

Escape by w.s. maugham



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ESCAPE” By William Somerset Maugham The text under interpretation is “Escape” by William Somerset Maugham. W. S. Maugham was a well-known English playwright, novelist and short story writer. He was the son of a British diplomat. He was educated at King`s school in Canterbury, studied painting in Paris, went to Heidelberg University in Germany and studied to be a doctor at St. Thomas Hospital in England. So, he put his hand in different activities and that`s why he is versatile and experienced person. S.

Maugham was critical of the morals, the narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy of bourgeois society. Such novels as “Of Human Bondage”, “The Moon and the Sixpence”, “The Theatre” and others came under his pen. He was also the master of the short story. Among them are: “Colonel`s Lady”, “Friend in Need”, “Lion`s Skin”, etc. S. Maugham was among the most popular writers of his era, and reputedly, the highest paid author during the 1930s. Maugham`s style of writing is clear and precise. He doesn`t impose his views on the reader. He puts a question and leaves it to the reader to answer.

I also like his revealing the weak sides and vices of human nature skilfully. His books are chatty and easy to read. This is clearly viewed from the given extract. “Escape” is a story about common people in common situation, and Maugham manages to tell it with the sense of humour and in a very interesting way. The essence of “The Escape”, to my mind, is that Roger and Ruth have diverse approaches towards the relations. Of course, the men and the women like the first step: flowers, attentiveness, passion. But then their paths diverge.

The romance disappears, the man looks for the way out, he craves for new emotions, but the woman deems that the relations should develop into the

marriage. And “ The Escape” is the example of such a mismatch. The story can be logically divided into four main parts: the exposition, passages about Ruth’s and Roger’s love, Roger falls out of love and the break-up. The story has a straight line narrative structure with author’s digressions at the beginning. I think that the beginning of the story serves as its subject matter, where the author recounts his point of view on marriage.

He convinces us that if a woman once made her mind to marry a man nothing but instant flight could save him. As an example he told a case, which happened with one of his friends, who seeing the inevitable marriage menacing before him, took ship and spent a year traveling round the world. He hoped the woman would forget him, but was mistaken. When he got back thinking himself safe, the woman, from whom he had fled, was waiting for him on the quay. This funny thing supports the idea that the inevitable loom of the marriage frightens some men and they try to avoid it.

It should be mentioned, that he describes that awkward situation very skilfully and in a very ironical way. It could be confirmed by some cases of irony, used by the narrator – “ instant flight” and “ inevitable loom menacing before him”, “ escaped with only a toothbrush for all his luggage”, which show us fear and trembling of men before the difficulties of the marriage. Maugham establishes realistic setting to his piece of writing. As the author uses the first-person narrative structure we can guess that the narrator is the secondary character of the story.

The main ones here are Roger Charing and Ruth Barlow. To describe them, Maugham uses the direct characterization. For example, he gives it when speaks about of Ruth’s eyes using the epithets (“ splendid”, “ moving”, “ big

and lovely”), a detached epithet (“ poor dear”) – all in the ironic way. Further on the narrator says that he knows only one man who escaped successfully. Once upon a time his friend, Roger Charing told him he was going to marry. Roger was tall and handsome, rich, experienced middle-aged man. Of course, many women wanted to marry him.

But he was happy to live the life of an unmarried man: the epithets “ sufficient experience”, “ careful” give the direct description of his lifestyle. But then he met Ruth Barlow. He fell in love with her. He immediately wanted to look after her and make her happy. Ruth was twice a widow, she was younger than Roger. She was quite good-looking and she had big, beautiful, dark eyes and she had the gift of pathos. When a man saw those big, sad eyes, he wanted to help Ruth. The epithet “ defenceless” expose the power of her look.

It was Ruth’s mode to get what she wanted because she had no other means (moneyfor instance). This “ gift” helped Ruth to reach hergoals. The metaphor “ the gift of pathos”, the epithets “ splendid dark eyes”, “ the most moving eyes”, “ big and lovely eyes” and the repetition of the word “ eyes” make us pay our attention to this peculiarity. And Ruth made her mind to marry Roger: he was rich, considerate, and tactful and was glad to take care of her, so he was the best variant for her. He didn’t let down and made a proposal of marriage to her and they were going to marry as soon as ossible. While reading we came across a lot of pure literary words (gift, splendid, wonderful, hazards, sadness, lovely) and some cliches (“ the world was too much for her”, “ stand between the hazards of life and this helpless little thing”, “ how wonderful it would be to take the sadness out of those big and

lovely eyes”) which are peculiar to the description of ordinary situations concerning love affairs, so we see what kind of story “ The Escape” is. The narrator provokes us to perceive it ironically.

