Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOYCE CAROL OATES

Joyce Carol Oates grew up in a working-class farming community and became interested in reading at an early age. She was the first in her family to complete high school, and after attending Syracuse University, she published her first book in 1962. Oates is well known for her prolific output—she has written over forty novels, as well as a number of plays and novellas, and many volumes of short stories, poetry, and nonfiction. On average, she publishes two books a year. Frequent topics in her work include rural poverty, sexual abuse, racial and class tensions, and female childhood and adolescence. Violence is also a constant theme, with occasionally supernatural underpinnings. She has won several awards including the National Book Award, the O. Henry Award, and the F. Scott Fitzgerald Award for Achievement in American Literature award. In 1962, Oates moved to Detroit where she began teaching creative writing at the University of Detroit. She lived there until 1968; influenced by the Vietnam War and the 1967 Detroit race riots, she then moved to Canada with her husband and began teaching at the University of Windsor in Ontario. In 1978, she moved to Princeton, New Jersey, and taught at Princeton University for 35 years, retiring in 2014. She has also taught creative writing at UC Berkeley.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Oates based the story and the character of Arnold Friend on real life killer Charles Schmid, who murdered at least three girls in Tucson, Arizona between 1964 and 1966. Oates first learned of this case from a *Life Magazine* article about Schmid, who was named the Pied Piper of Tucson. His trial was widely covered by the media in 1966, which was a time when the counter-culture (an anti-establishment cultural phenomenon which rejected traditional values and conventional social norms, for example racial segregation and support of the Vietnam War) was beginning to flourish.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Oates has described her writing as part of the tradition of great psychological realists, such as Henry James, whose works take a realist approach to American culture while incorporating mythological and symbolic elements. James's *The Turn of the Screw*, in its portrayal of a governess who is pursued by a possibly supernatural entity, is especially relevant to Oates's work. The fiction of Flannery O'Connor, which tackles the nightmarish aspect of American culture, has also been hugely influential for Oates. This influence can be seen in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find," in which a villainous figure, The Misfit, terrorizes a family over a short period of time, and the surrounding rural landscape comes to embody a fatal threat. In the early 1980s, Oates began writing explicitly horror and Gothic stories, and she noted influences such as Franz Kafka and Edgar Allan Poe. This Gothic element is particularly noticeable in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?", as Oates creates a sense of mounting psychological turmoil, but does not directly state whether the threat facing the heroine is or is not supernatural.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** "Where Are You Going, Where Have you Been?"
- **When Written:** 1966
- **When Published:** 1966
- **Literary Period:** 1960s Counterculture
- **Genre:** Short story
- **Setting:** The suburbs of an unnamed town in the United States
- **Climax:** Connie agrees to go with Arnold Friend and leaves her house in a trance-like state.
- **Antagonist:** Arnold Friend
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Pop Culture. Oates dedicated the story to Bob Dylan, as she wrote it after listening to his song "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." The story was also adapted into the movie *Smooth Talk*, starring Laura Dern, in 1988.

Grandmother. Oates's grandmother gave Oates a copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* when she was eight years old, which Oates has described as her earliest literary influence. Six years, her grandmother also gave Oates her first typewriter.

PLOT SUMMARY

Connie is a fifteen-year-old girl who loves nothing more than spending time with her friends at the plaza and flirting with the boys she meets there. She is frustrated by her family and her life at home, where her mother scolds her for her vanity and continually compares her to her older sister, June. One summer night, she and a friend go to the drive-in restaurant at the plaza, and while Connie reflects on how the **music** playing in the background "made everything so good." After a while, Connie

leaves the restaurant with a boy named Eddie. On their way to Eddie's car, Connie notices a boy with shaggy black hair staring at her from his gold **car**. He tells Connie "Gonna get you, baby," and draws an X in the air with his finger, but Connie ignores him.

One Sunday, Connie's family goes to a barbecue at her aunt's house, and Connie stays at home. She sits out in the yard, dreaming of boys she has been with in the past. When she opens her eyes, she is disoriented and goes to listen to the radio in the **house**. She becomes completely absorbed in the music, and after some time hears a car coming up the drive. Though she stays inside the house, Connie can see there are two boys in the car, which is a gold jalopy convertible. The driver behaves as if there's nothing unusual about his being there and apologizes for being late. The boy in the passenger seat simply plays music on a transistor radio. Though Connie is reluctant to speak with the driver, once it becomes clear they have the same taste in music, she begins to engage more in conversation. The boy tells Connie his name is Arnold Friend and tries to convince her to come for a ride. Eventually, Connie remembers that he is the same boy she recently saw at the restaurant. Friend now begins telling Connie things about her own life, speaking in a lilting voice "as if he were reciting the words to a song."

When Connie continues to refuse to come out of the house, Friend again tells her that he's her friend and that he put his "sign in the air" when she walked by. Connie studies his appearance and reflects that while she recognizes most things about him, including his smile and the way he dresses, "all these things did not come together." She now asks Friend how old he is, and though he tells her he's around her own age, she can tell he's at least thirty, maybe more. Friend turns his attention to Ellie, the boy in the passenger seat, and Connie realizes that he too is older than she initially thought. She suggests that the two of them should go away, and Friend becomes more forceful, telling her they won't leave until she goes with them. He also tells her he knows her family won't be coming home, and describes the scene unfolding at the barbecue with eerie detail. He tells Connie that he's her lover, and describes how he will have sex with her. Frightened, Connie threatens to call the police, but Friend is unperturbed and continues to tell her that she'll come out of the house and they'll drive away together, again threatening her family and declaring that he will have sex with her. Connie runs into the house and picks up the telephone, but can only hear a roaring sound and is unable to dial a number and call for help. She screams into the phone and, after a while when she can hear again, Friend begins telling her to put the phone back and to come outside. He again describes how he will have sex with her and threatens her family before repeating his instructions for her to come out of the house. Connie leaves the house, watching herself in the third person. She notices the landscape and understands that she will disappear into it.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Connie – The protagonist of the story, Connie is a pretty fifteen-year-old girl who loves spending time with her friends and flirting with boys. Connie takes great pleasure in her appearance, so much so that her mother often scolds her for being vain. Nonetheless, Connie's long blonde hair and general good looks make her supremely confident, and she enjoys the power she holds over boys her own age. Meanwhile, she feels suffocated by her home life and resents her mother's attempts to control her behavior as well as constant, unfavorable comparisons between her and her older sister, June. In many ways a typical teenager, Connie is eager to grow up and date; she also loves popular **music,** which has come to shape her expectations of romantic relationships and life in general. As the story unfolds, however, it becomes clear that Connie is hardly as mature and powerful as she would like to believe, and her vulnerability attracts the attention of the sinister Arnold Friend. When Friend arrives at Connie's **house**, he comments on how he was drawn to her because of her physical appearance, that her family will not return to help her, and that he intends to take her away with him and rape her. Over the course of their conversation, Connie becomes increasingly alarmed and disturbed, and her confidence and sense of control is slowly worn down until her free will is seemingly obliterated altogether. By the time she passively submits to Friend, she is experiencing such intense alienation that she sees herself in the third person and has seemingly accepted her fate. Though the story ends with her stepping out of her house, it is heavily implied that Friend later murders her.

