

CT - character trait  
 IS - imagery sight  
 IT - imagery touch  
 ISD - imagery sound

P - personification  
 S - simile  
 M - metaphor

T - tone  
 MD - mood

**The Sea Devil**

Arthur Gordon

Originally published: 1953, *Saturday Evening Post*

Main character

1 The man came out of the house and stood quite still, listening. Behind him, the lights glowed in the cheerful room, the books were neat and orderly in their cases, the radio talked importantly to itself. In front of him, the bay stretched dark and silent, one of the countless lagoons that border the coast where Florida thrusts its great green thumb into the tropics. T - Suspense MD - mysterious

2 It was (setting) late in September. The night was breathless; summer's dead hand still lay heavy on the land. The man moved forward six paces and stood on the sea wall. The tide was beginning to ebb flow away from shore.

3 Somewhere out in the blackness a mullet jumped and fell back with a sullen splash. Heavy with fish eggs they were jumping less often, now. They would not take a hook, but a practiced eye could see the swirls they made in the glassy water. In the dark of the moon, a skilled man with a cast net might take half a dozen in an hour's work. And a big mullet makes a meal for a family. cloudy or foggy night

4 The man turned abruptly and went into the garage, where his cast net hung. He was in his late 20s, wide-shouldered, and strong. He did not have to fish for a living, or even for food. He was a man who worked with his head, not with his hands. But he liked to go casting alone at night. Characterization: young, strong, intelligent, white-collar worker, not a fisherman by trade - it is a hobby

He liked the loneliness and the labor of it. He liked the clean taste of salt when he gripped the edge of the net with his teeth as a cast netter must. He liked the arching flight of sixteen pounds of lead and linen against the starlight, and the weltering crash of the net into the unsuspecting water. He liked the harsh tug of the retrieving rope around his wrist, and the way the net came alive when the cast was true, and the thud of captured fish on the floorboards of the skiff. flat-bottomed boat

6 He liked all that because he found in it a reality that seemed to be missing from his 20th century job and from his daily life. He liked being the hunter, skilled and solitary and elemental. There was no conscious cruelty in the way he felt. It was the way things had been in the beginning. Not a cruel person - enjoys fishing CT - kind

7 The man lifted the net down carefully and lowered it into a bucket. He put a paddle beside the bucket. Then he went into the house. When he came out, he was wearing swimming trunks and a pair of old tennis shoes. Nothing else. ← means no shirt

8 The skiff, flat-bottomed, was tied-up moored off the sea wall. He would not go far, he told himself. Just to the tumble-down dock half a mile away. Mullet had a way of feeding around old pilings after dark. If he moved quietly, he might pick up two or three in one cast close to the dock. And maybe a couple of others on the way down or back.

9 He shoved off and stood motionless for a moment, letting his eyes grow accustomed to the dark. Somewhere out in the channel a porpoise blew with a sound like steam escaping. The man smiled a little; porpoises were his friends. Once, fishing in the Gulf, he had seen the charter-boat captain reach overside and gaff a baby porpoise through the singy part of the tail. He had hoisted it aboard, had dropped it into the bait well, where it thrashed around, puzzled and unhappy. And the mother had swum alongside the boat and under the boat and around the boat, nudging the stout planking with her back, slapping it with her tail, until the man felt sorry for her and made the captain let the baby porpoise go. -Flashback CT - kind, compassionate, caring

great detail about in water

Specific Details about what the man is wearing

CT. Resourceful

10 He took the net from the bucket, slipped <sup>metaphor</sup> the noose in the retrieving rope over his wrist, pulled the slipknot tight. It was an old net, but still serviceable; he had rewoven the <sup>metaphor</sup> rents <sup>metaphor</sup> made by underwater snags. He coiled the 30-foot rope carefully, making sure there were no kinks. A tangled rope, <sup>CT. experienced</sup> he knew, would spoil any cast.

