



“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”

Notes on the story

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

May 15, 1890 - September 18, 1980



“I shall try to
tell the truth, but
the result will be
fiction.”

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER



Born: May 15, 1890

Indian Creek, Texas

Died: Sept. 18, 1980

Silver Spring, Maryland

Porter's mother died when Porter was only 2.

The family moved to Kyle, Texas, to live with her grandparents.





**From early
childhood, Porter
wrote stories, an
activity she
described as the
passion of her life.**



At age 16 she married John Henry Koontz, the first of four husbands.

Throughout her life she would continue to have passionate affairs marked by dramatic and vicious break-ups.

During the 1920s she traveled often to **Mexico**, wrote articles about the country, and studied art.



KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

Porter's first volume of stories, *Flowering Judas* (1930), impressed critics

She wrote and published many short stories and one novel during her life.





Porter's only full-length novel, *Ship of Fools*, was eventually made into an Oscar-winning film starring Vivian Leigh.



In the late **1940's**
and early
1950's, Porter
taught at
Stanford and
the **University**
of **Michigan**



Porter had very little formal education and never attended high school.

Later in life, Porter received an honorary degree from the **University of Maryland.**

Porter donated her writings to the **University of Maryland**, which currently houses a collection of Porter's writings and belongings.





Porter died in 1980 after several strokes, and was buried beside her mother's grave in the Indian Creek Cemetery in Texas.

A blue-tinted photograph of laundry hanging on a line. In the background, a faint rainbow is visible against a sky with some trees. The overall mood is serene and nostalgic.

“The Jilting of Granny Weatherall”

NOTES ON THE STORY

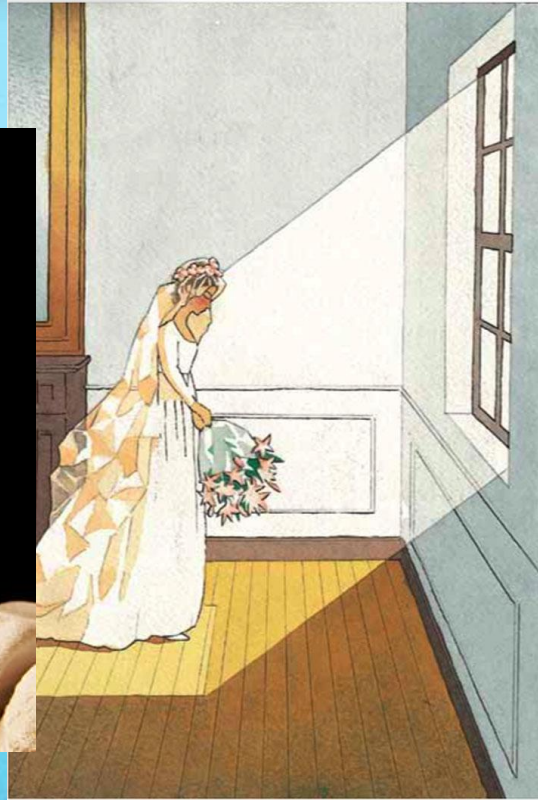
Note the title...

Although the story describes Granny's death, but the title is not "the dying of GW" but "the **jilting** of GW."





The **jilting** is the **most significant event** in GW's life (and the focus of the story)



The title describes the enormous hurt and humiliation that has secretly festered in her mind and heart for sixty years.



“Granny”



- Readers meet the protagonist in the title as “**Granny Weatherall.**”
- Then readers discover that “Granny’s” first name is **Ellen.**



“Granny” is her role→ she is the matriarch of her family. Granny is a **non-sexual** role/name.



“Weathering All”

She has “weathered all”...

- being jilted at the altar
- becoming a young widow
- the death of Hapsy
- maintaining the farm
- illness
- raising children

Weathering All

She “**weathers**” adversity by maintaining order in her physical surroundings





Setting

- **The physical setting**
= the bedroom where Granny Weatherall is dying
- **Most of the action**
occurs in Granny's mind