Arnold Friend – The story's antagonist, Arnold Friend is a deeply sinister character—a man who pretends to be a teenage boy in his effort to kidnap, rape, and murder Connie. Connie first sees Friend outside a drive-in restaurant, where he immediately tells her, "Gonna get you, baby." Throughout the story it becomes clear that he is highly manipulative and that his appearance is deceptive. Not only does he use Connie's love of **music** to make himself seem like an ideal romantic suitor and speak to her in a lilting, sing-song fashion to distract her from the horror of his words, he also wears makeup and stuffs his boots to make himself appear both younger and taller. These are all parts of his attempt to manipulate Connie into coming out of her **house** so that he can abduct her and, it is implied, rape and murder her. Over the course of their disjointed conversation, there are references to biblical verses and Friend demonstrates an uncanny knowledge of Connie's personal life. He also seems to know exactly what her family is doing at that very moment. In this way, it seems possible that Friend is an evil supernatural force, perhaps even the devil himself. Oates has

described how she based the character of Arnold Friend on the real life serial killer, Charles Schmid, who also wore makeup and stuffed his boots in order to alter his appearance, and was known for preying on teenage girls—taking three of their lives in Tuscon, Arizona the 1960s.

Ellie – Arnold Friend's sidekick, Ellie is passive and quietly disturbing character in the story. He sits in the passenger seat of Friend's car holding the transistor radio. Connie observes that while, like Friend, Ellie is also older than he originally appeared, he is also strangely undeveloped and completely submissive. Indeed, the only time he speaks is to ask Friend if he wants him to rip out the telephone cord to prevent Connie from calling the police.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Eddie – A boy who approaches Connie while she's out with her friend. They spend a few hours together, and it's on her way to Eddie's car that Connie first sees Arnold Friend.

Connie's Mother – Connie and her mother have a difficult relationship and often bicker, as Connie's mother finds her daughter's vanity and irresponsible behaviour frustrating.

June – Connie's older sister. Plain, prudent, and responsible, she is very different from Connie in temperament.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

APPEARANCES AND DECEPTION

"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" opens with a physical description of its fifteen-year-old protagonist, Connie—a pretty blonde girl living in 1960s America whose life revolves around bickering with her family, hanging out with her friends, and drooling over boys. Right away, Oates makes clear that Connie is highly conscious of her looks; she has a "habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right." As the story unfolds, it seems that Connie's attractiveness is the foundation of her self-worth and also provides her with a degree of control over boys, giving her a sense of independence and power. However, appearances also play a sinister role in the story. Through Arnold Friend, a strange adult man who arrives at Connie's home and kidnaps her with the intention to rape (and possibly kill) her, Oates demonstrates that appearances can be dangerous and deceptive.

Initially, Connie believes her appearance gives her a kind of elevated status. At the opening of the story, she thinks her mother is jealous of her good looks because her mother's own beauty has long since faded. Connie's mother scolds her daughter for her vanity, yelling, "Stop gawking at yourself. [...] You think you're so pretty!" In response, Connie thinks to herself that "she knew she was pretty and that was everything." The conflict between Connie and her mother is a power struggle rooted in appearances—and since Connie is the one who still has her good looks, she is the one with the power. Connie knows that she can use her appearance to her advantage; traits like her "long dark blond hair" frequently draw "anyone's eye," and she enjoys both the attention she attracts and especially the power she has in being able to reject or accept boys' advances.

Connie's appearance is also often deceptive, however. Connie looks and behaves differently when she is at home and when she is out with her friends: "Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home: her walk, which could be childlike and bobbing, or languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing **music** in her head." Connie presents one version of herself at home so that she seems agreeably childlike and innocent to her mother, and another version when she is out with her friends and wants to appear alluring and confident.

It is Connie's mature, seductive appearance when she's out—itself a sort of costume—that then attracts the strange, deeply deceptive Arnold Friend. When Friend first catches a glance of Connie, he can't stop staring, and says, "[I'm] Gonna get you, baby"—a creepy moment that foreshadows her abduction. Later, Friend admits, "I took a special interest in you, such a pretty girl, and found out all about you." He rattles off a list of things he knows about Connie, including her best friend's name and that her parents and sister, June, are gone. Arnold himself points out that his predatory interest in Connie comes from the fact that she's "such a pretty girl."

Friend is the story's strongest example of shows how appearances shouldn't be trusted, and this deceptiveness takes an outright sinister turn when he shows up at Connie's **house**. At first, Friend seems like a normal teenage boy; he's dressed "the way all of them dressed," and his smile assures Connie "that everything [is] fine." However, it's soon clear that Friend's clothes, **car**, speech, and even his taste in music are all part of a carefully-crafted disguise.

Furthermore, Friend claims to be eighteen, but she can tell that he's at least thirty years old—a realization that makes her heart "pound faster," as she realizes she's in genuine danger. Slowly, Friend's guise is dismantled. Studying him more closely, Connie also notices that other aspects of his appearance also seem fake. His hair looks like a wig, and even his "whole face was a mask." It seems that Arnold Friend has invested a great amount of time and effort into concealing his actual appearance, and

that he doesn't want Connie to see his true self.

Oates, has stated that Arnold Friend is based on Charles Schmid, a serial killer in Arizona who stuffed his boots and wore makeup. Schmid, like Friend, charmed and manipulated young women. This connection leaves the reader in no doubt as to Connie's fate, and highlights that appearances can be used to cover up malicious intentions. There are also suggestions that Friend's real identity is supernatural in nature, further emphasizing that appearances can be dangerous. Most startlingly, Friend knows everything about Connie, including where her family is and what they are wearing and doing at this very moment. When he reports these details, it seems like he is peering into some kind of vision

As his disguise falls apart, it becomes increasingly clear that Arnold Friend means Connie harm, and that her good looks in this moment offer her nothing in the way of independence, power, or control. Oates thus spins a cautionary tale, emphasizing that although appearances can sometimes serve as a source of validation or power, they must not be relied upon—they can be deceiving, dangerous, and even fatal.

AGENCY, CONTROL, AND MANIPULATION

The teenage Connie frequently bristles against her mother, who attempts to control her daughter's behavior and encourage her to be more like her responsible older sister, June. Yet where Connie seems somewhat at the mercy of her family at home, she holds an effortless kind of control over the boys she has sexual encounters with, and she takes pleasure in the simple sense of power this gives her. Oates introduces a subtler kind of control when Arnold Friend appears at Connie's **house**, one that is more psychological and manipulative. The majority of the story consists of Friend convincing Connie to step out of her house, and though Friend does not yet physically touch Connie, he wears her resistance down to such an extent that, while she is not technically *forced to leave the house*, nor can she be said to do so of her own free will.

Judging from her relationship with her mother and her encounters with young men, it is clear that Connie is determined not to be controlled by anyone, and that she enjoys exercising power over others because it makes her feel independent and important. Specifically, she resents her mother's attempts to make her conform to a certain version of femininity: to be humble, responsible, and domesticated like her sister. Her mother asks Connie, "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." Connie's violent responses show how intensely she resents her mother's attempts to control her. Not only does Connie tell her friends, "She makes me want to throw up," but inwardly she wishes she and her mother were both dead: "Connie's mother kept picking at her until Connie wished her mother was dead and she herself was dead and it was all over."