Through Roger’s vision, Ruth was very unlucky. Indeed, she seemed to be very miserable, everything was wrong with her. If she married a husband he beat her; if she employed a broker he cheated her; if she engaged a cook she drank. She never had a little lamb but it was sure to die. We can observe hopelessness of Ruth’s life through the epithets “ helpless little thing”, “ rotten time”, “ unfortunate”, “ poor dear”, the metaphor “ a little lamb”, parallel constructions “ if she married...” and pure literary words such as “ sufferings”, “ hazards”, “ sadness”.

Roger took an interest in her destiny and was ready to relieve it: the repetition of the pronouns “ she” and “ her” in Roger’s speech, the epithet “ dreadfully sorry” prove my assumption. The epithets “ very happy” and “ pleased” make us believe that it wasn’t a nuisance for him. But according to the narrator’s opinion, Ruth was two-faced woman of few ideas: he called her stupid and scheming. This epithets, the simile “ as hard as nails” add some points to her description, so it again proves that the method of character-drawing here is direct.

We see two people, Roger and Ruth, as the futurefamily, so this is the idea of this extract of the text. The author describes the first part of their relations which were rather standard. As thousands of men and women, they met, fell in love and decided to be together. But then, on a sudden, Roger fell out of love. This was the second part of their relations. There was no evident reason. Perhaps, his heart-strings were no longer touched by Ruth’s pathetic

look. Roger became acutely conscious that Ruth had a mind to marry him. He gave a solemn oath that nothing would induce him to marry Ruth.

But he was in a quandary. He was aware that Ruth would assess her feelings at an immoderately high figure if he asked her to release him. Besides, he didn't want people to say that he jilted a woman. The epithets "acutely conscious", "a solemn oath" and "an immoderately high figure" stress the importance, significance of his decision; as to the epithet "pathetic look" and the metaphor "heart-strings" (at the same time it is a cliché), they produce the humorous effect. Falling out of love is the most terrible thing I can imagine.

Recently it was an acute pleasure for Roger to do everything for Ruth. He was charmed, but, as I suppose, it wasn't a serious and profound feeling – Roger lost it too easily. It is obvious Ruth was a narrow-minded woman and she didn't really love Roger. But there are some arguments to be said in her defence, she lonely and wanted to be protected. Probably she would be a good wife. The repetition of the expression "to have a mind to" reveals the conflict of Roger's and Ruth's interests. Ruth desired to have relations of long duration - she cried for the moon.

On the contrary, Roger wanted to escape with no loss. And again we are the witnesses of the usual continuation of the love story. It's rather banal. Roger kept his own counsel; he remained attentive to all her wishes. It was decided that they would be married as soon as they found a suitable house. Roger applied to the agents and visited with Ruth house after house. It was very hard to find a satisfactory one. Sometimes houses were too large, sometimes

they were too small, sometimes they were too expensive and sometimes they were too stuffy, sometimes they were too airy.

The idea is that only such dishonest, shabby act as the flat-chase tactics seemed to be appropriate for Roger. I think, it was like a committing a crime. Roger's behaviour wasn't fair, it was even disgraceful, but unfortunately such conduct is not uncommon, the men trick the women very often, because their attitude towards the relations differs. Parallel constructions "sometimes they were too large, sometimes they were too small, sometimes they were too expensive and sometimes they were too stuffy", the metaphor "house-hunting", the epithet "innumerable kitchens" describe Roger's scheme of the trouble-free parting.

Firstly I took Roger's side, because I consider that each person should have a right for free choice, but then I was sorry for Ruth, Roger tired her out, she didn't understand what was happening. The epithet "exhausted" demonstrates her state brightly. At last Ruth revolted. She asked Roger if he wanted to marry her. There was an unaccustomed hardness in her voice, but it didn't affect the gentleness of his reply. Roger persuaded her that they would be married the very moment they found a suitable house. Ruth took to her bed. She didn't want to see Roger, but he was as ever assiduous and gallant.

Every day he sent her flowers, wrote that he had some more houses to look at. The epithets "assiduous", "gallant" display his dissimulation. A week passed and he received the letter: Ruth let him know that she was going to get married and claimed that Roger didn't love her. He answered that her news shattered him, but her happiness had to be his first consideration. He

sent Ruth seven orders to view. He was quite sure she would find among them a house that would exactly suit her. So, we can see that Roger appeared to be very smart and sly person.

He appeared quite cute to predict Ruth's following actions. When he got the hang of Ruth, he pretended he was still in love very gallantly, until she got the hang of him, and I should say it was a more civilized way of jilting a woman than just to leave her. So, I think the message of the story is that a woman can be sly and scheming, but a man can make it his way also. This story carried me with its eternal intrigue – the war between male and female. We may be in earnest about it or may try to ignore it, but it really takes place and this problem will exist until the end of human history.