



# Ten With a Flag

Psychological Lens Character Analysis

Short Story by: Joseph Paul Haines

# NOVEL SUMMARY

- A pregnant woman and her husband Johnnie live in a dystopian future where the government controls everything, and it's possible to predict a fetus' potential in the future. Every citizen is designated a rating out of ten depending on their worth to the Nation.
- The unborn child of this couple is rated a ten with a flag. If a fetus is flagged, it means the parents would have to make a sacrifice, and it gives the parents the option to choose to abort it.
- The couple are awarded with privileges thanks to their child's high rating, but Johnnie cannot let go of the sacrifice they will have to make, fearing for his wife's safety. He decides to abort the baby.

# NOVEL SUMMARY

- Once the decision is made to abort the highly rated baby, Johnnie is arrested as a traitor to the State and demoted to the lowest rank. It is revealed that losing him was the sacrifice the woman had to make. The government does not grant each citizen the right to bodily autonomy, and this woman is forced to carry out her pregnancy and live the way 'Central' wishes her to.
- The conflict in this short story is person vs. society/government. The conflict is between the married couple who want to be able to choose the fate of the baby that is best for them, but the government takes control, forcing the fetus to develop in order to become useful to them in the future. It explores themes of dystopia, reproductive rights, and total governmental control of a state.

# CHARACTER SUMMARY

- In love with his wife, very protective of her
- Hard-working, prideful of his work ethic
- Unintimidated by the government, unafraid to voice his opinions and concerns
- Naïve to the power, control, and threat of the government
- Persistent in his concerns, follows his gut

Johnnie



# CHARACTER'S WORDS

**"Excuse me?' Johnnie leaned forward in his seat. I could see his cheeks turning red. 'I work harder than [anyone]'" (Haines 27).**

**"Well, it doesn't [make me forget about the flag]. It certainly didn't keep Central from issuing the flag. Why would they have issued a flag unless there was some concern?" (Haines 26).**

**"He glanced in my direction and did a double-take. 'You look beautiful...I *do* so very love you, you know'" (Haines 28).**

**"And it could mean you're in danger. How are we supposed to know? Who's to say the child actually needs us to be a ten?.... [Abortion] isn't treasonous. The State wouldn't have given us the flag otherwise. It's our right" (Haines 29).**

# CHARACTER'S ACTIONS

"I squeezed his hand before he could [say something]. The last thing we needed was to anger a government official, particularly one as high up as Mr. White seemed to be. It was best to remain compliant....But of course, Johnnie couldn't keep his mouth shut. 'I've just one question, though. The flag? How can there be a flag with a rating of ten?'" (Haines 25).

"Since we'd come home from Human Services, [Johnnie had] spent all his free time in front of the computer. He wouldn't even discuss the test results with me." (Haines 28).

"He kissed my temple, then my cheek, then my ear. His warm breath caught in his throat. He pulled away, turned to Dr. Jones and said, 'We'll take the option.'" (Haines 30).

# STATEMENTS BY OTHER CHARACTERS

Mr. White

"You're a six now, correct?" Johnnie nodded. "Did you know that your boss had put in for a rate reduction?... He recommended you be downgraded to a five so that you can actually accomplish forty hours worth of work in sixty hours time" (Haines 27).

--"What's going to happen to Johnnie?"

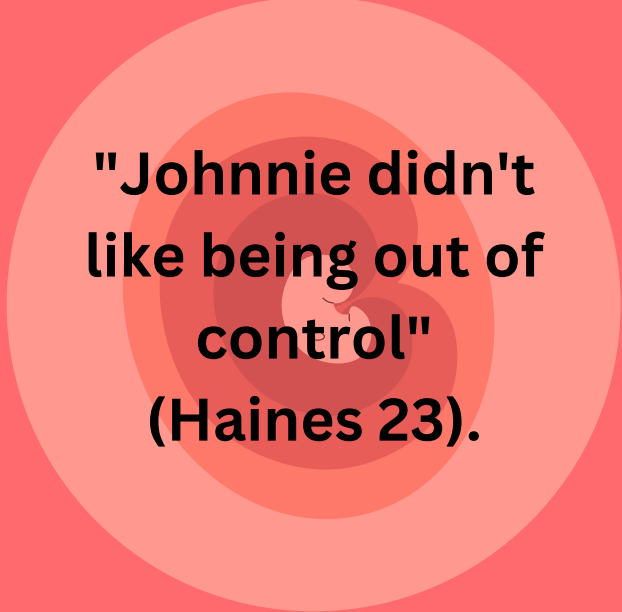
--"He'll be reduced to a one or two, of course. Put to manual labor. If he keeps himself clean, he could even work back up to a four or five" (Haines 31).