Compared to her relationship with her mother, the easy control Connie exerts over boys is both unspoken and uncomplicated. Oates describes how one boy, Eddie, whom Connie meets at the plaza, buys her food so that he can spend time with her and have some sort of sexual encounter. Connie also reflects that, when she has these encounters, they occur on her own terms. In this way, Oates establishes Connie's understanding of control as based either in bullying and nagging, as when her mother repeatedly tells her how to behave, and also as a matter-of-fact process of exchange, as when she chooses whether or not to give boys what they want from her.

Arnold Friend's method of controlling Connie is very different from how the reader has previously seen Connie interpret and exercise control, and a key element of Friend's gradual psychological control over Connie is his use of repetitive and highly manipulative language. When he first arrives at Connie's house, Friend behaves and speaks as though his presence makes perfect sense. For example, he apologizes for being late (as if she were expecting him), and claims, "This is your day set aside for a ride with me and you know it." His outlandish and nonsensical statements are delivered in a matter-of-fact way, as though he is being reasonable and it is Connie who isn't making any sense.

By repeating his instructions for her to come out of the house over and over, and by telling her what he is going to do to her as though there is no other possible outcome, Friend gradually wears down Connie's sense of agency and her ability to make choices, all the while paradoxically telling her she will leave the house of her own free will. Friend seems to know that he can control Connie with his words: if she simply listens to him for long enough, the desired effect will take hold. Friend goes on to say, "I'll tell you how it is, I'm always nice at first, the first time. I'll hold you so tight you won't think you have to try to get away or pretend anything because you'll know you can't." Not only does he tell her these sexually explicit things as though there is no possible alternative, he suggests he will do away with her need to make choices. While the kind of control Friend wishes to hold over Connie becomes increasingly sinister, he presents Connie's seemingly inevitable actions as a positive thing. Friend's use of manipulative language makes her believe she not only has no other option than to go with him, but that she has *chosen* to go with him.

As the story comes to a close, Friend successfully manipulates Connie: he has worn down her agency and free will so completely that she is unable to act in her own best interests. After her long and irrational exchange with Friend, Connie runs back into the house and picks up the phone, ignoring Friend's claim that he will leave her family unharmed *unless* she picks up

the phone and tries to call the police. However, when she reaches the phone, she is paralyzed, and it seems that Friend has successfully gotten into her head. When Connie picks up the phone, "Something roared in her ear, a tiny roaring, and she was so sick with fear that she could do nothing but listen to it." Unable to dial a number or to speak, Connie simply screams against the sound of the dial tone.

When Connie eventually leaves the house with Friend, she disassociates and watches herself in the third person: "She watched herself push the door slowly open [...] watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waited." In this way, Oates suggests that though Connie is obeying Friend's instructions, she is no longer fully present or in control of her actions. This is further insinuated by the suggestion that her identity is now irrelevant: "'My sweet little blue-eyed girl,' [Friend] said in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with her brown eyes." Although Connie used to be in control of all of her sexual encounters, her power is no match for Friend's. Through psychological control and manipulation, Friend successfully robs Connie of her agency, innocence, identity, and presumably, her life.

THE PRESENCE OF EVIL

In "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" fifteen-year-old girl Connie is confronted—and it's implied, raped and killed—by a sinister stranger named Arnold Friend. As the story unfolds, Friend manipulates and terrorizes Connie to such an extent that he becomes an embodiment of evil. In fact, the story goes so far as to suggest that Friend might be a personification of death, or even the devil himself—the very picture of violence, danger, and cruelty. This, combined with the story's biblical allusions and moments of religious imagery, allows Oates to explore the nature of good and evil in the context of everyday life. The story particularly wrings fear and tension from its assertion that evil and death exist—or can infiltrate—anywhere.

Oates establishes the ordinariness of Connie's life to suggest that her eventual, terrifying confrontation with Friend could happen to anyone. The story begins with the simple declaration, "Her name was Connie," before diving into the details of Connie's family and home. These include her tensions with her mother and elder sister, June, as well as the comparative absenteeism of her father, who is more concerned with his work than the squabbles of teenaged girls. Oates also informs the reader that Connie likes hanging out with friends and meeting boys. None of these details are particularly strange, and instead paint a picture of Connie as a perfectly normal fifteen-year-old girl.

The day that Friend comes to Connie's **house**, her family is away at a barbecue that Connie hadn't wanted to join. Though Connie is alone, a suburban home in the middle of the day is hardly the typical setting for a horror story—making Friend's sinister presence all the more chilling and suggesting that the safety implied by "home" is in reality nothing more than an illusion, knocked aside as easily as the screen door Friend threatens to open if Connie doesn't do as he says.

Of course, at first, Friend also seems like an ordinary, if odd, man. Yet he quickly becomes distinctly incongruous with the quiet suburban world in which he abducts Connie. As his conversation with Connie unfolds, he comes across as manipulative, sadistic, and threatening—in short, as pure evil.

Friend easily manipulates Connie, handily deducing her desires for romance and turning them against her. He makes her promises, but they are to break into her house if she disobeys him; he speaks in a sweet, lilting tone as he talks of graphic sexual violence and harming Connie's family; his name is "Friend," yet he is anything but that.

Friend clearly takes pleasure in perverting the quiet, normal world and values that surround Connie—that is, in robbing her of any sense of comfort or security. That he appears in an almost parodical form of a man—he wears mask-like makeup and wobbles across Connie's porch in shoes stuffed to appear taller—makes this all the more disturbing, as if he is perverting not simply the world Connie holds dear, but humanity itself.

Even though Connie and her family are distinctly not religious, religious symbolism appears throughout the story—further creating the sense that, however normal she may be, Connie's fate is tied to broader, near-mystical battles between good and evil. For example, Connie and her friends view listening to **music** as a kind of "church service." Meanwhile, none of Connie's family members "bothered with church"—a fact that contributes to Connie to being at home on the Sunday that Friend arrives.

The numbers written on the side of Friend's **car**—33, 19, and 17—have distinct biblical undertones. Judges is the 33rd book of the Bible if counting backwards from Revelation, and verse 19:17 reads, "When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, 'Where are you going? Where did you come from?'" This clearly evokes the story's title, suggesting perhaps that Friend does not belong in this world at all. Connie also repeatedly says "Christ" when flustered by Friend's presence, creating a subtle invocation of good in contrast to the evil presented by Friend.

Through all these details, Oates imbues her tale with a sense of grand, inescapable evil that belies its suburban setting. The insidiousness nature of such evil is further bolstered by the fact that Arnold Friend was based on a real-life serial killer Charles Schmid, a.k.a. "The Pied Piper of Tucson," who murdered three teenage girls and buried them in the desert in the early 1960s. Like Friend, Schmid wore makeup, stuffed his shoes to seem taller, and had striking (dyed) black hair; more sinisterly, he was described as particularly charismatic, and lured his victims through the use of his car, parties, and gifts. Schmid and Friend

reveal how evil can exist anywhere, and that even the innocent are not safe from its reach.

