

the man who hugged women essay sample

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In today's society there is a mold that everyone tries to fit into. You have to grow up, leave your childhood behind, get an education, get married and start your own family, without ever looking back. When following this course, the goal is not happiness; the goal is to live "the good life". Most people are afraid to accept and admit that they are not necessarily happy, as much as they are content with their way of living. In the short story *The Man Who Hugged Women* by Mischa Hiller, the main character is a woman called Freya, and at first it seems that she is quite satisfied with her way of living. Freya has a good friend called Pearl. Despite these women being very close, they are nothing alike. Where Freya is sort of cynical, logical and realistic, Pearl is more of a dreamer, very naïve and spontaneous. These differences become obvious when Pearl tells Freya about her new discovery. Pearl has heard about a man who helps women, sort of a counsellor, but by hugging them instead of guiding them. Freya thinks "it's crazy, that's what it is", but Pearl has already booked a session.

Pearl convinces Freya to come along for support, but when they finally get there, Pearl gets cold feet and runs away. Freya stays behind to try to find somebody, to tell that Pearl does not want her session. When *The Man Who Hugs Women* appears in the door, Freya cannot get herself to tell him that she is not Pearl, and she ends up going to Pearl's session. Throughout the story, one learns a lot about both of the women. Since the story is narrated by a 3rd person narrator, who is bound to Freya, all of Freya's thoughts are known by the reader. Because of this the readers only get to know Pearl as Freya sees her; a spontaneous, dreamy, but also determined woman.

Despite Freya's cynicism and her tendency to rationalize everything, she admires Pearl's spontaneity, and wishes to be more like her.

Pearl is able to do something Freya is not; admitting that she is not fully happy with her husband, and taking matters into own hands by visiting The Man Who Hugs Women. These two women share a special bond. This bond comes from a time when Pearl was there for Freya, when no one else was. It is never directly said what it was that Pearl helped Freya through, but it is said that “ Pearl had come with her once, for something a lot more traumatic the being held by a man. Something caused by a man and fixed, in this case, by a man”. The fact that Freya does not tell her husband, and that this incident was caused by a man, can lead the reader to believe that she might be referring to an abortion. This traumatic incident is what really connects the two women, since Freya feels as if she owes Pearl something and therefore goes with Pearl to see The Man Who Hugs Women.

One of the first things the readers learn about The Man Who Hugs Women is that he wears woollen jumpers. Despite Freya trying to mock this fact by saying “ Even in the summer?” she associates the woollen jumpers with her own father. When thinking of her father she thinks back to when she was a child. She also finds a picture of her father from when she was a teenager. In the picture the father is wearing a woollen jumper, and Freya tries to recall how her father would smell while wearing it. The fact that everything that is told about her father, are memories from her childhood can lead one to believe that something might have happened to her father. This could also explain why at the end when she finally meets The Man Who Hugs Women

she "...looked back at him, his woollen jumper... She turned and stepped towards the glow". It is noticeable that she looks at the jumper before following the man, and this could be because she associates it with the comfort of her father. Opposed to The Man Who Hugs Women is Freya's husband, Mukesh.

Mukesh is a psychiatrist, and does everything the right way; meaning it has to be done his way. Mukesh does everything by the book, he buys Freya flowers, gives hugs and compliments her, but the problem is it feels like artificial affection to Freya. Mukesh strictly controls the family. He forces their daughter to go to University, and when Freya insinuates that their daughter might be better off doing something else, Mukesh snaps and the topic is not discussed after that. Despite that Mukesh and Freya share some character traits, cynicism and realism, Freya is drawn to the spontaneous whereas Mukesh sticks to what he knows. Throughout the story one learns that Freya is not happy in her marriage and she craves affection.

At the end, when she follows The Man Who Hugs Women, she has decided to do something about it. Here the roles sort of shift between Freya and Pearl. Pearl is afraid to make the changes, and Freya is spontaneous and jumps into it and tries changing her life for the better. The short story shows how important affection is in a healthy relationship, and how a lot of people long for affection. In addition to this the story also focuses on the importance of changing your own life if you are unhappy, you cannot sit and wait for life to change around you. It is important to do what makes yourself happy, and not just everyone around you. Furthermore there is an aspect of friendship in

this text; supporting your friends when they choose to pursue their own happiness.