

Plow man

[Art & Culture](#), [Comedy](#)



The short story "Plow Man" (2004), written by Jessica Grant, is included in the collection "Making Light of Tragedy". This collection's title is significant for Grant's story because the narrator gravitates to comedy to deal with both the guilt and sadness he is feeling. This essay will take a deeper look into the situations where comedy is used as a coping mechanism to deal with the narrator's guilty conscience including how he deals with the conflict of the wind and snow, the projection of his negative attitude onto others and his inability to let go of the material things still tying him to Jenny.

The narrator uses comedy as a coping mechanism to help alleviate the guilt felt since losing his wife. Throughout "Plow Man" the narrator is struggling to ward away guilty feelings since his wife, Jenny, has passed. His remorse is conveyed in a humoristic manner, particularly when proceeding to take on the elements. The narrator amusingly views the winter setting as a villainous system, one that he feels is overpowering and out of his control.

To relieve his guilt, the narrator plays a victim to the winter storm, instead of taking control and shovelling his driveway. The reader is able to view the comedic flair of the narrator, as he challenges the storm, by stating, "It aims for your chest. It picks a fight. If I'm inside, it unleashes its fury on the driveway...Come out here... No. Fuck you" (95). The reader's overview of the situation, knowing a blizzard does not consciously take out frustrations on people, creates the entertaining conflict.

However, by forfeiting control of the situation, the narrator is able to reduce the guilt that he feels for not shovelling. Assisting in criminal behavior by slashing tires is another representation how the narrator relieves his guilt in a comedic way. He views the plow men as outlaws that are continuously

burying him in snow, inhibiting his ability to get to his wife. The narrator describes the plows as “ yellow-jawed monsters” (99), which is an absurd concept, as the lifeless plows are simply driven by men who are doing their jobs.

The narrator is able to alleviate guilt associated with not being able to get to his wife by supporting the destruction of the vehicle that he foolishly believes is burying him in snow on purpose. The cell phone bill resembles the narrator’s final physical tie to Jenny. As one of her last requests, Jenny asked that he promised to keep her cell phone with her in case there’s a chance she needed to contact him. The narrator realizes that this request is unreasonable; however, he feels obligated to respect the request of his deceased wife. In a conversation between a Sprint representative and the narrator, he recognizes the hilarity of the situation “ I’d like to leave it open indefinitely. Which started me laughing again” (96). The narrator makes the decision to maintain his wife’s wishes, knowing that he will constantly be tormented by the monthly phone bill. However, he would rather sacrifice his own well-being, than face the guilt that he would experience if he was to terminate his wife’s cellphone account.

In conclusion, throughout the “ Plow Man” written by Jessica Grant, comedy is used to relieve the narrator’s guilt through the difficult conditions he is facing. The reader witnesses an attempt to alleviate guilt using humor in situations that include, the snow storm, slashing the tires of the plow men and the narrator’s inability to cancel Jenny’s cell phone in order to fulfill his promise to her. Works Cited Grant, Jessica. “ Plow Man. ” Making Light of Tragedy. Erin, ON: The Porcupine’s Quill, 2004.