The Story of an Hour

by Kate Chopin

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken

to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband’s death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that

revealed in half concealing. Her husband’s friend Richards was there, too, near her. It

was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster

was received, with Brently Mallard’s name leading the list of “killed.” He had only taken

the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall

any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed

inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in

her sister’s arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room

alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she

sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach

into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all

aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street

below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was

singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had

met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless,

except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself

to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a

certain strength. 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.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was

it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of

the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this

thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her

will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips.

She said it over and over under her breath: