Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with heart trouble, great care was taken break her gently possible news her husband death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, broken sentences veiled hints that revealed half concealing. Her husband friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been newspaper office when intelligence railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard name leading list killed. He had only taken time assure himself its truth by second telegram, had hastened forestall any less careful, less tender friend bearing sad message.

She did not hear story many women have heard same, with paralyzed inability accept its significance. She wept once, with sudden, wild abandonment, her sister arms. When storm grief had spent itself, she went away her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing open window, comfortable, roomy armchair. this she sank, pressed down by physical exhaustion that haunted her body seemed reach her soul.

She could see open square before her house tops trees that were all aquiver with new spring life. delicious breath rain was air. street below peddler was crying his wares. notes distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, countless sparrows were twittering eaves.

There were patches blue sky showing here there through clouds that had met piled one above other west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon cushion chair, quite motionless, except when sob came up her throat shook her, child who has cried itself sleep continues sob its dreams.

She was young, with fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression even certain strength. But now there was dull stare her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder one those patches blue sky. It was not glance reflection, but rather indicated suspension intelligent thought.

There was something coming her she was waiting it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know it was too subtle elusive name. But she felt it, creeping out sky, reaching toward her through sounds, scents, color that filled air.

Now her bosom rose fell tumultuously. She was beginning recognize this thing that was approaching possess her, she was striving beat it back with her will powerless her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over over under her breath: free, free, free! vacant stare look terror that had followed it went her eyes. They stayed keen bright. Her pulses beat fast, coursing blood warmed relaxed every inch her body.

She did not stop ask if it were were not monstrous joy that held her. clear exalted perception enabled her dismiss suggestion trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw kind, tender hands folded death face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed gray dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment long procession years come that would belong her absolutely. she opened spread her arms out them welcome.

There would be no one live during those coming years she would live herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers that blind persistence with which men women believe they have right impose private will upon fellow creature. kind intention cruel intention made act seem no less crime she looked upon it that brief moment illumination.

yet she had loved him sometimes. Often, she had not. What did it matter! What could love, unsolved mystery, count face this possession self assertion which she suddenly recognized strongest impulse her being!

Free! Body soul free! she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before closed door with her lips keyhold, imploring admission. Louise, open door! beg open door you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? heaven sake open door.

Go away. am not making myself ill. No she was drinking very elixir life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead her. Spring days, summer days, all sorts days that would be her own. She breathed quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with shudder that life might be long.

She arose length opened door her sister importunities. There was feverish triumph her eyes, she carried herself unwittingly like goddess Victory. She clasped her sister waist, together they descended stairs. Richards stood waiting them bottom.

Some one was opening front door with latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, little travel stained, composedly carrying his grip sack umbrella. He had been far scene accident, did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed Josephine piercing cry Richards quick motion screen him view his wife.

When doctors came they said she had died heart disease joy that kills.