MUSIC AND ROMANTIC FANTASY

Throughout the story popular culture—particularly **music**—is presented as a medium through which adolescents make sense of their inner emotional lives. As a fifteen-year-old girl who struggles to get along with her family and enjoys nothing more than spending time with her friends and flirting with boys at the plaza, Connie is highly attuned to music and the affect it has on her. Connie herself is described in musical terms: she wears "jingling" charms on her bracelets and her laugh is "highpitched." In many ways, music suggests an escape from Connie's humdrum suburban existence and a connection to an exciting world of romance and passion. Yet in fueling her sense of romantic fantasy, music also primes her to be taken advantage of by Arnold Friend. The world of adult sexuality is nothing like the gentle romance of movies and pop songs, and Friend twists Connie's love of both—which, in essence, reflects her desire for fulfillment, connection, and escape—against her by using it to seduce her out of the **house**. The story thus points to the inauthenticity of the culture with which teens like Connie surround themselves.

At first, Oates directly links Connie's love of music to moments of passionate emotions or pleasure, which, in turn, are distinctly separate from the stifling world of her parents' home. While with friends, Connie's walk becomes "languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing music in her head." When she and her friends go to their usual restaurant, they listen "to the music that made everything so good: the music was always in the background, like music at a church service; it was something to depend upon." That Connie "depends upon" something suggested to be little more than empty fantasy adds to the story's tragedy.

As she and Eddie, a boy she meets and flirts with, make their way to his car, Connie is overcome "with the pure pleasure of being alive," and reflects that "it might have been the music." Later, when she is home alone listening to music, she again feels an intense kind of pleasure, "bathed in a glow of slow-pulsed joy that seemed to rise mysteriously out of the music itself and lay languidly about the airless little room, breathed in and breathed out with each gentle rise and fall of her chest." Oates further suggests that, because music is tied to passion, its absence signals a return to calm and order—or, perhaps, a return to reality. For example, after Connie has spent time with Eddie and she and her friend are being driven home by her friend's father, Oates writes that Connie "couldn't hear the music at this distance."

Given Connie's love of and constant exposure to popular music, it's no surprise that it has come to shape her expectations of romance and inform her encounters with young men. Music plays a role in even her most private and personal reflections; when Connie is reflecting on her previous sexual experiences, she refers directly to the way it is "in movies" and the promises made in songs, namely that it was "gentle and sweet."

The appearance of Arnold Friend, however, reveals the artifice of the soundtrack to Connie's passions. Nearly every time Connie takes pleasure in music, Friend appears. In this way, Oates draws connection between the enticing escape presented by pop culture's depiction of romance and the danger of being seduced by such fantasy.

When Friend arrives, the radio in his **car** is playing the same station as the radio in Connie's house—the same station with which she'd only just been singing along. Given Friend's obvious attempts to adopt teen lingo and pass himself off as decades younger than he is, this is clearly his way of further signaling to Connie that they are one in the same; that Friend understands her longing for a more passionate world and can in fact give her what she desires—that is, what the songs she so loves have promised her.

Friend even uses song lyrics to connect with Connie, playing on her idea of romantic love. When he speaks to her, Oates writes, "Connie somehow recognized […] the echo of a song from last year, about a girl rushing into her boyfriend's arms and coming home again…" Oates also explicitly suggests the musicality of Friend's voice, describing it in turns as "monotone", "lilting," and "chanting."

Friend not only continually mimics the properties of music, he also draws on the promises it holds to take advantage of Connie. He tells Connie that her family "don't know one thing about you and never did and honey, you're better than them because not a one of them would have done this for you." By suggesting that he is the only one to see her for who she really is and that he appreciates her in a way that no one does, Friend uses the romantic ideals inherent in the lyrics of popular music to make Connie feel desired and special.

Of course, none of this is true, and Friend is masking his horrific, violent intentions. In the climax of the story, when Connie does finally leave the house, Friend's recitation of a Bob Dylan lyric cements his utter insincerity: "My sweet little blue-eyed girl', he said in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with her brown eyes." Friend continues to spout romantic platitudes that clearly have nothing to do with Connie herself, further highlighting the artifice and fantasy of the world popular culture represents—at least for those who, like Connie, are young, naïve, and all too eager to escape the comparative mundanity of their reality.

LOSS OF INNOCENCE

Over the course of the story, fifteen-year-old Connie is eager to appear like a mature young woman, and she believes a key aspect of this is to engage in sexual experiences. As such, she uses her good looks

to attract the attention of boys and feels her knowledge in this area makes her independent and powerful. Connie's desire to fast-forward her adolescence and become an adult, however, is fulfilled in a cruel and sinister way by the appearance of a strange adult man named Arnold Friend. Friend forces a heightened level of sexual awareness upon Connie—and then presumably rapes her, forcing her to give up her sexual innocence. Though the reader understands Connie has previously taken part in consensual sexual activity with boys her own age, it is suggested that she's still a virgin, and this lack of knowledge or experience enables Friend to use sex in a threatening way to frighten and provoke her. The tragic impact of the story is rooted in how unwanted and irrevocable this loss of innocence is; by raping and murdering Connie, Friend takes away both her innocence and her young life.

Sexuality is introduced as a natural part of adolescence, as Oates makes clear that Connie enjoys spending time with boys and has thus far only had positive, consensual experiences. After her impromptu date with Eddie, for instance, they spend time together in his car "down an alley a mile or so away." Later, when she reflects on her time with Eddie and other boys, she describes that it is always "sweet" and "gentle." Many of Connie's thoughts revolve around boys, and she and her friends spend time at the plaza in the specific hope of meeting boys. Oates may paint Connie as a little boy-crazy, but she is ultimately a normal fifteen-year-old girl. Much of the media Connie consumes (including popular **music**) largely centers on sex and love as well, perhaps leading Connie to believe herself more mature than she actually is.

Friend, however, represents a distinctively adult—and malicious—type of sexual encounter that Connie cannot yet understand or hope to control. After Connie's initial refusals to get into the **car** with Friend, he begins to tell her, "You're my date. I'm your lover, honey." Connie responds with shock and dismay, but nonetheless he repeats his claim and suggests that he intends to rape her: "Yes, I'm your lover. You don't know what that is but you will."

Friend's use of distinctly graphic, sexual language both frightens and appalls Connie: "And I'll come inside you where it's all secret and you'll give in to me and you'll love me." In response, Connie tells him to "shut up" and covers her ears as "if she'd heard something terrible, something not meant for her." Her discomfort reflects the gravity of the situation, but it also emphasizes that—despite her experiences with boys—she is still largely innocent about sex. Though Connie intuits what Friend's intentions are and can grasp the full meaning of his words, she also wants to resist the knowledge he is trying to impart and, in this way, makes a flimsy attempt to preserve her innocence. Friend also uses sexual imagery and portrays sex with him as an inevitability over which Connie has no control. This goes against the grain of Connie's own sexual experiences, which have all been "gentle" and consensual.

