

Analysis and interpretation of stolpestad

Linguistics, Language



I believe that we often consider the fact that we don't get enough out of our lives. We think a lot about whether we live our lives to the full. Maybe someone chooses not to live an exciting life where every day, is a new day and a new opportunity. Whether we live a boring life – sometimes alone, sometimes with a family – we still wonder if we get enough out of our every day and avoid living a stagnant life. But is that even possible? Or does some just choose to live a predetermined life – which might make them feel secure because it's something familiar – even though they might find it boring?

But maybe it's not possible to live a secure life with a family and a good job without getting tired of it? Maybe some people are just stuck in a boring life, without doing something to change it. I believe that is what we see in this short story by William Lychack, where we hear about police officer Stolpestad and his stagnant life. Stolpestad certainly seems to be stuck in a routine – a boring life, where every day is the same. Day in and day out. As mentioned above we hear about the main character Stolpestad. He's a police officer who doesn't seem to be pleased about how his life turned out to be.

He doesn't seem happy about his job and it just seems like his life is at a standstill: “ Was toward the end of your shift, a Saturday, another one of those long slow lazy afternoons of summer – sun never burning through the clouds, clouds never breaking into rain – ... ” The day is described in a bit negative way because of the choice of words such as “ long” “ lazy” and “ slow”. But it also seems like both these word and the weather description are a symbol of Stolpestad's life. Everything seems a kind of inadequate – just like the weather.

The sun is never really shining so much that it's sunny, but at the same time, it's not really rain either. The weather seems a kind of stagnant - just as Stolpestad's life. A characteristic feature of this short story is the narrator view. The story is told in 2. Person but at the same time the text refers to Stolpestad as a "you" which means that it seems like it's actually Stolpestad who's telling the story. Maybe even telling the story to himself. The way this short story is written is a kind of what you would find in self-help books - and not in the ordinary short stories.

Besides that it's not quite clear when the persons in the story are actually speaking and when it's just actions and Stolpestad's thoughts: "Maybe you'll take that glass of water after all, you say - the boy sent into the house - the woman asking if you won't just help them. Doesn't she want to call a vet? No, she tells you - the boy pushing out of the house with a glass of water for you - you thanking him and taking a good long drink, ..." This quote also shows that the text is a bit difficult to read because it's hard to figure out whether people are actually speaking or if the text is just written in a spoken language.

There are a lot of things which symbolize Stolpestad's life. For instance there's the weather, but also the setting is a symbol of his boring life. Everything is described in a negative way: "... the odometer like a clock ticking all these bored little pent-up streets and mills and tenements away. The coffee shop, the liquor stores, Laundromats, police, fire, gas stations to pass - ..." The shops Stolpestad passes are plain and a kind of colorless, and it's something he sees every day. We also hear that he passes his old childhood which means that he actually never really moved away.

He just stayed in the same old town where he was born. Maybe therefore you could say that he never really got any further in his life. He just stayed “along the same sad streets.” The main theme in this short story is clear all the way through the text, and there’re a lot of symbols of Stolpestad and his life. A couple of them is ready mentioned, but also the dog, which he is supposed to shoot, is a symbol of Stolpestad. The dog is injured and about to die, but still it’s a live even though its condition might seem critical.

You could say the same about Stolpestad. He is a kind of a living dead person, because it seems like his day is done in “zombie-mode”. He doesn’t get very much out of his life, he’s just trying to survive another day at the office, with the wife, the children and the sad streets. So the main theme – and also the conclusion – is that stagnation isn’t something good. You have to wake up and get something out of the day and your life, instead wasting your precious time at endless bar visits and a job where you don’t even want to go.

Stolpestad is really stuck in his life, and he doesn’t get any further, and maybe that’s what the point of this story is all about. William Lychack is trying to tell us that we shouldn’t just settle for a boring life. We should go out there and find who and what we wanted – and where we wanted it. But whether Stolpestad actually wants or tries to break with his stagnant life is uncertain but it could seem like it in the end of the story, where Stolpestad is actually heading toward the woods – maybe a symbol of something different or something new.

But in the end Stolpestad is stuck in his life.. and reality stands in the door – and she wants her husband to come back inside again, and back to his every day routine.

References

Stolpestad by William Lychack. Page 1. line 1-4

Stolpestad by William Lychack. Page 2. line 62-66.

Stolpestad by William Lychack. Page 1. line 3-5

Stolpestad by William Lychack. Page 1. Line 11