



Odour of Chrysanthemums

D.H. Lawrence

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'Was this what it all meant - utter, intact separateness, obscured by heat of living?' D. H. Lawrence's short stories portray complex, flawed interior lives, showing individuals facing momentous emotional events. In these two stories of fragile happiness and failed dreams, a tragedy forces a woman to acknowledge that she has never known her husband, and a man blinded in the First World War discovers an unexpected peace. This book includes "Odour of Chrysanthemums" and "The Blind Man".

Odour of Chrysanthemums Details

Date : Published 1977 by Progress Publishers (first published April 24th 1914)

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From Reader Review Odour of Chrysanthemums for online ebook

Michael Lieberman says

Bottom line: D.H. Lawrence at his emotional best.

The story is set in a Nottinghamshire coalmining town and follows a wife as she waits for her husband to return from his shift. When he doesn't, she assumes he's gone drinking in one of the local pubs. The story reminds us how grim and desperate working class life was in the English Midlands a hundred years ago. Here is Lawrence meditating on our fundamental aloneness in this world, what constitutes a relationship, what it means to be husband and wife, what is shared and what is not. It was a painful but rewarding read.

Gisselle Moyano says

Me gustó que la esposa haya reacciono de una forma no esperada a la muerte de su marido. Sin embargo, se me hizo bastante predecible.

Kris says

I haven't read any Lawrence before, and this was a good introduction. He is great at establishing mood, and I thought he offered an interesting perspective on what could have easily been one-dimensional characters in a one-dimensional story. Instead, he brings in layers (offering the mother's perspective on the husband as a boy, for example) to make it interesting.

Malvika says

Alright. I probably sound silly but I did not understand the idea behind the story. I guess it has something to do with the psychology of Elizabeth Bates, but as a reader, I could not (and still can't) figure out what her Psyche is exactly.

What I like about this story:

1. Elizabeth's character is without any doubt wonderfully sketched. (but then all of Lawrence's characters are interesting)
2. His portrayal of the life of the coal miners and their families is quite realistic, albeit depressing.
3. Chrysanthemums. I like their significance and how they are symbolic of every turning point in Elizabeth's life. (If I'm not wrong)
4. The quote: "She knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame."

What I don't like:

1. It's inability to keep me interested.
2. The idea that Lawrence is trying to present (because I didn't get it).

Will I recommend it? No.

Alisa Cupcakeland says

It was a nice reading, and I think it reflects well the reality of many marriages at that time when marriage was more like a duty than a voluntary institution.

Sepideh Tafazzoli says

She knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame.

Abdullah Bannan says

It was ok, I guess. The author over-described everything though! The scenes felt real nonetheless. I like the emotional confusion Elizabeth falls into, and the epiphany she has upon her husband's death.

Michael A. says

has the aesthetic of something i'd fall asleep to reading in high school english class. couldnt understand a quarter of the dialogue because of heavy accents, probably my fault. would be one star but the ending elevated it.

Vanessa says

D. H. Lawrence writes about a world he knew intimately: the grinding hardships and existence of miners.

The story, "Odour of Chrysanthemums" emphasizes Elizabeth's harsh realization about her own responsibility in the shortcomings of her marriage.

Elizabeth confronts the illusions and failures of her life after washing her husband Walter's dead body. Like Elizabeth in "Odour of Chrysanthemums," Lawrence was able to embrace a more nuanced understanding of human relationships and the ramifications of environment, choice, and consequence.

Hosanna says

I was required to read this short story for a college class. *Odour of Chrysanthemums* is a weird, grotesque story of a wife who discovers that her abusive husband is dead and feels no grief for him. There is nothing of interest in this book, and I would not recommend it.

Claire says

This one was recommended by my mother. She's not normally a classic fan, so any story that can leave a lasting impression must be a good one.

It's a profound story of love and loss. It's a cautionary tale about not knowing what you have until it's gone. It's a horror story about that moment that anyone in love dreads.

It's brilliantly written, with wonderful imagery. You cannot help but feel deep pity for Elizabeth as she realizes just what she's lost.

Very short, and well worth a read.

Jana says

An interesting short story that would provide you with the information about women of that age, their constant worry for family and husbands. Lawrence is using his own voice for the main character - Elizabeth Bates, hence implying that she is somehow better than anyone else in the story. The rest of the characters use degraded language and are hardly understandable for the reader. The atmosphere is very much beautifully presented, the constant symbolism of flowers and colors: pink chrysanthemums in the beginning and brown in the end. Feeling relief when encountered with death of someone who was only a burden and a stranger is taboo, especially when it's coming from a young woman in the 19th century. The critics say that Lawrence liked implementing his mother's qualities into female characters, and maybe that could be an apparent reason of Elizabeth's dominance over everyone else. I give it 4 stars not because it's less good than anything I've read but just because it's the question of personal taste in the writing I prefer to read.

