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The Ride Down Mt. Morgan

“The Ride Down Mt. Morgan” is one of the most famous play by the American essayist and playwright, named Arthur Miller. The play premiered in London in the later part of the year 1991 and received much appreciation from the audience. The author has shed light on the dilemma of a bigamist, living in a monogamist society. The two wives of the main character believe themselves to be the only wife and got the only chance of confronting each other when their husband became the victim of an accident. They could have spent their whole lives with their false belief if the hospital authorities had not contacted them, telling them about the mishap which their husband had faced. The play has followed the distinctive genre of comedy and the style of the play is dramatic. The author has explored the themes of betrayal, bigamy, monogamy and as well as crucial conflicts of the personalities of the characters. Miller has also presented the play in a well-structured manner, which keeps the interest of the readers intact. Miller, through a well-structured plot of the play, may have tried to highlight the controversies attached with bigamy.

The genre of the play “The Ride down Mt. Morgan” by Arthur Miller is a comedy. The author has tried to present the very first encounter of the two wives of the main character, Lyman Felt in a humorous manner. Felt have been married to Theo for the past thirty years of his life and has a grown-up daughter, Bessie from her as well. On the other hand, he has been married to Leah as well for the past nine years of his life and he has a son from her name, Benjamin. Felt had married Leah on the notion that he would divorce his first wife, however, he has been managing the two families quiet efficiently for nine years prior to the opening of the play. He was a successful insurance agent which provided him with the opportunity of managing the financial needs of the two families, based in New York City and Elmira, respectively. The two wives were not aware of the existence of each other and only encountered each other when they received the news of the accident of their husband. It was also a controversial point for Felt when he had to acknowledge before the two of them that he is a bigamist and the author has presented the encounter, as well as later circumstances in a bit humorous manner (Miller, 10).

Miller has incorporated the dramatic style into the play, in order to highlight the dilemma of the bigamist man, living in a society which is strictly against it. The purpose of using the dramatic style is also to shed light on the controversial practices of the society, as well as highlight the flaws of the charterers which gave rise to such a situation. The style of the play has also provided an opportunity for Miller to explain the choice of Felt of marrying two women at the same time. He has highlighted the point that the first wife of Felt was not able or willing to fulfill his needs, which forced him to look for other means to fulfill his desires and needs. He married Leah for the sake of his personal needs. He had the option of divorcing his first wife, however, he also did not want to part ways with her, just because she was not tending to him anymore. So he adopted a difficult solution to the issue and decided to keep his marriage intact with both of them, without their knowledge. He was able to support the two families, not only financially, but also emotionally and never neglected any of their needs. His work was based in the New York City so he used to spend time in Elmira on the claim of the business trip and he did not face any difficulty for the nine years of his life in managing two families secretively.

In the play “The Ride down Mt. Morgan,” Miller has explored the themes of betrayal, bigamy, monogamy and as well as crucial conflicts of the personalities of the characters. Betrayal is the major theme of the play because all of the main characters of the play were betraying each other in one or the other way. At first, the play gives off the impression that Felt was betraying not only his two wives but his children as well by concealing the fact from them that he had two families to take care off. He was betraying Theo and their daughter that he had to spend time off from them due to his business trips, while he was actually spending that time with another secret family. On the other hand, he was also betraying Leah and their son by making her believe that he had married her after divorcing his first wife and she was the only women in her life at that point of time, while he was actually married to Theo at the same time. The children for both wives also believed that they are the only child of their father, which was not true. The betrayal of the characters did not end there as Leah was also betraying her husband by having a secret affair. On the other hand, Theo had not betrayed him practically, however, she was also at fault for not only neglecting but constantly turning a blind eye to the physical needs and demands of her husband, just because she did not feel the same. Moreover, the pay also highlighted that that colleagues of Felt considered that he has depicted a hypocrite attitude by having two families at the same time, which the author has negated by highlighting their own betrayal towards their families, as they had secret lovers (Miller, 120).

