

Main idea of the birthday party novel

Life



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Dialectic Writing Entry

The Birthday Party, by Katharine Brush, is a short narrative about a presumably married man and woman who were sitting across from each other in a restaurant. The man is said to be wearing glasses and having a, “ self-satisfied face.” While, on the other hand, the woman is “ fadingly pretty, in a big hat.” Shortly after, the narrator informs us that the wife surprises her husband with a slice of cake for his birthday. The orchestra played Happy Birthday while the rest of the customers applaud, causing the husband to be filled with embarrassment. Under his breath, he seems to scold the wife, and the story ends with his wife in tears.

This short narrative written by Katharine Brush, is a literary example on how opinions can shape a story. For example, she begins the story with an assumption: the people across from her are married. From there, she describes the presumed couple by first painting the man in a poor light, describing him as a man with a, “ self-satisfied face.” Then, she pushes us to sympathize with the wife, by describing her as a woman who is, “ fadingly pretty...” The way she commences this story is phenomenal, as for not only is the reader hooked, we are also sympathizing with the protagonist of the story. She builds the storyline by saying the wife, “ beamed with shy pride,” after presenting her husband, the antagonist, with a surprise piece of cake for his birthday. She continues to develop the antagonist by describing him as, “ hotly embarrassed,” and even, “ indignant,” toward the wife after her act of affection. Moving forward into the night, the narrator tells us that the husband spoke some words under his breath to his wife, leaving her, “ crying quietly and heartbrokenly and hopelessly...” The author’s use powerful

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adjectives leaves the reader feeling quite bitter toward the husband for possibly scolding his wife for such an affectionate act.

Once again we don't know if that's what actually happened. A lot of what the author describes are simply assumptions. We don't know if the people across from her are married. Yet she uses this to set the scene for a potential protagonist and antagonist story. Her powerful illustration of the husband and wife leaves us sympathizing toward the wife, and already feeling judgemental toward the husband for having such a smirk face. But, we need to understand that was just her opinion. The man's face might naturally look, "self-satisfied," while on the other hand the wife might have never been pretty in the first place. The reader is left uncertain, therefore the author's word becomes truth, and later on in the story villainize the husband for apparently looking embarrassed for the surprise act by the woman. The husband could have been pleasantly surprised and loved the surprise birthday cake. Yet, the reader continues to feel disgust toward the husband for possibly saying something under his breath. It is possible he just told his wife that he has terminal cancer and he won't be with her next year. But, the reader accepts the author's word as truth, which leaves the reader hating the husband for possibly scolding his wife in public.

This goes to show the power of opinion; in this case, the authors commentary in the story. I believe that the author's portrail is accurate to an extent; some of what she wrote was unlikely to be exaggerated, but the story would have been uneventful if some events were not as dramatically portrayed. The husband was most likely embarrassed, but the wife probably wasn't heartbroken at the end of the story like the author had dramatized.

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And most likely the husband only whispered to his wife to not do this next year. But, as we can see the author was able to portray a dramatic protagonist vs antagonist story by just her observational commentary. Leaving us filled with emotions toward the husband and the wife.