Mr. White

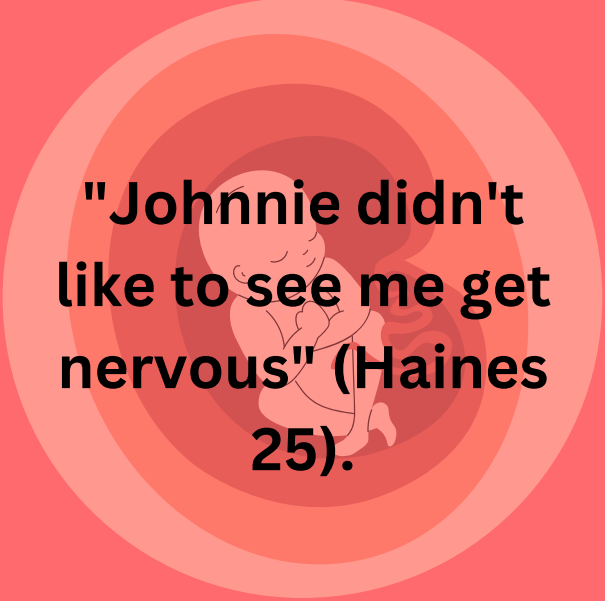


# DIRECT STATEMENT BY NARRATOR

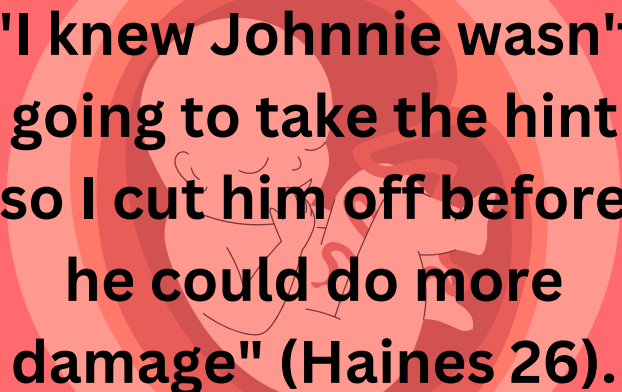
"Johnnie didn't like being out of control" (Haines 23).



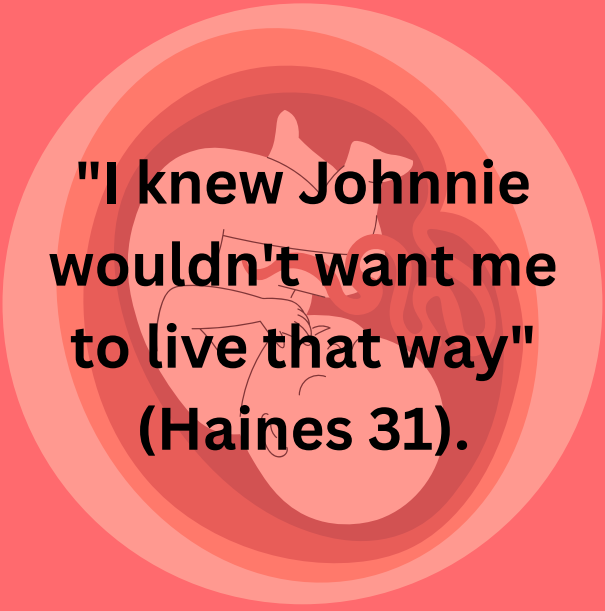
"Johnnie didn't like to see me get nervous" (Haines 25).



"I knew Johnnie wasn't going to take the hint so I cut him off before he could do more damage" (Haines 26).



"I knew Johnnie wouldn't want me to live that way" (Haines 31).





# WHAT ARE THE...?

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**ID**



**EGO**



**SUPEREGO**





**id**



- **The first theorized aspect of the human psyche**
- **Primitive, irrational, instinctive**
- **Operates on the pleasure principle**
- **Present since birth**
- **Consists of biological components of personality (sex, joy, anger, fight or flight)**



# EGO



- **The second theorized aspect of the human psyche**
- **Decision-maker, reasonable, mediator**
- **Operates on the reality principle**
- **Compromises between id's selfish demands and superego's idealistic rules**



# SUPEREGO



- **The third theorized aspect of the human psyche**
- **Controlling, moralistic, virtuous**
- **Operates on the conscience and ideal self systems**
- **Developed around ages 3 to 5**
- **Represents the morals of society/one's parents**

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HOW ARE THE  
ID, EGO, AND SUPEREGO  
PRESENT IN THIS  
SHORT STORY?

