

Injustices in a good
man is hard to find



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Contents

Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find* is a tragic short story that was first published in 1953 and revolves around a single family comprised of a mother, a father, three children, and a grandmother. The family decides to travel to Florida for vacation despite the grandmother's claims that an ex-convict by the name Misfit was headed in the same direction. On their way to Florida, the grandmother thinks they are near a plantation house that she remembers from as a young lady..

After a bit of persuasion and deceit, the grandmother convinces her son Bailey to drive them there to see it. The grandmother soon realizes, however, that she is mistaken as to the location of the plantation house but decides not to tell the rest of the family her error. The grandmother's cat, that she snuck onto the road-trip without telling anyone, gets out of the basket and frightens Bailey so much that he crashes the car.

Luckily, no one in the car suffers any injuries. Unfortunately, the Misfit and his two henchmen show up at the scene of the crash and gun down the entire family. In this essay, the injustices of murder, unjust prosecution, and violence in society, as they occur in this short story, will be analyzed. The Misfit orders Bobby Lee and Hiram to murder the parents and three children. Well, first you and Bobby Lee get him and that little boy to step over yonder with you There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another, (O'Connor 24). The children and their parents are ultimately shot to death by Bobby Lee and Hiram for no particular reason. Bobby Lee and Hiram carry out these murders, ordered by the Misfit, without question or

hesitation. The men perform these heinous acts casually and with no signs of remorse. No one in the family ever attempts to harm these men. Initially, the family thought that the Misfit and his friends would help rescue them after they crashed their car. To the family's surprise, the men exit their vehicle carrying guns and the grandmother immediately identifies one of the men as the Misfit. From what the grandmother says at the beginning of the story, it is clear that she fears the Misfit and is aware of the terrible crimes he has committed against other people (Bandy).

Bobby Lee and Hiram commit murder, perhaps the greatest injustice of all, when they execute the three children and their parents. In the end, the Misfit murders the grandmother. She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest, (O'Connor 32). The Misfit guns down the grandmother despite her desperate pleas to spare her life. She listens to the Misfit's complaints about injustice and religion. She even suggests that prayer may hold the solution to his troubles. She tells him that he is a good man and that she was sure that he comes from nice people. The grandmother, despite her terror, tries desperately to convince the Misfit that he has goodness inside of himself despite being a convicted murderer. She continues to praise him even though he has ordered the murder of her entire family. When she sees that the Misfit's face is twisted and that he is about to cry, she reaches out to touch him. In a final attempt to extract mercy from the Misfit, the grandmother identifies him as one of her own children (Bandy).

Ultimately, the Misfit murders the grandmother despite her pleas for mercy and words of encouragement. The Misfit's reaction to the grandmother's pleas for mercy is inhumane and unjust. The Misfit claims that he was wrongly convicted and imprisoned for the murder of his own father. My daddy died in the nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu, and I never had a thing to do with it, (O'Connor 28). From what the Misfit tells the grandmother, it is clear that he believes that he was wrongly convicted. He mentions that he is unable to recall if he really committed the crime that he was accused of. Furthermore, the Misfit was only told by the doctor at the penitentiary that he killed his father; he was not given any proof or evidence that he committed the crime (Shmoop Editorial Team).

In a judicial setting, one can only be convicted after the evidence has been provided and proven to be true. The Misfit claims that his father died of epidemic flu and there is no way that he could have caused that. If the Misfit's claims are true, then an unjust act was committed against him by those held responsible for enforcing justice in our society. The Misfit also claims that he was held in custody without being shown any proof that he had committed a crime. they could prove I had committed one because they had the papers on me They never shown me my papers, (O'Connor 30). He was only told his offense by word of mouth in the hospital by the psychiatrist. The Misfit has the right to be shown the evidence that upholds his conviction in order to realize that his punishment is fitting for his crime. Doling out a punishment that exceeds the nature of the crime committed is an injustice (Flint). The judge is expected to provide the suspect with all the information and an explanation of why they are being detained. The Misfit

claims that he was denied this right. If the Misfit's claims are true, then the judge committed an act of injustice by convicting him without providing adequate information regarding his crime. Violence and injustice are an ever-present threat in our society. Seen a man burnt alive onctet I even seen a woman flogged I found out the crime dont matter," (O'Connor 27 - 29).

The Misfit mentions that he has witnessed acts of injustice carried out upon other people. He once witnessed a man being burned alive and a woman being beaten but never mentions the crimes for which they were accused. From these two examples, it is clear that there are injustices in society pertaining to crime and punishment (Flint). When the story begins, the grandmother is afraid of going to Florida because she believes that it is unsafe due to the alleged presence of the Misfit. Also, the wife of the owner of the Tower is scared that the Misfit may attack their restaurant. It is clear, in this story, that members of society lack feelings of security and safety due to the actions of violent injustices that occur to seemingly innocent people. The Misfit's techniques of seeking justice are unjust in themselves. then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can — by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness." (O'Connor 31).

The Misfit chooses to enjoy his time as a free man by committing evil and heinous crimes. He seems to take pride in the fact that he has spent his time killing people and burning their houses down since he escaped from the penitentiary. Despite claiming to be innocent of the crime he was arrested for, he freely admits to orchestrating and committing terrible acts toward other people. By seeking his own justice through violence toward others, the

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Misfit commits acts of injustice (Peck). It is clear that the Misfit does not feel any guilt from his unjust actions. Furthermore, he mentions that he has realized that the crime does not matter. The Misfit is misguided in his attempt to seek justice for his own wrongful conviction. The Misfit uses unjust actions to seek justice for what he claims to be a wrongful conviction. This essay provides a literary analysis of the unjust acts in Flannery O'Conor's short story, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. Several examples of injustice have been named and analyzed. The injustices in this essay include the murder of an entire family, the injustices in society such as burning a human being alive, the wrongful conviction of the Misfit, and the Misfit's unjust actions in his quest for his own personal justice. This short story gives examples of injustices that may occur in modern-day society which must be avoided in order to maintain feelings of safety and security amongst members of the population.