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The Irony of Marriage

A shaded shadow falls over the house. No matter where you look a sorrow dark expression is in everyone's faces. A loud silence seems to quiet the loudest murmur, and no one wants to break. When you lose a loved one the daily routine comes to an abrupt halt, everything stops; your heart, your life, and even your soul becomes an aching void. You are filled with despair while just staring at nothing, pure emptiness, and a blank daydream with no end. In almost all cases, a wife would react with grief and deep sorrow at the news of her husband's death. But in Chopin's "*The Story of an Hour*," the author brings up a different case scenario where a wife celebrates the death of a husband. The death of the husband opens a new window of freedom for the wife to bring up a question of whether marriage really offers what many people expect. From the author's perspective, marriage is a complex institution that does not guarantee to meet the expectations many people have because it comes along with challenges that may make people feel restricted and reconsider being alone. An analysis of the themes of freedom, marriage as an institution, female self-discovery and identity, and irony extracted from the story reveals Chopin's perspective of marriage and its challenges.

The death of Mr. Mallard has given his wife a freedom and a new lease on life. Louise experiences freedom of her life while being alone in her room. The news of her "husband's death" has given her new freedom of mind, which overcomes her grief, and she is now enjoying new democracy at her house. She keeps whispering to herself, "free, free, free!" "free!" "Body

and soul,” which is an indication that the death of Brently has brought her the freedom of mind and body, which she feels happy about (Chopin 3). Louise’s happiness after the death of her husband is symbolic, rewinding the memories of readers back to the question of whether marriage really offers the freedom and fulfilment many people hope for. Chopin answers this question through the unexpected reaction of Mrs. Mallard after the death of her husband. Mrs. Mallard’s discovery of freedom after the death of her husband resonates with cases of many women in marriage. They only get the privilege of enjoying fulltime freedom after the death of their husbands. Chopin uses Mrs. Mallard to warn people to be careful in the marriage because it may lead to permanent denial of freedom.

Chopin presents the institution of marriage as ironical because it does not provide the benefits couples hope for. Chopin's description of the reaction of Mrs. Mallard after receiving the news about the death of her husband reveals that she does not enjoy being in a marriage. Louise is sick and confined in a room but feels mentally restricted by the presence of her husband (Chopin 1). She loves him but dreads for an unrestricted life. Here, Chopin brings dilemma of love versus freedom that comes with many marriages. Sometimes, women choose to stay under the restrictions of their husband purely because of love. However, there comes a time when one has to choose between love and freedom. Mrs. Mallard is in this situation and she chooses to let go her husband for the sake of freedom. This is the dilemma many couples undergo. However, with time, one gets tired and freedom becomes of more importance than love. In this case, Chopin highlights the complexity of the institution of marriage that at times puts people in a dilemma of choosing between love and personal goals.

Marriage restrictions can sometimes send women in a self-discovery and identify process where they get to understand their true worth and what they want in their lives. Chopin presents

this in a somewhat unreasonable manner through Mrs. Mallard. She is suffering from a heart disease that makes her prone to succumbing to death under stress, yet she chooses to mourn her husband alone in a private room where she is vulnerable (Chopin 1). However, Louise takes the private time alone to reflect on her marriage life, and her resolutions are clear, she wants to be free. Chopin presents Mr. Mallard as the obstacle to her freedom, which is the case for many wives around the world. Generally, the removal of obstacles opens up the mind of the affected to new opportunities and it is through self-realization that individuals can decide on what they want in their lives. Mrs. Mallard has reached this point and she in a process of self-identity and realization that leads her to a new discovery. She wants to be a free woman! The freedom of mind brought by the death of her husband makes Louise discover new things she could not when the husband was alive. Here, Chopin brings the benefit of self-identity and discovery, which makes the oppressed scrutinize their lives and discover what they want in marriage.

The story concludes with her husband returning home with no clue that an accident even occurred, and Louise Mallard dying when she sees him. "When the doctors came, they said that she had died of heart disease- of joy that kills" (Chopin 3), but in the great irony of the story, something is revealed. Louise experienced a shock, not out of the joy of seeing her husband alive, but rather out of the distress of losing her newfound freedom. The removal of the intense joy brought by her newfound freedom is actually what led to her death.

In conclusion, this story teaches that marriage is a complex institution that people entering into should be careful about not to fall into a trap of a victim of circumstances because marriage is the happiness and freedom people presume.

Work Cited

Chopin, Kate. *The story of an hour*. Joe Books Ltd, 2018.

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