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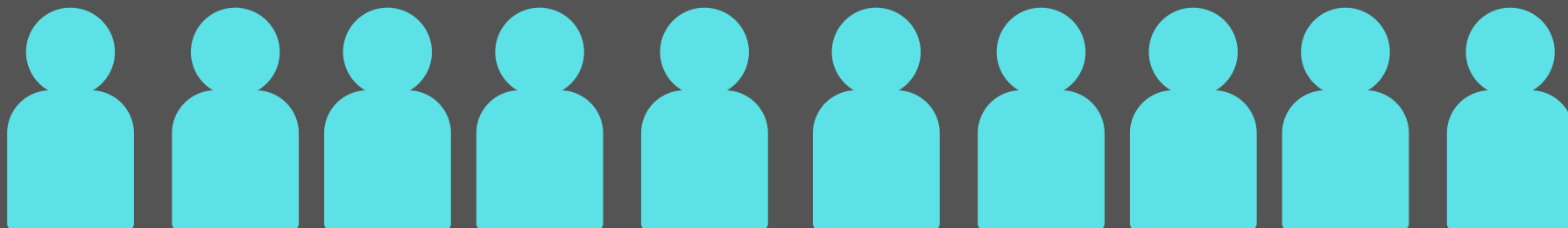
# SUPEREGO EVIDENCE

Throughout the story it is shown that this dystopian society is strict and like a police-state. Human Resources lets Johnnie know that their child would be an asset to their nation, and hints that it would not be a good decision to abort it.

His superego is telling him to disregard the flag and do what is right for their nation: to give birth and educate a 10-rated child.

# SUPEREGO QUOTE

**"Why would you [terminate the pregnancy], sir? Your child is a ten. He or she will be a great credit to the nation and improve life for all of the citizenry. What citizen would even consider that?" (Haines 25-26).**



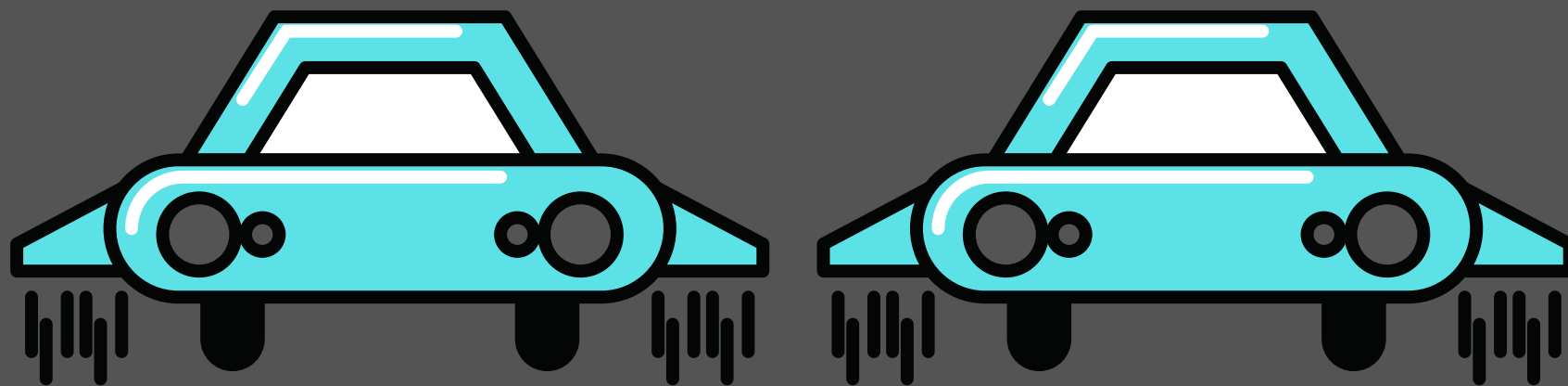


# 1D EVIDENCE

When meeting Mr. White, Johnnie cannot stop worrying and asking questions about the flag. Even after the couple was given a promotion to be eights, he could not leave the computer, researching what flags mean. His id is telling him that there is something wrong with the situation, his primal instinct to protect his wife and his fear of the flag meaning something terrible weighs on his mind.

# 10 QUOTE

"I grabbed his wrist and clamped down. He whipped his head around to look at me, and that's when I finally saw it: He was terrified."  
(Haines 29).



# EGO EVIDENCE

Johnnie's ego tried to mediate between his superego and society's ideological values of raising a 10 baby, and his id and gut feeling's hesitance to the consequences the couple would have to face of raising a flagged baby. In the end, Johnnie's ego makes the decision to terminate the pregnancy.

# EGO QUOTE



--"My eyes filled with tears. 'But he's going to be a ten. He's going to be a perfect little boy.'  
--'Yes, he will,' Johnnie replied... 'But perfect for who?'" (Haines 29).

"'I think we should use the flag,' he said."  
(Haines 31).



# The End

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