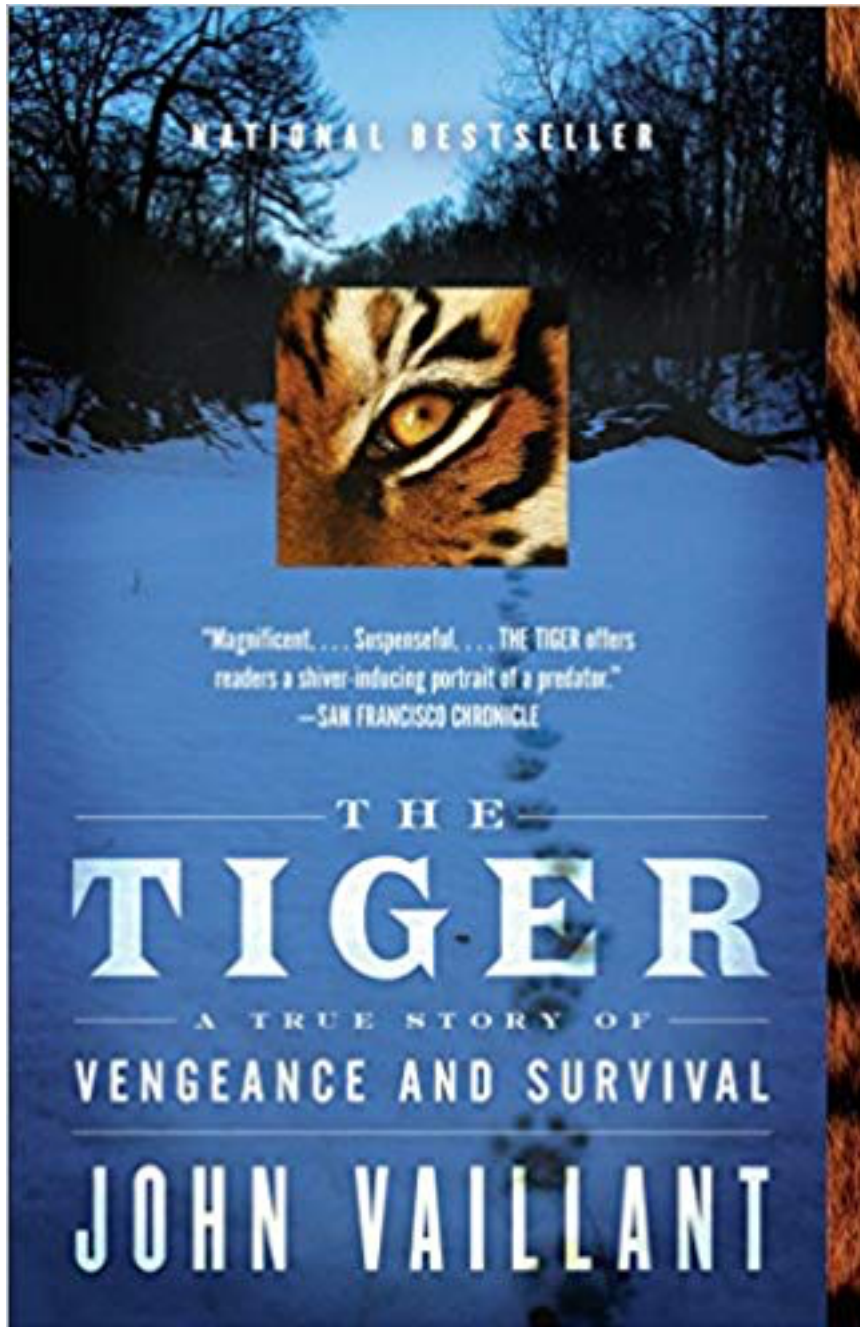


#93: The Tiger

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#books/rating/★★★



Overview

A captivating story of the hunt for a man-eating tiger. Along the way you are introduced to the history of tigers in Asia, the poverty and struggle for survival faced in Eastern Russia, post-Perestroika, and the challenges around wildlife conservation. The mental space of the hunters particularly resonated with me—they need to be totally self-sufficient, comfortable

with extreme isolation, and be able to read signs and signals that most would fail to recognize. Overall a great read.

Book Notes

PART ONE - MARKOV

- Perestroika - the political and economic reforms in the Soviet Union in the late 20th century
- "The general appearance of the tiger is that of a huge physical force and quiet confidence, combined with a rather heavy grace." - *Mammals of the Soviet Union* (pg. 25)
- Akira Kurosawa's, *Dersu Uzala*
- "For many Russian urbanites, 'Russia' stops at the Urals, if not sooner. Beyond that is Siberia—a bad joke, and after that, well who really cares." (pg. 61)
- "One cannot afford to be lazy in the forest: you need firewood; you need water. You have to be checking your traps and your nets, hunting for meat—you have to be hustling all the time." (pg. 81)
- "The most terrifying and important test for a human being is to be in absolute isolation. A human being is a very coal creature, and ninety percent of what he does is done only because other people are watching. Alone, with no witnesses, he started to learn about himself—who is he really? Sometimes, this brings staggering discoveries. Because nobody's watching, you can easily become an animal: it is not necessary to shave, or to wash, or to keep your winter quarters clean—you can live in shit and no one will see. You can shoot tigers or choose not to shoot. You can run in fear and nobody will know. You have to have something—some force, which allows and helps you to survive without witnesses. Markov had it." (pg. 84)
- "Once you pass the solitude test, you have absolute confidence in yourself, and there is nothing that can break you afterward." (pg. 84)
- "One scholar estimated that tigers have killed approximately a million Asians over the last four hundred years." (pg. 91)
- On Dunkai saving Pikunov's life...
 - "While Pikunov was preparing to simply race back along their rapidly filling tracks, Dunkai stopped and pulled a hatchet from his rucksack. Finding a tree about as thick as his leg, he chopped it down, cut the trunk to ski length and then split it into slender boards. 'The snow was up to our waists...there was no way out of there without skis, and Vanya made them without any proper tools; all he had was a knife and an axe. He was a master of all trades.'" (pg. 109)

- "There are at least eight cases that my teams and I investigated, and we all arrived at the same conclusion: if a hunter fired a shot at a tiger, that tiger would track him down, even if it took him two or three months. It is obvious that tigers will sit and wait specifically for the hunter who has fired shots at them." (pg. 138)
- "What tigers usually do, and what they can do, are very different things." (pg. 139)
- Russian tiger hunting game (Lancepupov club)- "I was the tiger!" (pg. 145)
- "A hunter can only rely on himself. If anything happens, there is no one to help him, and all of us who live this way have a very advanced intuition. We also carry the experience of our ancestors in our heads: that's how a man functions in the taiga." (pg. 165)

PART TWO - POCHEPNYA

- "Roughly three-quarters of all trafficked wildlife ends up in China, which has become a blackhole for endangered species." (pg. 223)

PART THREE - TRUSH

- "Today, Sobolonye has the feel of a time capsule in which the most damaging effects of perestroika have been preserved . What is so haunting is the fact that this time capsule contains people, and it is clear from the faces and the material poverty that many of them remain trapped in 1995, which could have been Appalachia in 1935, a time when life in the resource dependent hill country was particularly desperate and bleak." (pg. 284)
- There were 75,000 tigers living in Asia the beginning of the 20th century. Today, only 5% of the population remains. (pg. 296)
- "To date, there has been no case of a captive tiger being successfully introduced, or reintroduced, to the wild. Captivity is a one-way trip." (pg. 298)