In this way, Oates makes clear that Friend uses sex and sexual knowledge to force Connie's adolescence to an unnatural conclusion and jolt her into a kind of cruel adulthood. Through the fact that Connie has only had positive experiences prior to meeting Friend but still resists Friend's advances, Oates seems to be suggesting that adolescence is a necessary period for young people to discover sexuality on their *own* terms, and that for a third party to force this discovery in any way can have dangerous and terrifying results. She also seems to suggest that sexual awareness, if delivered prematurely or violently, is extremely traumatizing.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MUSIC

From the outset of the story, music symbolizes Connie's inner life, specifically the pleasure she takes in romantic relationships and romantic ideals themselves. Whenever she goes to the plaza with her friends, music is always playing in the background. Furthermore, she becomes more aware of music when she is experiencing intense moments of pleasure, references music while reflecting on her previous romantic encounters, and becomes absorbed in a music-induced trance. In this way, music is closely tied to her feelings of pleasure and her desire for fulfillment, connection, and escape. Arnold Friend takes advantage of this by using music as a way to trick Connie into believing there is a connection between them. The transistor radio in his car is playing the same music as the radio in her house, and when he draws his X sign in the air, Connie observes it seems that the two sources of music are coming together. Following this, Friend slowly coaxes her out of the safety of her **house**. In this way, the symbol of music represents not only Connie's inner life and pleasure, but also Friend's violent sexual desire and evil intentions. Additionally, Friend's attempt to seduce Connie through music suggests that pop culture's portrayal of romance is deceptive, and has left Connie ill equipped to identify Friend's disturbing behaviour. Ultimately, then, music also comes to hold very sinister connotations.

CONNIE'S HOUSE

For the majority of the story, Connie is standing inside the house and Arnold Friend is trying to convince her to come outside. Slowly, both Connie and the reader come to understand that if she leaves the house, Friend will take her away with him and rape her, perhaps even murder her. The house, then, comes to represent Connie's adolescent

innocence and the safety both her family life and status as a child provides her with. Though there is nothing to stop Friend from forcing his way into the house, it seems he cannot enter it himself, but instead has to slowly manipulate Connie in to leaving it of her own free will. In this way, it seems to function as a barrier between her current state of naivete, and the carnal, disturbing knowledge that Friend wishes to force on her.

ARNOLD FRIEND'S CAR

Arnold Friend arrives at Connie's **house** in his car, and Connie notices that not only is it battered from a previous accident, but also that it is marked with sentences, such as "DONE BY CRAZY DRIVER"; Friend's own name; and the numbers 33,19,17, which appear to reference a verse in the Bible, which reads "When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, 'Where are you going? Where did you come from?'" This seems a possible clue regarding Friend's possibly supernatural identity. Friend continually asks Connie to come for a ride in the car; it is the means by which he will take her away from her home, and, by extension, her family and her life as a teenager. In this way, getting into the car will bring an end to Connie's childhood innocence. As Friend's own name is written on the car, it is clear that it functions as a direct extension of Friend himself and his intentions. The car is also another aspect of Friend's disguise: like his clothes and the music he claims to love, it is intended to make him seem normal and unthreatening to Connie. Ultimately, however, as Connie notices that one of the phrases painted on his car is outdated, it functions as a clue that Friend is older than he says and not what he appears to be.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Harper Collins edition of *High Lonesome: New and Selected Stories 1966-2006* published in 2006.

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? Quotes

She was fifteen and she had a quick, nervous, giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right. Her mother, who noticed everything and knew everything and who hadn't much reason any longer to look at her own face, always scolded Connie about it.

Related Characters: Arnold Friend, Connie's Mother, Connie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears in the first paragraph of the story, and quickly establishes that not only is Connie fixated on her own appearance, but that her concern with how others view her appearance is a source of anxiety. In many ways Connie is a typical teenage girl, deeply concerned with what others think of her even as she expresses pride in her good looks. This suggests that, for all her confidence, Connie is still a vulnerable young girl. Oates further makes clear that Connie's focus on her looks is a point of tension between her and her mother, who is a generally controlling presence in Connie's life. Importantly, Connie interprets her mother's frustration with her vanity as connected to her own faded looks. In this way, Oates quickly establishes and emphasizes that Connie's is obsession with appearances potentially clouds her judgement regarding the behaviour of others. This paves the way for tension later in the story, when Arnold Friend manipulates Connie by altering his physical appearance as part of his attempt to conceal his true, sinister intentions.

Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home: her walk, which could be childlike and bobbing, or languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing music in her head; her mouth, which was pale and smirking most of the time, but bright and pink on these evenings out; her laugh, which was cynical and drawling at home—"Ha, ha, very funny"—but highpitched and nervous anywhere else, like the jingling of the charms on her bracelet.

Related Characters: Connie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 119-120

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Oates explores and complicates Connie's relationship to her own appearance. It's clear that Connie understands that appearances can be deceptive, and intuitively behaves differently when at home with her family or out with her friends. This paragraph is striking for the intuitive way in

which Connie seems to she different versions of herself; one is domestic and childlike, the other outgoing and social. This points to the fact that Connie is still in many ways an innocent young girl, and that her attempts to appear mature and seductive are, in a way, a sort of costume. Connie is also linked to music here, with her "highpitched" voice like the "jingling" of jewelry; throughout the story music will be associated with pleasure and romantic fantasy, suggesting that Connie, like many teenagers, views her own life through the conventions of romance in pop culture.

She drew her shoulders up and sucked in her breath with the pure pleasure of being alive, and just at that moment she happened to glance at a face just a few feet from hers. It was 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.

Related Characters: Eddie , Arnold Friend, Connie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 120-121

Explanation and Analysis

This paragraph appears after Connie has gone off from the plaza with a boy named Eddie. As she and Eddie make her way to the latter's car, Connie sees Arnold Friend for the first time. Importantly, she has just been experiencing an intense feeling of pleasure. The proximity of her pleasure and the appearance of Friend, which Oates emphasizes with the words "just at that moment," makes the two events seem closely connected, almost as though Connie has inadvertently conjured Friend. Friend's predatory behaviour is also notable; he directly addresses Connie with a casual threat. Also, given Friend's intentions seem to be sinister, Oates seems to suggest that Connie is will be punished for her pleasure, or that pleasure has consequences she doesn't yet understand.

Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun, dreaming and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love, the caresses of love, and her mind slipped over onto thoughts of the boy she had been with the night before and how nice he had been, how sweet it always was [...] sweet, gentle, the way it was in movies and promised in songs [...]

Related Characters: Eddie , Arnold Friend, Connie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 122

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears after the rest of Connie's family has left to attend a barbecue and she is home alone, sitting in the sun. Oates demonstrates that Connie has had multiple romantic encounters, and that they have all been positive and consensual. In this way, Oates establishes Connie's level of sexual experience: the reader understands that Connie has always previously had a degree of control when dealing with boys, and suspects that she is still a virgin. She is on the cusp of womanhood, but still a young girl exploring what it means to be an adult. These lines also underscore Connie's relationship with popular music, the lyrics of which have led her to expect certain romantic norms. This attachment to music, and the fact that it has shaped Connie's views of relationships, is important because Arnold Friend will later draw on music to manipulate Connie. Friend will both reference the romantic ideals music presents, and also speak in a lilting, rhythmic way that resembles music in order to make his sinister words sound more enticing.

