



Short Stories and Elements of a Plot: *Thus I Refute Beelzy*, by John Collier

Exposition:

- Characters
 - Simon Carter (Small Simon)
 - Simon Carter (Big Simon)
 - Mrs. Carter
 - Betty
 - Mr. Beelzy
- Setting
 - A decaying, yet beautiful, summer house surrounded by garden around dinner-time
- Background Information
 - Small Simon spends his days playing alone outside in the garden
 - He likes imaginative games and talks of a character called “Mr. Beelzy”
 - Big Simon is a dentist
 - Small Simon is six years old

Rising Action:

- Conflict
 - Small Simon “imagines” a figure called Mr. Beelzy whom he plays with every afternoon in the garden. His father, Big Simon, confronts him about his games and Mr. Beelzy. Small Simon claims that Mr. Beelzy is real, but Big Simon is convinced that he is not. Big Simon must find a way to prove to Small Simon that he is not real. *Or is he...?*
 - The conflict is external.

Climax:

- The climax of the story occurs when Big Simon leads Small Simon up the stairs for a beating for thinking such things, and then there is a large crash, and Betty and Mrs. Carter run up to find the remains of Big Simon. Prior to this, Big Simon asked Small Simon, “*What is the pretend?*”, and Small Simon answered, “*Big Simon and Small Simon.*” Big Simon was outraged by this and ordered his son upstairs for a beating to set him straight, but Small Simon claimed that if Big Simon attempted to hurt him Mr. Beelzy would come in the form of a lion with wings and eat him up. This proved to be somehow true as all that was left of Big Simon was a shoe with a man’s foot still in it, like “*...that last morsel of a mouse which sometimes falls unnoticed from the side of the jaws of a cat.*”

Falling Action:

- The outcome of the confrontation scene was that Big Simon died. Just as he promised, Mr. Beelzy ate up the one who was trying to hurt Small Simon. With the help of an “imaginary” ally, Small Simon defeated his enemy, his own father, Big Simon.
- All of the characters of the story are impacted by the confrontation scene. Small Simon finally got his revenge on Big Simon by having his friend Mr. Beelzy eat him. Big Simon was killed, thus ending his life in a split second for trying to defy the imagination of his son. Mrs. Carter has now become a widow with a severely troubled son, and Betty has just witnessed an impossible act of dark magic. And of course, Mr. Beelzy will rest with a full stomach and an easy mind knowing he has protected his precious Small Simon.



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- A giant new problem has developed within the Carter family. First of all, they must deal with the fact that they have lost their father. Secondly, Small Simon could perhaps be certifiably crazy. Third, they must deal with the issue of Mr. Beelzy.

Resolution:

- The story ends as Mrs. Carter and Betty find the remains of Big Simon on the landing of the stairs, seeming as if eaten by a lion.
- The conflict was resolved as Mr. Beelzy killed Big Simon. Small Simon lived in fear of his father, always crushing his creative spirits. Now once it had gotten to the point of physical abuse, Mr. Beelzy had to step in and end the life of the man who was hurting Small Simon.
- Small Simon's life is now changed forever. He no longer has a father, which he is pretty happy about, and now he must deal with everyone knowing about Mr. Beelzy and how dangerous he could be. Small Simon could suffer some major consequences from this event.
- Mrs. Carter's life is also changed in the story. She now has no husband to support her family and has a son who imagines dangerous, human-eating monsters who somehow come to life. She will have a very difficult time dealing with this crazy situation.

Reference: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JdUn92RvfGVisorRdGBPFEVcW1GuRKI2uAiQni2A9cl/edit>

Thus I Refute Beelzy by John Collier (May 1901-April 1980)

Questions and thoughts

When is this story written? This fiction piece was first published in 1951 Britain.

What is the genre? The style of writing is fantasy and perhaps absurd tragedy.

What type of review is Collier given? British critic David Langford describes Collier as poetic and witty and praises Collier's "smiling misanthropy". What does this mean? _____

What kind of shock might this have created in post war Britain? Does this compare to *shock media* - which is purposeful and very deliberate? _____

Are the themes "father-son time" and "imaginary friends", or "consequences of denial" and the "evil within"?

Why might novelist Neil Gaiman and Roald Dahl use this story as inspiration? _____

What is the significance of the name Mr Beelzy? _____

