

"some of us had been threatening our friend colby" by donald barthelme essay samp...



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“Some of Us Had Been Threatening Our Friend Colby” by Donald Barthelme Essay Sample

In “Some of Us Had Been Threatening Our Friend Colby,” Donald Barthelme tries to show how inhumane man can be by telling an absurd story of a man named Colby who, “had gone too far.” (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 19) In the story, Colby’s so-called friends decided that they must hang Colby because of his going too far. Barthelme uses this story to illustrate how people can sometimes let their emotions get in the way of their good judgment.

Colby’s friends had been warning him for some time that they did not like the way Colby had been behaving. But after Colby did something, his friends decided that he should be hanged. They tried to rationalize their decision by saying that they, “.... had a perfect moral right to do so because he was our friend, belonged to us in various important senses, and he had after all gone too far.” (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 194) His friends would not listen to Colby’s argument that, “Going too far was something everybody did sometimes.” (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 193)

We never do find out what Colby had done, but we do know that whatever it was, it made his friends very angry with him. Since Colby was never arrested for any crime, we can infer that what he did was not a serious crime. This is why Colby’s friends’ reaction to his actions seems very unusual. One would think a normal response to Colby’s actions would be to yell at or exclude Colby from the group—not to hang him.

As Colby’s friends fussed over every little detail of the hanging as if it were an elaborate wedding, Colby again appealed to his friends saying, “...

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everybody went too far, sometimes, and weren't we being a little Draconian." (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 195) Colby's friends acted as if they cared for Colby, but they were more worried about their presentation of Colby's hanging as they tried to decide whether to use a gibbet or a tree for his hanging.

We see this when one of Colby's friends, Hank, suggests that they use wire instead of rope because it would be, " more efficient and in the end kinder to Colby." (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 196) One of Colby's other friends said this was out of the question, " because it would injure the tree...and that in these days of increased respect for environment, we didn't want that" (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 196)

After Colby was finally hung, the friend that questioned Hank's suggestion to use the wire has this false sense that he had done good when he said, " The two things I remember best about the whole episode are the grateful look Colby gave me when I said what I said about the wire, and the fact that nobody has ever gone too far again." (Barthelme, 1973, pg. 196)

Even though Colby is their friend, Colby's friends decide to hang him simply because he had made them angry. Colby's friends let this anger take over, causing their logic to become skewed. They rationalized that since Colby had hurt them, they had the right to hurt him back. But because of their anger towards Colby, they became the ones who went too far.

References

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