

A good man is hard to  
find by flannery  
o'connor and where  
are you going, where  
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A Good Man is Hard to Find by Flannery O'Connor and Where are you going, where have you been? by Joyce Carol Oates

A Good Man is Hard to Find by Flannery O'Connor and Where are you going, where have you been? by Joyce Carol Oates have one element that is the same. Both protagonists, the grandmother in A Good Man is Hard to Find and Connie in Where are you going, where have you been? try to negotiate with their assailants, finally giving in to their fate. These characters thought they can talk their way out of any tight situation, especially with a criminal. Sometimes it works, but more than likely it does not. When reasoning does not work with criminals, it is because criminals do not think like normal law-abiding citizens. Both of these stories are the prime example of this reasoning.

The grandmother and her family in O'Connor's novel had an accident on a rural road. The car they flagged down was a convicted killer called The Misfit and his two cohorts. When the grandmother recognized him as The Misfit and told him so. This made The Misfit decide to kill everyone right there on the spot. As The Misfit's cohorts take her son and grandson into the woods, whereupon gunshots are heard, the grandmother keeps talking to The Misfit. She speaks of him being a good man, all he needs to do is pray. Then The Misfit's cohorts take her daughter-in-law, granddaughter, and grandchild, still the grandmother is trying to talk The Misfit into saving her. When she tells him that he is one of her own children, The Misfit shoots her three times in the chest. At no time did the grandmother run, yell, or try to physically save herself. Perhaps her age is a factor, but her son and his family did not resist either. They were led to slaughter like lambs.

Connie in Oates' story was in a similar situation. Arnold Friend, although his past was not fully explained, was a predator. The story suggested he was in his thirties. Arnold had definitely stalked Connie, knowing her friends, family, where she lived, and that she was alone on that day. When his manner became threatening, Connie said she would call the police. After half-heartedly locking the screen door, she kept talking to Arnold. She threatened her dad was coming home. She kept talking to him, trying to keep him away. However, Arnold wanted to take her away to a field and rape her, he plainly said so. After Arnold stated he would kill her family if she did not come, Connie left with him without a struggle. Again, Connie did not scream, run away, or make any meaningful attempt to escape.

The real reason for these women's negotiation attempts are numerous. The first is their age. The grandmother was old, Connie was only fifteen. The grandmother was not physically capable of outrunning or overpowering her captors was not feasible. Connie was inexperienced and unsure of her self. Secondly, both women were in rural areas. Screaming and running away probably seemed futile.

The most important reason for negotiation was both women thought they could reason with the criminal. The flaw with this plan is criminals do not think like ordinary citizens. The Misfit and Arnold Friend did not want to be good boys. They did not want to conform to normal society. The values of The Misfit and Arnold are not understood by the grandmother and Connie. The Misfit just wants to leave no witness that would lead to his capture. Arnold Friend wants to control and rape women. These values are beyond the grandmother and Connie's comprehension. Thus the grandmother and

Connie's arguments were not effective.

Negotiation with criminals is a gamble. Criminals are unpredictable. The grandmother and Connie could not have seen what fueled The Misfit or Arnold. Though they had good reasons to negotiate and not struggle, their fate was sealed no matter what happened. Both stories show the dismal outcome of decent women dealing with corrupt men.

#### Reference

Oates, J. C. (1994). *Where are you going, where have you been?*. Canada: Ontario Review Press.

O'Connor, F. (1955). *A good man is hard to find*. Florida: Harcourt & Brace.