

# Cathedral

Literature



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The Cathedral Stands for the Marriage between the Husband and the Wife

The short story "Cathedral" written by Raymond Carver first appeared in the "Atlantic Monthly" in March, 1981. The story tells about a marriage couple from Seattle and their complicated relationship. The research paper will discuss the status of marriage in the short story through the analysis of the marriage relationship, and the role of husband and wife in it.

Very often marriage life does not meet expectations of the wife and the husband and it seems that it is impossible to live any longer. In this very situation both of them need a helping hand but the question is "Do they often strong enough to understand it or continue to live in the world full of ignorance"

The story depicts complicated relationship between the husband and the wife caused by psychological problems of the husband. The main problem is that the narrator of the story drinks too much and unable to communicate with his wife adequately. Carver depicts that alcoholism of the husband ruins warm and friendly family relations and results in isolation of both spouses. Describing this situation the author uncovers the reality of life stated that marriage cannot be happy without mutual communication and understanding. The psychological problems caused by alcoholism are isolation and inability to understand others (the blind man), and even feel sympathy to a dear person (his wife). For instance, Carver depicts that when the wife has tried to commit suicide her husband could not say more than: "But instead of dying, she got sick. She threw up" (Carver 2). This remark shows his emotional paralysis and apathy towards his wife. It is evident that there is no close connection between them, as the marriage couples should have, and this very distance feels through the whole story.

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The theme of loneliness and isolation in the "Cathedral" explained by the status of the marriage people coming from different backgrounds. The husband prefers to distance himself from his wife story, which shows that he doesn't care about her at all. These instances suggest that the couple don't love each other enough, leading the reader to think that the marriage is unhappy, because of loneliness the wife has tried to commit suicide seeing no way out.

The "Cathedral" stands that the marriage union, which exists without love, is near to ruin. It should be noted that the husband pays a particular attention to his wife, but the readers feel that it is not love. Cravens depicts the situation typical for many families where the duty of the wives is to cook and please their husband, but the husbands do nothing to help their spouses, except get dead drunk. On the other hand it is possible to say that this situation is caused by absence of love between the spouses, where both of them are trying to find a relief in isolation and drinking, or suicide. For instance, when the wife is cooking her husband says that: "if you love me," she said, "you can do this for me. If you don't love me, OK!" (Carver 2). It is evident that the wife is unsure whether her husband loves her or not. It is depicted that the wife and the husband live in different world frames.

Taking into account the title of the story it is possible to draw a parallel between the "Cathedral" and marriage. Cathedral is a symbol of marriage consecrated by the church, which should be happy and full of love and understanding, but in contrast to this fact, Cravens potrays unhappy one which is far from an ideal union between a man and a woman. The interesting fact is that the husband cannot explain what is a "Cathedral" to a blind man, which could be interpreted in the way that he does not know what

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is the happy marriage and true love. In the "Cathedral," a self-insulated figure of husband who is far from universal virtues is dramatic, and caused pain to everyone near him.

To conclude, the wife and husband prefer to escape from life troubles rather than solve them. They do not ask for help and do not want to pay attention to the feelings of each other. Nobody listens to them, maybe they stopped trying to talk about their problems but then it got too much. The "Cathedral" shows that absence of love results in self-absorption, and attempts to escape from life troubles, which cannot solve the problems either.

#### References

1. Carver, Raymond. Cathedral. New York: Random House, 1984.