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Stripped of Perfection

Flannery O’Connor’s short story “Good Country People” is a bizarre yet riveting tale. O’Connor’s story can catch the reader’s attention by pointing out physical imperfections of her fictional characters. To gain the attention of her reader’s O’Flannery develops an interesting character with physical disabilities that symbolize flaws and attributes to being intellectually superior and being stripped of all physical and emotional imperfections. In “Good Country People”, one of the main characters is Joy Hopewell, Joy illustrates a superior self- made image of herself that is quickly and undeniable made to be untrue. Joy has a realness yet incredibly crude attitude about herself as well as for life due to her accident when she was ten years old. Throughout the story O’Connor connects Joy’s physical disabilities with Joy’s deeper flaws allowing Joy to be stripped of all her imperfections to help her (Joy) draw a deeper conclusion and understanding that her beliefs are flawed as well as her physical body.

O’Connor’s character Joy Hopewell changes her name to Hulga because her attitude is far from sweet and innocent more like ugly and mean, so she thought the name would suit her well. Mrs. Hopewell Joy’s mother is “certain that she (Joy) had thought and thought until she hit upon the ugliest name in any language” (O’Connor 266). Hulga is thirty-two years old with many disabilities one being she has a weak heart leading Hulga to believe in nothing anymore not even God. Hulga believes “we all are damned” (O’Connor 276). Hulga’s second disability is she has poor vision without her glasses she cannot see a thing leaving her helpless. Hulga’s poor vision reflects her blindness of reality. The third disability Hulga has is her missing leg “which was shot off in a hunting accident when Joy was ten” (O’Connor 266). Hulga used her handicaps to mentally check out of reality and make her own conclusions about herself until she met Mr. Manley Pointer, a bible salesman. Mr. Pointer unreluctantly takes great slake in stripping Hulga of her physical flaws leaving her physically and emotionally lost as well as vulnerable and dependent as he runs off with her wooden leg and her glasses in his pocket by pretending to be someone he was not.

In a moment of pleasure Hulga is forced to conclude and face who she really is. She is not the superior intellectual she thought she was, nor “good country people who merely hope well” (O’Connor 282).

Works Cited

O’Connor,Flannery. “Good Country People.” *The College Writer: A Guide to Thinking,* *Writing, and Researching.* 5th ed., edited by VanderMey et al., Cengage, 2015, pp. 264-278.