Bigamy and monogamy are also among the most important themes of the play, as the whole play is based on the issue of bigamy. There are a number of societies as well as cultures of the world which do not allow bigamy and require the individual to divorce their partner, before tying the knot with some other individual. The basic purpose of such a practice is that the partners are able to give their best to each other and do not tend to any other individual for their needs and problems. However, most of the people sharing their lives through monogamist marriage often have secret affairs and lovers. If their respective culture or society allows the practice of bigamy, such individual would not have to keep their other relationships secret. The crucial conflicts of the personalities of different characters is also an important theme of the play by Miller because he has tried to show that before blaming Felt for having two families, the characters need to reflect on their own practices. If he had betrayed them, they were also not being true to him and were deceiving him as well. He had only deceived them by not telling them about his other marriage, apart from that he was tending to their emotional and financial needs quite effectively. He was always present for them, whenever they needed him and had not neglected his responsibilities towards them. The author has tried to critique the general practice of monogamy which forces the individual towards having secret relation or affairs if they are not satisfied with their marriage. Divorcing the partner and marrying another person is not the right choice all the time and Felt proved the fact that if the person has enough resources, managing two families side by side is not a difficult deal.

Miller has presented the structure of the play in quite an interesting and engaging manner. The exposition of the play is that the main character, Lyman Felt became the victim of an accident on the icy mountain of Morgan on his Porsche. He received critical injuries and was hospitalized after that. The title of the play is also devised from this accident as the accident own the mountain, disclosed the secret chapters of the life of Felt. The rising action of the play is the admission of Felt in the hospital due to his critical injuries and the decision of the hospital authors to contact his family. It is a general practice in the hospitals that the family of the patient is contacted and informed, in case the patient is not brought by the family members. In the case of Felt, the hospital authorities not being aware of the fact that he was managing two families secretively, they contacted both of them and gave rise to a controversial situation for Felt. The crux of the play is that point when Felt comes to know that both of his families have been informed about his accident, as well as present condition and they are on their way to visit him.

The climax of the play is the point when the two wives encountered each other in the hospital room and came to know the fact that their husband had another family and beside them. Theo was in great shock as she had been married to Felt for thirty years. She never knew that her husband was not going on business trips to Elmira, but the purpose of his visit was to look after his second wife and their son. She felt greatly betrayed that her husband had not regarded her efforts and commitment of thirty years with him and had been deceiving her for not any short time but for the past nine years. He was not having just an affair with any woman, but he had married another woman, which meant he had legalized his relationship with her and also had a son from her. On the other hand, Leah was also in utter shock because of the fact that Felt had also deceived her since the inception of their marriage. He had told her about his first marriage and has also assured her that he would only marry her after divorcing his first. However, he had not fulfilled his promise and had been managing two families, based in two different towns, without the knowledge of the existence of each other (Miller, 58).

The falling action of the play is the point when it is revealed that only Felt has not deceived his spouses, but they have also disappointed or deceived him in one or the other way. Leah was having a secret affair, behind the back of her husband. She was not grateful for the life he had provided her as he tended to all her financial and emotional needs, still, she stabbed him in the back by deceiving him and not staying true to him. On the other hand, it was actually Theo who pushed him into such a situation. They were living a happy married life until Theo faced some changes in her desires and needs and instead of talking about the matter, she started pushing off and neglecting the needs of her husband. Felt was left with no choice of staying true to his wife and instead of having an affair, he chose to marry Leah. He was also not ready to divorce Theo keeping in view all the happy time he had spent with her, due to which he ended up in the dilemma of being a bigamist in a monogamist society. The resolution of the play is the point when both wives realize that they have not been fair to their husband. The antecedent action in the play that comes in the form of revelations is the fact that Felt had promised Leah to divorce Theo before marrying her and he did not do so (Miller, 83).

 The development of the characters is basically flat in the whole play as they do not develop dramatically, however, their little secrets are exposed through the plot of the play. The main characters are trying to prove that they have received unfair treatment, however, they had to face the reality that they have also done the same. There is no particular complication in the play apart from the revelation of the two marriages of Felt. In addition to it, there is also no particular reversals in the play as well.

“The Ride Down Mt. Morgan” by Arthur Miller has depicted the ride down of Felt which exposed nine-year-old secret of his life that he had two families. Two marriages at the same point of time were not allowed in his culture and society and decided to go against the customs of the society by not divorcing his first wife when he had to marry another woman for the sake of his personal needs. Miller has presented the play in a well-structured manner while highlighting the important themes of betrayal, bigamy, monogamy and the controversial personalities of the characters.

Work Cited

Miller, Arthur. *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*. Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1999.