"Now, these numbers are a secret code, honey," Arnold Friend explained. He read off the numbers 33, 19, 17 and raised his eyebrows at her to see what she thought of that, but she didn't think much of it.

Related Characters: Arnold Friend (speaker), Connie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

As Arnold Friend continues his attempts to engage Connie in conversation and convince her to come out of the house and go for a ride with him, he draws her attention to his jalopy. Along with his name and the words DONE BY CRAZY WOMAN DRIVER, there is a Bible verse written on the car. This is often interpreted as being from Judges, the seventh book of the Old Testament (the 33rd book of the Bible if counting backwards from Revelation). Verse 19:17 of Judges reads, "When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, 'Where are you going? Where did you come from?'" These lines clearly reference the title of the story and also emphasize how illogical Friend's appearance at the house is—how he seems to be strangely out of time and not to belong in this world. In essence, he is not what he appears to be, and by including this biblical reference Oates seems to be suggesting that Friend might be a supernatural presence, if not the devil himself.

Additionally, Genesis 19:17 reads, in part, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed." This is perhaps a warning to Connie, an admonishment to leave lest she be "consumed" by Friend (as, indeed, she is).

❝ He was standing in a strange way, leaning back against the car as if he were balancing himself. He wasn't tall, only an inch or so taller than she would be if she came down to him. Connie liked the way he was dressed, which was the way all of them dressed: tight faded jeans stuffed into black, scuffed boots a belt that pulled his waist in and showed how lean he was, and a white pull-over shirt that was a little soiled and showed the hard small muscles of his arms and shoulders.

Related Characters: Arnold Friend, Connie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 125

Explanation and Analysis

Friend has clearly adopted the style of a teenager to aid in his manipulation of Connie. At this stage in the story Connie is aware of some discrepancies in Friend's appearance, but she has yet to decide what precisely these discrepancies mean. That she notices his muscles hints at her burgeoning sexuality, but also at the disturbing act that, however powerful Connie thinks she is because of her good looks, Friend is physically much stronger. Additionally, while she likes the way he is dressed, she also notes that his boots are "scuffed" and his shirt is "soiled." The fact that Friend seems unable to stand upright without balancing against the car, meanwhile, is one of several references to the real-life killer, Charles Schmidt, that Arnold Friend is based on, and who stuffed his boots with newspaper in order to make himself appear taller.

Despite these observations, however, Oates suggests that Friend's disguise and manipulation of Connie is having the desired effect, as she is inadvertently imagining herself leaving the house, estimating that he would be only slightly taller than her "if she came down to him." In this way, the reader suspects that because there are so many recognizable traits to Friend's disguise, namely his clothes, Connie's fixation on appearances is being used against her.

❝ "Yes, I'm your lover. You don't know what that is but you will," he said. "I know that too. I know all about you [...] I'm always nice at first, the first time. I'll hold you so tight you won't think you have to try to get away or pretend anything because you'll know you can't. And I'll come inside you where it's all secret and you'll give in to me and you'll love me—"

Related Characters: Arnold Friend (speaker), Connie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

This paragraph appears toward the end of the story, as Friend continues to stand outside Connie's house and urge her to take a ride with her. The tension has gradually been building with Friend alluding to his sinister intentions, yet now he is explicitly telling Connie that he will rape her. These lines are especially disturbing because, not only is Friend describing sexual violence, he is also thrusting adult knowledge onto Connie, forcibly introducing her into the world of sex and ending the innocence associated with childhood and early adolescence. Also disturbing is Friend's phrasing of how events will unfold; his description includes a complete absence of Connie's agency and free will. Not only will escape not be an option, Friend insinuates, but Connie will not even "think" she has "to try" to escape. Furthermore, despite his desire to abduct and rape her, Friend states that Connie will not only submit to him but love him.

> Arnold Friend was saying from the door, "That's a good girl. Put the phone back." […] She picked it up and put it back. The dial tone stopped. "That's a good girl. Now, you come outside." […] She thought, I'm not going to see my mother again. She thought, I'm not going to sleep in my bed again.

Related Characters: Arnold Friend (speaker), Connie's Mother, Connie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs after Connie has responded viscerally to Friend's words and run back inside the house to attempt to make a phone call—despite Friend's warning that he would come into the house if she were to do so. After screaming into the phone and seeming to lose consciousness, Connie opens her eyes to the sound of Friend's voice instructing her. This is a pivotal moment as, given that Connie obeys Friend without question, it seems that he has worn down her free will entirely and she is no longer able to resist him. She is simply too shaken or traumatized to act in her own best interest, and Oates indirectly makes clear that Connie has accepted her fate.

> "My sweet little blue-eyed girl," he said in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with her brown eyes but was taken up just the same by the vast sunlit reaches of the land behind him and on all sides of him—so much land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it.

Related Characters: Arnold Friend (speaker), Connie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is the final sentence of the story. It is chilling that Friend's last words are from a Bob Dylan song, as the symbolic role of music within the story has come full circle: what was once a source of pleasure and romantic fantasy for Connie is now entwined with dread and horror. Given that Connie has brown eyes, Friend's words and their reference to a blue-eyes girl also demonstrate that Connie's individual identity no longer matters. Her sense of self is has been completely eroded by Friend, and this emotional disappearance is emphasized by the fact of her impending physical disappearance. Connie looks at the landscape and is overwhelmed by how vast it is, and the failure to recognize the land surrounding her home speaks to the alienation and trauma she is currently experiencing. It also suggests she is walking away from her house—a symbol of her childhood and naivete—towards a vast yet inevitable unknown—in this case, signifying both adulthood and death.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

Connie is a pretty fifteen-year-old girl with a "nervous, giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors," as well as a tendency to "check other people's faces to make sure her own was all right." Her mother, who "noticed everything and knew everything," is irritated by Connie's vanity and often tells her daughter to "stop gawking." Connie believes her mother is critical because her own good lucks have long since faded, and, in Connie's mind, being pretty is "everything."

Oates immediately establishes Connie's vanity, as she places huge emphasis on her appearances and her good looks give her a sense of power and status. Oates also makes clear, however, that this power is inherently tied to the opinions of others—a fact that makes Connie also appear vulnerable, insecure, and naive.

Connie has a contentious relationship with her mother, insisting that the latter makes Connie "want to throw up." Sometimes, she even wishes both she and her mother were dead. Her mother also makes unfavorable comparisons between Connie and her plain older sister, June, whom she views as more reliable and responsible because she helps out around the house and is saving money. Connie's father, meanwhile, is for the most part uninvolved with the family; after spending the day at work he is emotionally distant when he comes home, "when he came home he wanted supper and he read the newspaper at supper and after supper he went to bed."

Connie has strained relationships with her mother and sister, which, combined with an emotionally-distant father, creates a sense that Connie is alienated within her family. In this way, Connie's alienation gives her a false sense of freedom; while she is left to her own devices, she is also vulnerable. Arnold Friend will take advantage of both the vulnerability caused by Connie's obsession with appearances and her estrangement from her family. Connie's dramatic wish for death also foreshadows her tragic fate.

Connie often goes to the shopping plaza three miles away with her best girlfriend. They catch a ride with the friend's father, who never bothers to ask about their outings when he picks them up hours later. Connie is aware of the attention she attracts while at the plaza, and notes that her appearance and behavior are very different to when she's at home. She changes the way she walks, for instance, as well as her expression and her laugh to be less childlike. Sometimes Connie and her friend go to a drive-in restaurant near the plaza; one night, while they're sitting at the counter and feeling excited while listening to the **music**, a boy named Eddie comes over to chat with them. When he asks Connie if she would like something to eat, she arranges to meet up with her friend later and leaves with Eddie to go to his car.

Connie presents a different version of herself when she's home and when she's out with her friends. Importantly, this change is not only rooted in appearance but in Connie's whole demeanor. When she's at home, she behaves in a way that won't attract her mother's criticism, but when she's out she's eager to attract attention for the validation it gives her. That her friend's father doesn't ask what they've been up to reinforces the sense that for all the power she thinks she has, Connie is still a child and is being left vulnerable to the world. Music is connected to Connie's pleasure in this moment, as it will be throughout the story. Finally, given how easily Connie and her friend arrange to meet up later, it seems that it's normal for the girls to pair off with boys while they're out.

On her way to Eddie's car, Connie feels overwhelmingly happy, a feeling she connects to the **music** playing more than her excitement at being with Eddie, and sucks "in her breath with the pure pleasure of being alive." At that moment she notices a boy (later revealed as Arnold Friend) just a few feet away; he has "shaggy black hair" and his **car** is gold convertible jalopy. His staring at her and also grins at her. Connie turns away, but when she looks back, the boy is still watching her and says "Gonna get you, baby," "wagg[ing] a finger" at her. Three hours later, Connie reunites with her friend, and the girl's father picks them up. As they drive away, Connie observes that she can no longer hear the music from the drive-in restaurant.

Connie again connects pleasure with music and male attention, but this time the latter is unwanted. This time the boy—later revealed as Arnold Friend—has a predatorial presence, and the way he speaks to Connie is casually threatening. By noting that Connie can no longer hear music when they leave the plaza, Oates again underscores this connection between male attention and pleasure and music. Not only does the presence of music seem to conjure these things, but its absence also seems to signal a degree of calm, and there is a sense of order being restored as Connie and her friend are safely heading home, beyond the reach of music and boys alike.

Because it's summer vacation, Connie is spending a lot of time around the **house**, dreaming about boys and the excitement of summer, while her mother continually gives her things to do and asks her prying questions about "the Pettinger girl," whom Connie refers to as "that dope." Sometimes Connie and her mother get along, and Connie thinks her mother prefers her to June because she is prettier than her sister, but any harmony between them is always short-lived.

It seems the Pettinger girl has gotten into some sort of trouble regarding sex and/or pregnancy, and Connie is careful to separate herself from this behaviour in her mother's mind. This is another example of Connie's ability to present a certain version of herself at home. Her assumption that her looks place her higher in her mother's affection again emphasizes the importance she places on physical appearances.

One Sunday, Connie's family go to a barbecue. Connie refuses to attend, however, rolling her eyes "to let her mother know just what she thought of it." Connie's mother snaps at her to "Stay home alone then." Once her other family members have left, Connie sits outside to let her freshly-washed hair dry in the sun, again dreaming of boys she has met and how her experiences have always been "sweet and gentle," the way it was "promised in songs." When she opens her eyes she feels disoriented and decides to go into her bedroom to listen to **music** on the radio.

Connie willingly separates herself from the family; she is disdainful of the idea of going to the barbecue and would rather spend time home alone, perhaps an attempt to assert her maturity and independence. While she reflects on her previous romantic encounters, Oates demonstrates how popular music functions as a kind of prism through which Connie interprets her experiences. She also is clearly influenced by pop culture's depiction of romance, which have led her to believe that dating and sex happen in a specific, "promised" way.

While listening to the **music**, Connie pays "close attention to herself" and once more feels an intense joy that seems to come out of the music itself. After a while, she hears a **car** come up the drive. Upon running to the window, she sees it's not a car she recognizes and worries that she doesn't look good enough to entertain visitors. Once the car comes to a stop, "the horn sounded four short taps, as if this were a signal Connie knew."

Music is an important part of Connie's relationship to her own body, and once again she observes how music seems to be a source pf pleasure. When Connie hears a car coming up the drive, Oates again references Connie's fixation on appearances; rather than feel concern about an uninvited stranger, she worries that she doesn't look good enough to receive anyone. That Connie "knows" the ominous "signal" from the horn suggests the inescapability of her abduction, foreshadowing how Arnold Friend will draw her out of her house.

Connie goes into the kitchen and watches the boys in the **car** through the screen door. She recognizes the driver as the boy (soon revealed as Arnold Friend) in the gold convertible **car** with shaggy black hair that looks like a wig. He begins talking to Connie through the screen door as though they had agreed to meet here at this time, apologizing for being late. Connie is careful not to return the driver's friendliness and notices that the boy in the passenger seat hasn't even looked at her. The driver now begins asking Connie if she'd like to go for a ride and draws her attention to his gold-painted car. Again, she is reluctant to speak with him, and he changes the subject to the transistor radio the passenger is holding. Connie realizes the **music** coming from the radio is the same as the music she's playing inside the house.

The sinister element to Friend's behavior continues, and the fact that his hair looks like a wig immediately suggests he is not the teenage boy he pretends to be. Connie is not entirely taken in by his attempts at casual conversation and intuits there is somethings strange happening. The fact that Friend's radio is playing the same station as Connie's is likely no coincidence; Connie, like many teens, identifies deeply with popular music, and Friend wants to ingratiate himself by pretending that he, too, is a teen who understands Connie's emotional state and desires.

Connie is unable to decide whether or not she likes the boy and asks him about what's painted on his **car**. He now very carefully gets out of the car and moves around it. He reads off the numbers 33,19,17, and then tells her, "This here is my name." Connie can see that "Arnold Friend" is written on the side of the car. Friend adds, "I'm gonna be your friend." Again, he asks Connie if she wants to go for a ride, and when she tells him no, he tries to entice her further.

Friend's name is, like the man himself, deceptive: he is no friend of Connie's. The numerical code is often interpreted to be in reference to two different biblical verses. The first, Judges (the 33rd book of the Bible if counting backwards from Revelation) 19:17 reads, "When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, 'Where are you going? Where did you come from?'" Meanwhile, Genesis 19:17 reads, in part, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed." Throughout the story Friend is suggested as an embodiment of evil, a notion bolstered by the inclusion of a religious allusion here that references the title of the story and could be read as a warning to Connie from God to leave, lest she be "consumed" by Friend; indeed, Friend will later sniff Connie as if she were food to "gobble up." The way Friend speaks to Connie also subtly negates her agency or free will, which he will do throughout the story.

As Friend stands beside the **car**, Connie observes his appearance; he is dressed the way all teenage boys dress (tight jeans, boots, and a white t-shirt that shows off his muscles), and his face is somehow familiar. Calling her by name, Friend tells her, "This is your day set aside for a ride with me." He begins laughing but stops so quickly that Connie knows it isn't genuine. She asks how he knows her name, and he won't give her a straight answer. Instead, he continues to pressure her to leave her **house** and come for a ride. When Connie again refuses, he takes off his sunglasses, and Connie notices that the skin around his eyes is very pale. Speaking in a "simple lilting voice" that reminds Connie of someone reciting a song, Friend begins telling Connie details about her own life.

