

# Arnold friend: a dream friend



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Arnold Friend: A Dream Friend Joyce Carol Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been" tells the story of Connie's encounter with a boy/man who introduces himself as 'Arnold Friend,' telling her "that's my real name and I'm gonna be your friend, honey." Arnold Friend talks and behaves in mysterious, even devious ways; and some readers have taken him to be a representation of the 'devil.' This paper puts forward the view that 'Arnold Friend' is a 'dream friend' in Connie's fantasy life, emerging after her chance encounter with a strange young man, who had "wagged a finger" at her and "laughed" and said, "Gonna get you, baby,"

Dreams, as everyone since Freud knows, are all about wish fulfillment.

Connie, though good-looking, is not given much love or respect in her own house-and that is one reason why she needs dreams and fantasy. Indeed, she is "always" put down in open comparison to her elder sister June: "Why don't you keep your room clean like your sister How've you got your hair fixed-what the hell stinks Hair spray You don't see your sister using that junk." This seems the perfect ground for the cultivation of a fantasy life that could emerge in dreams.

Certain secret wishes and the guilt that accompanies them need to be reconciled. This may not be always possible in real life, but sometimes, a dream may help. In life, Connie can escape from the drab dullness of her surroundings only on her occasional evenings out with her girlfriends. Once, when she was out with one such girl, a boy named Eddie invites her out for a bite, and she goes with him, although she feels guilty at having "to leave her like that." Something inexplicable happens. On the way she notices a boy with shaggy black hair, in a convertible jalopy painted gold. He stared at her and then his lips widened into a grin. Connie slit her eyes at him and

turned away, but she couldn't help glancing back and there he was, still watching her. He wagged a finger and laughed and said, "Gonna get you, baby," and Connie turned away again without Eddie noticing anything. The guilt of having left her girl friend to herself and the thrill of the stolen encounter with the stranger percolate down into Connie's subconscious. This comes to the surface in a dream (it could be a sleep-dream or even an extraordinary daydream) when her parents and sister leave for a party one day. Connie rudely opts out, and is left to her own devices. Feelings of guilt at having rudely refused her mother's offer to go to the party may contribute to Connie's fantastic dream experience. Not only does the boy in the gold-painted jalopy pay her a visit when she is alone at home, accompanied by a boy called Ellie who is "a miserable creepy dope," she "recognizes" many things about him, and the magical/mysterious powers of action and observation that he possesses absolve her of all guilt and responsibility for whatever might happen.

This interpretation is confirmed by a clue to the dream-like nature of the entire experience, provided in the first part of the last paragraph of the story: " 'My sweet little blue-eyed girl,' he said in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with her brown eyes." The dull brown hues of reality merge into the beautiful blues of dream-fantasy, and Connie can guiltlessly experience forbidden pleasures, outside the bounds of waking consciousness.

#### References

Oates, Joyce Carol. "What Are You Doing, Where Have You Been Celestial Timepiece:

A Joyce Carol Oates Home Page. Retrieved 1 May 2006.

<https://assignbuster.com/arnold-friend-a-dream-friend/>