

# Review of flannery o'connor's book, a good man is hard to find

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## **A Unique Combination**

The overall mood of a story influences the feeling of the audience after they have read it. If the story has a positive mood, complemented by a comfortable setting and happy relationships between the characters, the audience will be left feeling good. If the mood is negative, with elements such as an eerie setting or unsettling characters, the audience will be left feeling uncomfortable, upset, or possibly sad. In her story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find", Flannery O'Connor blends the humorous with the disturbing, resulting in a very interesting and unique effect. The combination of the humorous elements with the disturbing elements enhanced the story's disturbing nature, because these two contrasting feelings are usually not used together in the way that O'Connor has used them.

Initially, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is a humorous narrative of a dysfunctional family going on a road trip. The first half introduces us to a naggy grandmother, a grumpy father, a quiet mother, and two sassy children; the perfect setup for a humorous narrative. Throughout the first half of the story, the reader is entertained by the conversations between the grandmother and the children. An example of this is when the grandmother was telling the story about the man who gave her a watermelon every Saturday. June Star responded to this story by saying she wouldn't marry someone just because they brought her a watermelon every Saturday. It is this type of banter between the children and the grandmother that accounts for most of the comedic element in the story.

Some of the humor of the story distracts the reader from some important foreshadowing; whenever the grandmother talks about the Misfit, the topic is deflected by a witty comment from one of the kids. For example, when the grandmother asks John Wesley what he would do if he met the Misfit, John Wesley says, " I'd smack his face." This absurd comment momentarily distracts the reader from the threat of the Misfit.

After the car rolls over, the story takes a turn for the dark and disturbing. After the children shout excitedly, " We've had an ACCIDENT!", a car pulls over to help them. However, it doesn't take the grandmother long to realize that one of the people in the car is the Misfit, the very criminal that she was trying to warn her family about. After her realization, the Misfit begins having the two boys with him take the family, a couple at a time, into the woods and killing them. Meanwhile, he is talking to the grandmother, who keeps saying that he is " a good man", and that he is " not a bit common." She also keeps telling him to pray, and that Jesus will help him. At this point, the Misfit begins talking about how he wishes he was there when Jesus raised the dead; this goes on until he shoots the grandmother. The story has shifted from humorous to disturbing with the addition of only one major character; no other elements of the story, like the setting or the structure, changed to accompany the dark side of the story.

It is this unsettling blend of humor and darkness that makes this story unlike most other stories, television shows, or movies. Generally, a story sticks to one mood, whether it be dark and unsettling or jovial and funny. The other elements of the stories, like the characters, setting, and use of language, are

all used to influence the overall feeling and the theme; they all work together to create a certain feeling in a story. When these elements don't seem to be working in sync with each other, it can have a disturbing effect; "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is an example of this effect. The setting helped establish the humorous mood of the story in the beginning, but in the end, when disturbing characters were introduced, the setting was still described exactly the same as it was in the beginning. The discord between story elements is what makes the story more disturbing.

Overall, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is a story that creates a unique feeling for the audience by combining humor with darkness. Initially it is a humorous story, but with the addition of some dark characters, it is transformed into a disturbing story, making it different from most stories that we encounter.