

## A Waste of Love

A metaphorical piece based on a different aspect of 'The Lodger's' life. The story has been structured using Frank O'Connor's 'Frontier theory,' meaning the protagonist is faced with an internal boundary and he/she either fails or succeeds in the quest to overcome that boundary.

Anne went on yet another holiday last month, this time it was three weeks in the Canary Islands. That's her way of trying to get shot of me, the problem is she knows that, you see, otherwise I wouldn't be telling you. She was rid of me for a while when she first got off the plane and checked into her room, but then I reappeared, when she got down to the bar and saw a smartly dressed man she rather liked the look of sitting alone with a beer and a James Patterson novel. She's always been quite an outgoing girl has Anne and she would have gone over and talked to him I'm sure, but the thought of me got in the way. It's been like that for almost a year and a half now.

Everything she does seems to remind her of me even simple things like right now for example, she's making herself a cup of regular coffee. I couldn't stand the caffeine you see so she only used to buy the decaf type, and drinking the full bodied stuff feels strange and out of the ordinary somehow. Don't get me wrong, she knows it's silly and she's trying to fight me off. It's fine when somebody comes over or she has some important work to do, but otherwise I'm always lurking about in the back of her mind, ready to make myself known at any point. Anne's walking into the lounge with that coffee at the moment and you can tell I'm still controlling her far too much because she's just walked round my chair to get to her own where she feels she belongs, needless to say I won't be sitting next to her for a while.

I couldn't believe it but Anne actually had a date last week, the first date she's had in over a year and a half. To say she wasn't really up for it would be an understatement. She was dreading it, she is still desperately hung up on me you see. My guess is she was pushed into it by somebody. Anyway, to my surprise she quite enjoyed herself. The date was with a fellow called John, the new owner of the local pub. He's actually a really nice guy. I just wish I could say the same about what he's done with the pub. Before he took over, it had so much character, so much individualism, that's all disappeared now though. Everything's neutral and modern. I guess he just wanted to bring in some fresh clientele. John and Anne went out for a meal in Freeman's Park close to the city centre. There are a lot of posh places down there. Much more than I could afford. That's not to say he's got a lot of money, I wouldn't think he has. I guess that show's just how fond he is of Anne. In fact, John left her a message the next morning to thank her for "a great night."

The problem is Anne never replied to that message and as I said it's been a week now. She's just been stuck at home in her chair worrying about it, asking herself do I really want this? What if he finds out that I'm still stunned from losing David? Despite the fact it's been a year and a half, she's still not sure she's ready for things to change. She would love to spend time at work, in her gallery, but she took care of things there as soon as she got back from holiday. I'm sure if she had have known that her feelings of loneliness and fear were going to come thundering back and imprison her like this, she would have saved some of it to occupy herself. She knows that she could start painting again, give herself some new stuff to sell. However, in order to get herself into a creative mood she would have to forget, and Anne knows better than anyone how hard that is.

Nothing about that living room has changed since I've been gone. The furniture's obviously the same and the walls are still a deep passionate red. Every time she sees them, they remind her of how much she still loves and cares for me. This is not helped by the fact that there is a picture of us together on our wedding day sitting untouched on the mantle piece in front of her. That's what keeps me in her

mind I'm sure of it. My eyes must burn through to her heart on a daily basis, constantly reminding her that she's alone.

The phone is perched on the book case behind her. I've seen her glance over at it countless times over the past seven days, trying to force herself to return John's call and set up a second date. She's even picked the phone up five times but she hasn't called John once. I don't really know what's stopping her. Anne knows that John's a caring guy and I know she fancies him as well. You can tell by the way her face lights up whenever he smiles at her from across the bar. She knows full well that a new relationship is exactly what she needs to get over me and make herself feel confident again. None of this makes any difference though, despite this knowledge, she's hardly slept at all this week. I've tormented her relentlessly. Most nights Anne's laid there, wide eyed, wide awake, not even trying to fall asleep. Her nights have been beyond terrible recently. She tossed and turned as if she were possessed. Wait a minute the phone's ringing...

Anne looks so relieved She's now thinking how silly this is, she knows she has to take control, stop waiting. Her hands were shaking when she put the receiver to her ear, in breathless anticipation of what John was going to say. From as far as I can tell, it was just Beth calling to make sure the date went ok. Beth knows that going out on that date was a huge step for her mum to take. My Beth's always been the caring sort. She took great care of me when I was in the hospice. She was there every other day making sure I was comfortable and happy. Well as happy as I could be bearing in mind I was waiting to pop my clogs.

## Commentary

This short story came from the characterisation exercise undertaken in class. The story is entitled 'A waste of love'. It details Anne's struggle to move on after the death of her husband and start a new relationship. The development of the character, therefore, is achieved through the use of O'Connor's frontier theory. The story is narrated through the voice of the dead husband. The husband is an omniscient narrator thus allowing the readers an insight in to the mind of the protagonist. However, readers are encouraged to question the motives of the narrator, lines such as 'I'm still controlling her far too much' suggest that the narrator is possessive.

The end of the second paragraph introduces the theme of isolation, the other vital component of O'Connor's frontier theory. In this story, the isolation of Anne is portrayed not only through the loss of her husband but also by the fact she is confined to a single chair in her living room for most of the narrative. 'She's just walked round my chair to get to her own were she feels she belongs, but needless to say I won't be sitting next to her for a while.' This quotation provides readers with a physical representation of the hold that Anne's husband still has over her. Her armchair then becomes the symbol of her loneliness and isolation.

To take a phrase from Labov, the third paragraph introduces the complicating action that is to say Anne's date with the pub owner, John. It also provides background on his character. Following on from this the writer details the uncertainty of the protagonist. this is achieved through a mixture of two opposing writing techniques 'showing' and 'telling'. The author begins by telling the reader what Anne is thinking. This is followed by a strong use of imagery '...her feelings of loneliness and fear were going to come thundering back and imprison her...' Here Anne's feelings are personified through the use of the dynamic verbs thundering and imprison, showing readers the intensity of her feelings. This technique is continued in the description of the setting which mirrors these feelings. 'the walls are still a deep passionate red. Every time she sees them, they remind her of how much she still loves and cares for me.'

The final aspect to note in this story, and thereby in O'Connor's theory is the moment of realisation

which, in this story, occurs right at the end after Anne receives a call. 'She's now thinking how silly this is, she knows she has to take control, stop waiting.' Now our protagonist is able to end her isolation.

The inspiration for the interaction between character and setting in this story was taken from O'Connors short story 'The Geranium'. Rather than it being the plant on the window Anne's wedding day picture, on the mantle piece, encapsulates her feelings. The workshopping process was crucial for me in editing the themes of the piece and cutting the story down to the required length.

## Bibliography:

O'Connor, F. Faber & Faber. (1990). *The Geranium*. The complete stories. pp.3-14

O'Connor, F. (2013) *Writing Short Stories*. Short Story Module Anthology. pp. 63-72

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Story: 1080

commentary: 500