

"The Storm"

In "The Storm" by Kate Chopin, there are only a few characters introduced in the entirety of this short story. It follows a father and son, Bobinot and Bibi, as they are trapped in a store awaiting the passing of a storm. Meanwhile, the mother gets caught in her home with someone she clearly has feelings for. This leads to a sexual escapade that is unclear as to if it is a singular event or one of regular coming. Regardless, there seems to be no internal struggle of moral righteousness from either character on the escapade. While a surface reading of "The Storm" might suggest a criticism on infidelity and paint the mother, Calixta, and the man, Alcee, in a negative light, the text contradicts itself by suggesting that this sexual exploration is necessary in all aspects. In order for everyone to remain happy, albeit ignorantly, infidelity occurs. Chopin's characters are able to separate their marital lives from their sexual ones, and in doing so, Chopin shows that infidelity is not necessarily connected to love and dedication.

Ambiguity is shown in the marital relationship of Calixta and Bobinot in the beginning of the story. As their son seems concerned that "Mama'll be 'fraid," Bobinot does not make much of a fuss of the woman being home alone. However, he immediately purchases some shrimp which "Calixta is very fond of." So while he may or may not be concerned about her safety while she is alone in a storm, he made an effort to remember a detail about her that is more than likely going to make her happy.

Additionally, while Calixta is home during the storm, she is fervently sewing. However, once she realizes the storm is coming, her first thought is to "hasten out and gather" Bobinot's clothes before the rain came. She could have left them in the rain, but chose to uphold her duty

of caring for the laundry and brought them in. This nice gesture is then shattered by her choices when an unexpected guest arrives. This man, Alcee, asks for some solace from the storm, and it becomes apparent that the two have a history as “Assumption” is mentioned as the place that he “had kissed her and kissed her,” seemingly prior to her marriage. But soon enough, her marriage is long forgotten as the storm raged on outside and “the roar of the elements raged on and made her laugh as she lay in his arms.” While she seemed to take pride in her duties as a wife, she clearly found this sexual tension and release to be more important than her husband awaiting to return home to her.

Upon Alcee leaving, Bobinot makes his return home nervously as he has Bibi in tow after he had attempted to “scrape the mud” off of him in order to please his “overscrupulous wife.” This is another moment of ambiguity as he is trying to do something to please his wife, but she is then described in a way of overbearing for her standards. However, when Calixta returns, they are both surprised to see her only with “satisfaction of their safe return.” After her evening with Alcee, she is essentially rejuvenated. She has a newfound appreciation for her home duties and for her family. It is clear that without Alcee, she is high strung, overworked, and tired of her life. This evening with Alcee, whether it was spur of the moment or if she should be expecting him again, shows that she needed a release that Bobinot was not providing.

Additionally, the last bit of the story depicts Alcee writing a letter to his wife encouraging her to stay at the bay with the children. While he had trouble with the “separation” from them, their “health and happiness” was worth more. In one final cyclical moment, the wife, Clarisse, admits that while she is “devoted to her husband,” their life together was “something she was willing to forego for a while.” So, Clarisse, Alcee, and Calixta have all been separated from their spouse and shown that while they are happy where they are, sometimes a release is needed.