Friend has made attempts to disguise not only his true appearance but his intentions from Connie by adopting the style of teenage boys so that he will seem familiar and unthreatening. His behaviour feels increasingly erratic, which suggests a loss of control and that his disguise is starting to slip, and that Connie will potentially glimpse his true nature. Connie's repeated attempt to ask him a direct question is met with further deflection, though he takes off his sunglasses, perhaps in frustration, and in doing so exposes more of his true self to Connie. Again, however, Friend manages to conceal the sinister reality of his intentions by speaking in a way that resembles "someone reciting a song," and so uses Connie's love of music to distract her from the content of his words.

Friend lists the names of Connie's friends and tells her that they've met before—she must just not remember him. He tells her again that he's her friend, and that he made his "sign" in the air (an X) when she walked by him at the drive-through. Studying his appearance, Connie observes that she recognizes most things about him, but that "all these things did not come together." She asks Friend how old he is; he stops smiling, and Connie suddenly realizes that he looks about thirty years old. He claims to be the same age as her—"Or maybe a couple years older. I'm eighteen"—but Connie remains doubtful. She notices his eyelashes are thick, "as if painted with a black tarlike material."

Friend continues to engage in manipulative behaviour, telling Connie nonsensical things as though they're obvious and normal. His disguise, however, remains unconvincing to Connie, so much so that she asks him straight out what age he is. This seems to break his concentration. Connie is now able to identify false aspects of his appearance, most importantly that he is a grown man and not a kid her own age, and that he has clearly made an effort to alter his appearance.

Friend abruptly begins speaking about the boy in the passenger seat, Ellie, who continues listening to the radio in a kind of daze until Friend pounds on the **car** to get his attention. When Ellie turns toward Connie, she is shocked to realize that he isn't a kid either—he has "the face of a forty-year-old baby." Connie begins to feel dizzy and tells the boys to leave, but Friend repeats that they are there to take her for a ride. He tells her, "Maybe you better step out here," and Connie notices that his voice is now different. After Connie's repeated refusals, Friend begins laughing, and Connie feels dizzy and fearful, thinking that he "had come from nowhere […] and belonged nowhere."

As if sensing that he has revealed too much, Friend now draws Connie's attention to Ellie. The realization that Ellie is also a grown man heightens Connie's panic. Friend continues his attempts to coax Connie out of the house, but she is further alarmed by his change in tone and laughter. Connie's observation that Friend "had come from and belonged nowhere" echoes the phrasing of the bible verse marked on his car, and in this way Oates again suggests that Friend as an incarnation of evil.

Connie claims that her father is coming home soon, but Friend says, "He ain't coming. He's at a barbecue," going on to describe the barbecue with uncanny detail. Connie begins to feel lightheaded, and she and Friend stare at one another through the screen door. He tells her that he is her lover and describes how he will have sex with her. Connie becomes increasingly upset and threatens to call the police. After he nearly falls over, Friend smiles at Connie, and now she observes that his "whole face was a mask."

Connie now fully intuits the danger of the situation. Friend's knowledge of the barbecue and her family suggests he has been watching her (or has some sort of supernatural power), and underscores how alone and vulnerable—rather than mature and independent—she really is. He now becomes more explicit in his intentions, telling Connie things she can't ignore or misinterpret. The sexual nature of his threats is doubly violent because it forces adult knowledge onto Connie; he seems determined to treat her like a woman when she is still a child. He nearly falls over, which suggests his disguise is becoming increasingly unstable. This is further underscored by Connie realizing his "whole face was a mask."

Friend is unperturbed by Connie's threats to call the police. Ellie asks if Friend wants him to pull out the phone, and Friend tells him to shut up. Friend tells Connie that he won't come into the **house** unless she touches the telephone, and that she "won't want that." When Connie tries to lock the door, he describes how easy it would be to break through it, and that if the house were on fire, she would run out into his arms. His words and the rhythmic way he says them remind Connie of a song from the year before. Connie now asks Friend what he wants, and he replies, "I want you." Again, she says her father is coming back and threatens to call the police, and again he is unperturbed, referring to his promise not to come into the house unless she touches the phone.

By ignoring Connie's threats of the police, Friend confirms that he is not subject to, or at least does not see himself as subject to, the same rules and laws as she is. Ellie, conversely, seems without his own agency or free will, only speaking to ask Friend if he can do his bidding, and it's plausible that, if Connie leaves the house and gets into the car, she will be under Friend's control in the same way Ellie is. Friend's words continue to be threatening, but again his lyrical way of speaking draws on Connie's love of music and confuses her so that she's unable to focus fully on the danger of her situation. Furthermore, the promise he wants her to uphold puts her in an impossible situation: although she is still inside her house and for the moment safe, she remains unable to seek the help that could bring this encounter to a close.

Friend repeats that that Connie should come out of the **house** herself, before asking "Don't you know who I am?" and telling her, "You come out and we'll drive away." Ellie again offers to pull out the phone, and Friend again tells him to shut up before speaking in a nonsensical rush of words. When he recovers himself, he makes a veiled threat toward Connie's family and further alludes to having sex with her, at which point Connie runs back inside the house.

Friend seems adamant that Connie leave the house of her own free will, opting to slowly manipulate her and emotionally terrorize her rather than bring her outside by physical force. The string of nonsensical language he utters seems to be further evidence that his disguise is wearing thin. This is underscored by the explicit threat to harm Connie's family which, combined with Friend's explicitly sexual implications, finally proves too much for Connie and causes her to act impulsively and run from the screen door back inside the house.

Connie picks up the telephone but can only hear a roaring sound and is unable to make a call, instead screaming and crying out for her mother. After a while, she regains her senses and can hear Friend telling her to put the phone back. She feels hollow and thinks of how she will never see her mother or sleep in her own bed again.

Connie is so shaken and traumatized she is unable to make a telephone call, and so it seems that Friend has already done sufficient emotional damage to Connie to stop her from acting in her own best interests. After losing herself in another trance, it is clear that she has undergone a real change: she is no longer resistant and complies with Friend's instructions, and seems to have accepted her fate.

Friend tells Connie, "The place where you came from ain't there anymore, and where you had in mind to go is cancelled out," and describes how he intends to have sex with her in a sunny field. He tells her to get up and come toward him, and she obeys. As he coaxes her out of the **house**, Connie watches herself in the third person. Once she is outside, Friend croons, "My sweet little blue-eyed girl," which has "nothing to do with her brown eyes," and Connie observes the vast, unfamiliar landscape that she is walking into.

Now that Connie has decided to leave the house, Friend compounds her estrangement from her family, home, and childhood by negating her past and future. This alienation is reiterated by Oates's description of Connie watching herself in the third person, and by Friend singing about a blue-eyed girl when Connie's eyes are brown. The vast, overwhelming landscape could be a reference to adulthood and/or death, both of which are unfamiliar to Connie's young mind and both of which she is being pulled towards nevertheless.

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