

Carvers popular mechanics

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This indicates the gloomy surroundings, and that " it was getting dark on the inside too" (Carver, par. 1), which coincides perfectly with the mood of both characters. Amidst the enveloping emotion of anger and hurt are the sole source of hope and happiness-the baby. The association of the baby with these positive qualities is so significant that both parents appear to hold on to its essence, in the physical and symbolic sense. They fight over possession of the baby, and the wife even " noticed the baby's picture on the bed and picked it up" (Carver, par. 6), not intending to let her husband take it from her. This reveals Carver's use of the literary element of symbolism to communicate the story's theme; the baby, including its representations, is, by its very nature, the product of the failed relationship, thus both parties are keen on keeping it for themselves. Due to its role as a symbol that delves beyond its literal meaning (Holman and Harmon 467), the baby is not necessarily desired by its parents because of the universal values of love and familial duty; the baby is a trophy, the quintessential prize that would ultimately decide the victor in the duel. In the end, the reader is left wondering what would become of the infant, particularly since the quest has become physical, with neither of the parents showing any intention of giving up. Ending the story with the line " In this manner, the issue was decided" (Carver, par. 34), could mean one of two things: that the parents would never come to an agreement as to who would have the baby, bringing to mind images of future custody battles; or the incredible and shocking idea that the husband managed to grab the baby through force, implying physical damage to the infant. Clearly, the parents did not care for the baby's welfare, since their manner of settlement did not take the baby's safety into consideration.

In the Carver tradition, foreshadowing is also used to move the story forward. While the argument between the parents is established subtly as having an emotional basis, the later fight over the baby is largely physical and tangible. The wife proclaims to her husband, " You're not touching this baby," (Carver, par. 15), and the husband's reaction is the opposite, as he " reached across the stove and tightened his hands on the baby" (Carver, par. 22). More physical descriptions are made, revealing their effects on the baby who " was red-faced and screaming" (Carver, par. 25). This scuffle, which is akin to a wrestling match or a tug of war, foreshadows the final outcome that does not directly explain the actual decision (Holman and Harmon 201). If the foreshadowing elements are to be taken logically-including the amount of force implied-then the result would also be physical, and the triumph of the husband could mean that the baby is extremely hurt, at the very least. Carver's style of using unexpected endings through the simple narrative is at work in the story, and the functions of symbolism and foreshadowing are integral in his technique. By using both, the theme of selfishness and greed are exposed. His appropriation of the parent characters is significant in showing the extent of these negative qualities since the baby is the ultimate symbol of vulnerability and unity. With both parents only after possession and not welfare, it is clear how the situation is already devoid of hope and chance; what each is after is triumph over the other, and they both see the baby as the one element that could seal the decision.