

God's lift is out of order

1. Write an essay (700-900 words) in which you analyse and interpret God's lift is out of order

What is it like to be left behind by someone close to you? Everywhere you will find people who have lost somebody near them – it is only natural. But what makes a person want to loose their own life? Life is not always easy to be a part of and some choose to leave by committing suicide without thinking about those who are close to them. Perhaps suicide seems the only way to solve someone's problems, but it is a selfish act and it is the people left behind who are suffering. In the short story by Karen McCarthy "God's lift is out of order" we read about these matters.

The first-person narrator of the story is a girl, a black girl from Jamaica who lives in England. She has a boyfriend, Ed, who she is in love with, but even though he is mentioned in the story, we do not hear much about him. The story centres around a whole other man named Aaron, who is a friend of the female narrator. Her story begins with a dream. It is a dream about this Aaron, who we later hear about in reference to some things the two of them have done together. After having had this dream she cannot stop thinking about Aaron and about two weeks after on Christmas Eve the narrator is getting ready for a big birthday party. This is when she accidentally finds a Valentine's day card from Aaron, but does not have the time to read it. Without further notice she does not realise that Aaron probably was thinking of her as more than just a close friend – he could be in love with her, but does not want to interfere with what she has with Ed, so he keeps his feelings to himself. Later arriving at the party she meets Kevin, who asks her if she has heard what happened to Aaron. Kevin, not realising that the narrator does not know anything, tells her that Aaron has committed suicide. The girl is left in shock and cannot move.

Throughout the story we hear about Aaron and the girl. A certain episode at a hospital is worth mentioning. Here they often go and have a cup of hot chocolate before going back home, but at this time the elevators are not working. Above them a sign reads "Goods lift is out of order" which the main character mistakenly reads as "God's lift is out of order". This situation in reference to Aaron's suicide gives the title of the story. The fact that God's lift is out of order agrees with Aaron's early death. He dies too young because of some kind of 'mix-up' in God's order.

In the end of the story the main character goes to the party earlier mentioned, where she hears what has happened to Aaron. She seems to be feeling guilty, especially because of what happened the last time she talked to him and said:

“mum should never have given you this number and don’t call he re again” (p. 3, l. 120)

She now knows exactly why things ended as they did. And the truth is that she actually did not mean the things she said, she really missed him. Her reaction towards these information’s shows that she appreciated the friendship of Aaron’s, but also that she might have had a feeling that Aaron wanted more than just friendship with her and therefore tried to keep a distance. On the one hand because of her relationship with Ed, but on the other hand she also knows that Aaron has gone too far with his drug abuse.

The main themes in this story are premonition and the feeling of regret. The dream we hear about in the beginning of the story is set as a warning to the main character and afterwards she keeps thinking about Aaron. She sees him fall to his death whilst screaming out her name and she wakes up calling out his. But as any other she only sees it as a nightmare and not as a bad omen. You can think of the sign “God’s lift is out of order” as a hint to. As mentioned before it represents the wrongness of Aaron’s death – he dies too young. And had the narrator only read the Valentine’s card from Aaron, when she received it, she might have been able to prevent him from killing himself. Talking to Aaron on the phone at the incident described earlier makes her feel bad, but not nearly as much as she does after his death. The things she told him were the last words he heard from her. There is no worse feeling of regret than letting someone die without letting them know how you really feel about them. The fact that she let Aaron die thinking that she disliked him and never wanted to talk to him again is most likely unbearable and she regrets not having told him how much she would like to have kept him in her life.

“Not Waving but Drowning” is a poem written by Steve Smith about a man who is drowning while crying out for help. It is a very dark poem and it can stand as an example for Aaron’s situation. Slowly the drugs are killing him and the main character does not hear his cry for help. He feels as if he is being ignored by his best friend and the woman he is in love with, but she does not know that he is depressed and has not recognised his cry for help:

“I was much further out than you thought” (l. 3)

After the death of Aaron the main character feels a great deal of guilt and sadness which the photo by Mick E. Westerlund expresses well. She is walking alone in dark surroundings showing a lot of sadness and pressure. The way she is walking and the feeling of guilt the main character has adds up to this girl who is walking through a gate as if ending a chapter in her life. The loss of Aaron is very hurtful and even though it is not her fault she comes to blame his death on herself.

Whatever reason is given for committing suicide it cannot be justified. There are always people who get hurt and not only the one doing it. The people left behind are the ones hit the worst. However, these people do not realise that there is a better way out, that whatever problem one might have they can be solved differently if only trying hard enough.

2. Give a brief account (200-300 words) of the devices used in Edward Munch's painting *The Scream* and compare it to Mick Westerlund's photo.

The Norwegian artist Edward Munch painted the world known painting "The Scream" in 1893. It is an expressionistic oil painting that centres around a screaming person. Using dramatic lines in the background draws attention further to the screaming person who is in direct focus this way. Also that the point of view is almost in human perspective makes a stronger impression. The use of warm colours in the sky in contrast with darker bluish colours gives a dramatic effect. Comparing the painting to the photo by Mick E. Westerlund is difficult because of the different devices used in these two images. "The Scream" by Edward Munch is a painting while Mick E. Westerlund's is a photograph. To create the effect as desired he uses only black and white colours. So the only real comparison between the two images is the perspective of a human point of view and that the person in both pictures wear dark, if not black, clothes. In "The Scream" it symbolizes the chaos and frustration the person seems to be feeling and in the photo it relates to somewhere of an ending for the girl walking through the gate.