

'low visibility' - essay

Sociology, Violence



' Low Visibility' - Essay Many women experience violence in their relationships. Their fear keeps them from escaping, but fortunately, some women find a way out. Margaret Murphy's short story " Low Visibility" gives us a realistic insight of how people can remold other people negatively, and yet even though they have reached the very bottom, hope can still bring them back their spirits and rights. Laura, who she is called, is married to her abusive husband John who is being violent. He likes to beat her up and probably also rape her from time to time, which the text gives expression for many times; - ' She can feel the crackle of tension like an electrical charge in the air. He slaps her with the back of his hand, his knuckles bruising her cheekbone. " Sit still, you twitchy cow" He says. This is his foreplay, his substitute for romance' (P. 10, L. 80-87) This is also an example of the violence John is causing Laura, but it hasn't always been like this, Laura hasn't always been unhappy; ' once she was a girl who could set a room to laughter' (P. 8, L. 19) She used to have a spirit, to be lively and excited, but the violence in the relationship has changed her dramatically. John has squeezed out the joy of her, until there was none left. John have made her insubstantial, and caused her to be an afraid, trembly woman. - ' She hasn't spoken a word of command in four years' (P. 10, L. 99-100) That John is a big man also symbolizes that people respect him, so he has never been oppressed, and it is doubtful if he really knows how it feels and what it means. During the violent relationship between Laura and John there's another important event taking place. A riot breaks loose in the town and their following it on the TV. Young people of groups in thirty or forty have gathered and some of them are armed or wearing masks. They are causing

as much damage as they can do, their looting shops, burning cars, smashing windows, throwing stones and stealing. - ' A flash of something white and orange shoots high into the night, over the burning car, spiraling as it falls, a looping script of flame and smoke. The bottle smashes at the feet of the police cordon and fire leaps, a splash of heat, a puddle of flame, curling around the edges of the shields, prying at the chinks in their defences. They shuffle back a few steps and the crowd roars in triumph.' (P. 8, L. 9-13) 'What are they protesting about?' John demands. 'Their own shitty lives?' (P. 8, L. 14) the riots are merely a protest like Laura's, just in a bigger scale. Below in a shop they can hear the looters and John goes downstairs to fight them. ' Don't' Laura says. The sound of her own voice startles her and John stares in her direction. He goes down anyways so he can strangle their protest like he has strangled her spirit. That didn't happen for John; instead he got beaten up and felled to the ground. In the meantime Laura has found a ' tiger eye stone' in her pocket, which was a gift from a friend. The friend once told her that it symbolized courage and that ' The tiger eye, creates harmony out of chaos'. (L. 109) Laura comes out and sees him lying on the street; he's reaching out his hand because he wants her to help him. She picks up a brick and considers killing him with it, but standing with the tiger eye in the other hand, and looking at her husband to see how weak he suddenly seems, she realizes that a person has the ability to change. She is revived; - ' She feels herself returning — the particles of herself that her husband caused to flee are returning into her' (L. 161) This night have reconstituted her, ' order out of chaos she says' and chooses the tiger eye and turns around and walk away. Anger will come later. The title: Low Visibility is a play on words to

describe how John could never fit in with Laura and her friends and be careless and outgoing, he could never be invisible. Everywhere they went people always noticed him, while Laura always was invisible and always felt like it. In the end of the story, out on the street Laura gets visible for a moment, when she is the strong one and John is the weak. When a looter passes them out on the street he says something to Laura, and Laura marvels ' that he sees her — sees her and not John'. When she walks away in the end, she walks away to be invisible again, to join the invisible people (L. 173) (...rejoin the invisible...). The fact that we only hear Laura's name once, in the last sentence of the story, support the symbolist of the invisibly person she is through the whole story.