Taylor Moore says

I don't know, I just didn't really like this story. I love D.H. Lawrence's style of writing, but this short story didn't seem to do anything for me. The story didn't seem to pull me in at all. I can't really describe it, but the overall feeling was "meh". It poses a nice question to discuss for my Brit Lit class, but again, I didn't really enjoy the story. Then again, I do hate reading cockney accents (it's almost as bad as reading black Southern accents *coughJimcough*).

Anyway, again, it wasn't terribly bad, but it's definitely not a favorite.

Susan says

I have to confess that I have never read anything by D. H. Lawrence before and I thought one of his short stories might be a good introduction. The story follows the wife of a coal miner, who is awaiting the return of her husband Walter from the pit. She has two children and is pregnant and, as dusk falls, we gradually learn of her suspicion that he has gone drinking, leaving his dinner to dry out uneaten. However, as the evening progresses, she is concerned enough to go looking for him and we discover the truth of what has

happened.

This short story was, in so many ways, really realistic. The thoughts which drifted through Elizabeth Bates mind; the worries of the children that their father had not returned and yet the concern that he might walk in and begin to argue with their mother, were well realised. This was a dark and somewhat depressing read, which did express real concerns and the poverty faced by miner's families, as well as the dangers of the job. Written in 1909 and published in 1911, this story was later adapted into a play and it does give a realistic, if bleak, portrait of life during those times.

Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says

Moving and thought-provoking. When Ford Madox Ford published this in his June 1911 issue of his English Review he was convinced he had discovered a genius.

A mother (Mrs. Bates) with two young children, a girl and a boy, in their humble dwelling waiting for the father who works in a mine. Dinnertime passes and he hasn't arrived. The night deepens, she sends the children to bed, and her husband is still not home. This is not the first time this has happened. On many occasions before, her husband would later stagger home dead drunk. Any wife who has a husband who loves the bottle would find familiar the vacillating anger-and-fear emotion she feels here as so skillfully presented by D.H. Lawrence who was himself born of poverty and a son of a coal miner:

"The children had their hands and faces wiped with a flannel. They were very quiet. When they had put on their night-dresses, they said their prayers, the boy mumbling. The mother looked down at them, at the brown silken bush of intertwining curls in the nape of the girl's neck, at the little black head of the lad, and her heart burst with anger at their father, who cause all three such distress. The children hid their faces in her skirts for comfort.

"When Mrs. Bates came down, the room was strangely empty, with a tension of expectancy. She took up her sewing and stitched for some time without raising her head. Meantime her anger was tinged with fear."

Things happen after this which will create unforgettable scenes that would stay in your mind for a long time and with an ending that would make you revisit your thoughts on one of literature's recurrent themes: "the utter isolation of the human soul."

Ludodreamer says

Novella molto carina, che spinge a riflettere sul significato della vita e della morte.

Riporta i problemi familiari di Lawrence ed è interessante scoprire che solo la figlia di Elizabeth riesce a sentire l'odore dei crisantemi.

3 stelline perché mi sarebbe piaciuto leggere qualche pagina in più.

Karen says

The descriptive language set the scene indelibly in my mind. I waited with Elizabeth, my heart in sync with hers.

Mujda says

Now this was a far better read than "The horse dealer's daughter".

A short story, the prose is rich with emotion. The story begins quite gently, weaving out a simple life of a family from a mining town. The main theme is the emotional (or lack of, in this instance) relationship between a husband and wife.

The last two pages is where the harrowingly thought-provoking character realisation occurs. Lawrence does very well in portraying the fragility of life, an oft-forgotten realisation of how mortal every human being is.

The wife's emotions, bittersweet and coloured with guilt yet peace, happiness yet dread (so many juxtapositions) I think are meant to reflect the title of the book - how the chrysanthemum flowers, usually a symbol of joy or optimism, not to mention the expected nice fragrance, actually has an "odour" in this case.

The juxtaposition of what we expect out of life versus the reality (a happy marriage where the children unite the parents, as opposed to a loveless marriage) is portrayed fantastically. A really great piece of prose, showcasing the emptiness in one's life when miscommunication is present, and the sinking feeling one gets after realising this, only after the partner passes away.

"It is life intensified which is what short stories are interested in" Carys Davies

Liv says

It was full of wonderful descriptions and juxtapositions, demonstrating that Lawrence would be a great author, but as a story, I wasn't too impressed.

Laura says

Opening lines:

The small locomotive engine, Number 4, came clanking, stumbling down from Selston — with seven full waggon. It appeared round the corner with loud threats of speed, but the colt that it startled from among the gorse, which still flickered indistinctly in the raw afternoon, outdistanced it at a canter.