Specific Details-describing the net

11 The basic design of the net had <sup>hyperbole</sup> not changed in 3,000 years. It was a mesh circle with a diameter of fourteen feet. It measured close to fifteen yards around the circumference and could, if thrown perfectly, <sup>IS</sup> blanket 150 square feet of sea water. In the center of this <sup>metaphor</sup> radial trap was a small <sup>metaphor</sup> iron collar where the retrieving rope met the twenty-three separate drawstrings leading to the outer rim of the net. Along this rim, spaced an inch and a half apart, were the heavy lead sinkers.

12 The man raised the <sup>metaphor</sup> iron collar until it was a foot above his head. The net hung <sup>IS</sup> soft and pliant and deadly. He shook it gently, making sure that the drawstrings were not tangled, that the sinkers were hanging true. He eased it down and picked up the paddle. <sup>Net could be dangerous</sup>

Building Suspense

13 The night was <sup>S</sup> black as a witch's cat; the stars <sup>IT</sup> looked <sup>IS</sup> fuzzy and <sup>IS</sup> dim. Down to the southward, the lights of a causeway made a <sup>M</sup> yellow necklace across the sky. To the man's left were the <sup>IS</sup> tangled roots of a mangrove swamp; to his right, the open waters of the bay. Most of it was fairly shallow, but there were <sup>IS</sup> channels <sup>IS</sup> eight feet deep. The man could not see the old dock, but he knew where it was. He pulled the <sup>IS</sup> paddle <sup>IS</sup> quietly through the water, and the <sup>Personification</sup> phosphorescence <sup>IS</sup> glowed and died.

14 For five minutes he paddled. Then, twenty feet ahead of the skiff, a mullet jumped. A big fish, close to three pounds. For a moment <sup>P</sup> it hung in the still air, gleaming dully. Then it vanished. But <sup>IS</sup> the ripples <sup>IS</sup> marked the spot, and where there was one there were often others.

15 The man stood up quickly. He picked up the coiled rope, and with the same hand grasped the net at a point four feet below the <sup>M</sup> iron collar. He raised the skirt to his mouth and <sup>IS</sup> gripped it strongly with his teeth. He slid his free hand as far as it would go down the circumference of the net so that he had three points of contact with the mass of cordage and metal. He made sure his feet were planted solidly. Then he waited, feeling the tension that is older than the human race, the fierce exhilaration of the hunter at the moment of ambush, the <sup>ancestral desire/action</sup> atavistic desire to capture and kill and ultimately consume.

16 A mullet swirled, ahead and to the left. The man swung the heavy net back, twisting his body and bending his knees so as to get more upward thrust. He shot it forward, letting go simultaneously with rope hand and with teeth, holding a fraction of a second longer with the other hand so as to give the net the necessary spin, impart the <sup>centrifugal force</sup> that would make it flare into a circle. The skiff <sup>P</sup> ducked sideways, but he kept his balance. [The net → <sup>1st</sup> climax fell with a splash.] → force creates a circular motion/movement

Falling Action #1

17 The man waited for five seconds. Then he began to retrieve it, pulling in a series of sharp jerks so that the drawstrings would gather the net inward, <sup>S</sup> like a giant fist closing on this segment of the teeming sea. He felt the net quiver, and knew it was not empty. He swung it, dripping, over the gunwale, saw the broad silver side of the mullet quivering, saw too the gleam of a smaller fish. He looked closely to make sure no stingray was hidden in the mesh, then raised the <sup>M</sup> iron collar and shook the net out. The mullet fell with a <sup>onomatopoeia</sup> thud and flapped wildly. The other <sup>M</sup> victim was an angel fish, beautifully marked, but too small to keep. The man <sup>CT. Compassionate Caring</sup> picked it up gently and dropped it overboard. He coiled the rope, took up the paddle. He would cast no more until he came to the dock.

→ The net creates victims → foreshadowing