

The story of an hour



The Story of An Hour by Kate Chopin The tone and imagery of paragraph five is very exciting, yet depressing. The story's omniscient narrator sets it in the gloomiest and most melancholy terms. A young frail woman with a weak heart hears of the death of her husband and it appears that she may grieve herself to death because of her heart condition and her self-imposed isolation. She experiences grief: “ She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair ... motionless ... except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her...” Then an epiphany: “ But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.” The newly bereaved widow goes from deep despair to unspeakable joy while looking out a window. The writer/narrator does not appear to view marriage favorably, but as a self-limiting trap. Lives of “ quiet desperation” (Henry David Thoreau) is also for women. Consider the following: The monstrous joy ...She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death... But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely ... And yet she had loved him-- sometimes. Often she had not. She cared for her husband, she missed him, but “ Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.” Mrs. Mallard looks forward to the future until a key turns in the lock, bringing about her own fatal heart attack. The irony is apparent. Did she die of shock at seeing the living apparition, or because of instant sadness of knowing he was still alive?