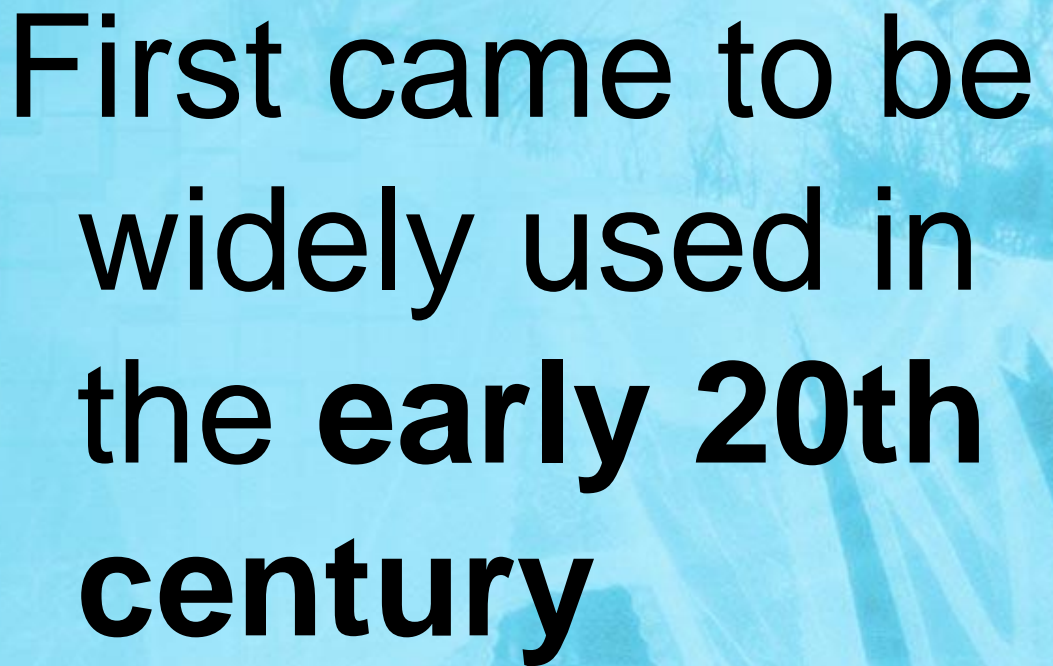


Stream-of-Consciousness Narration

Stream-of-Consciousness

Unusual narrative perspective:

Story is written in the
3rd person POV, but
seems more like a
1st person narrative.



Used as a means to share a character's thoughts without using 1st person narration



Appears to be random and free-flowing, but is actually **carefully planned** to make an impression



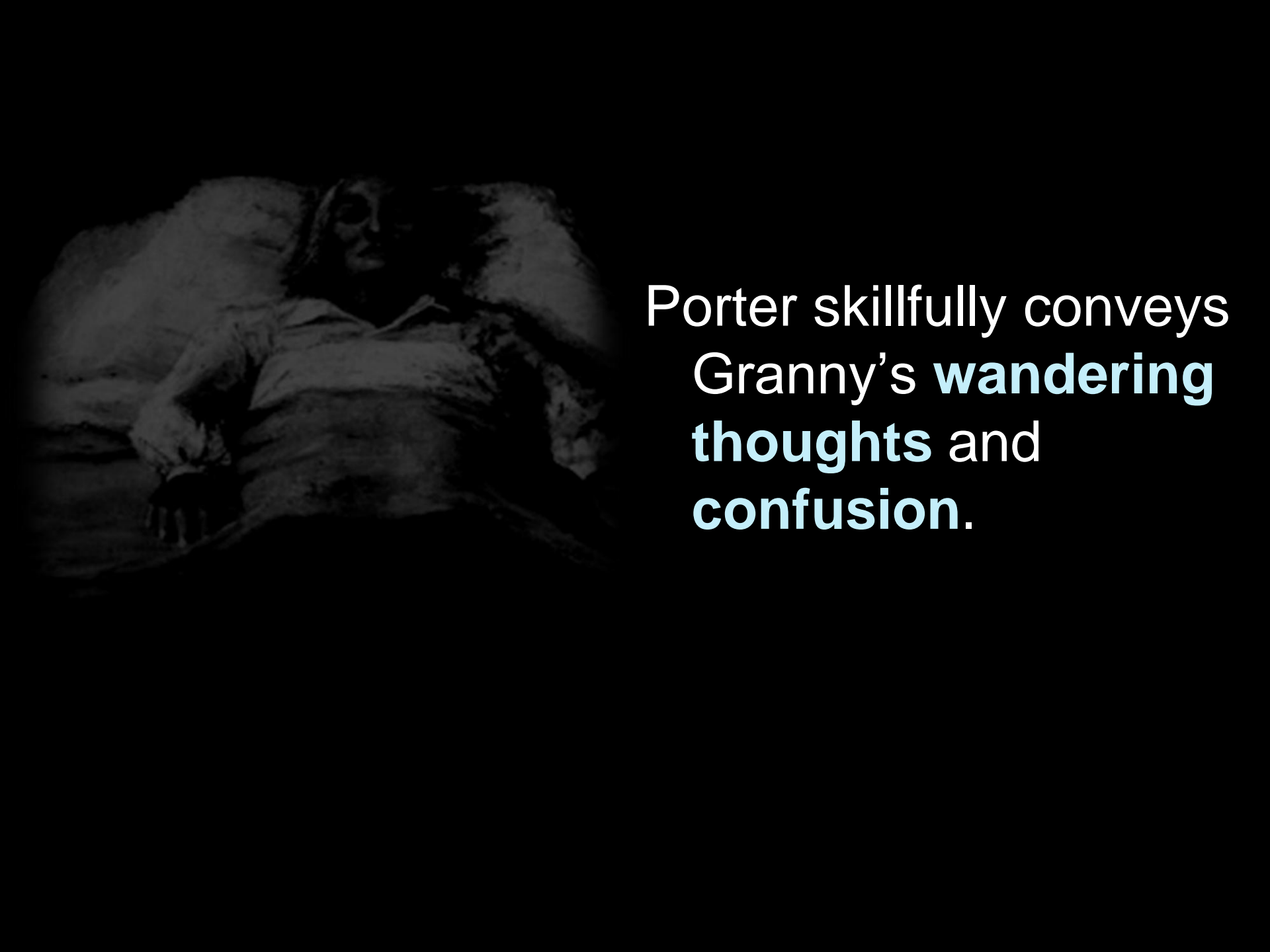


uninterrupted flow
of a character's thoughts,
impressions, and feelings...

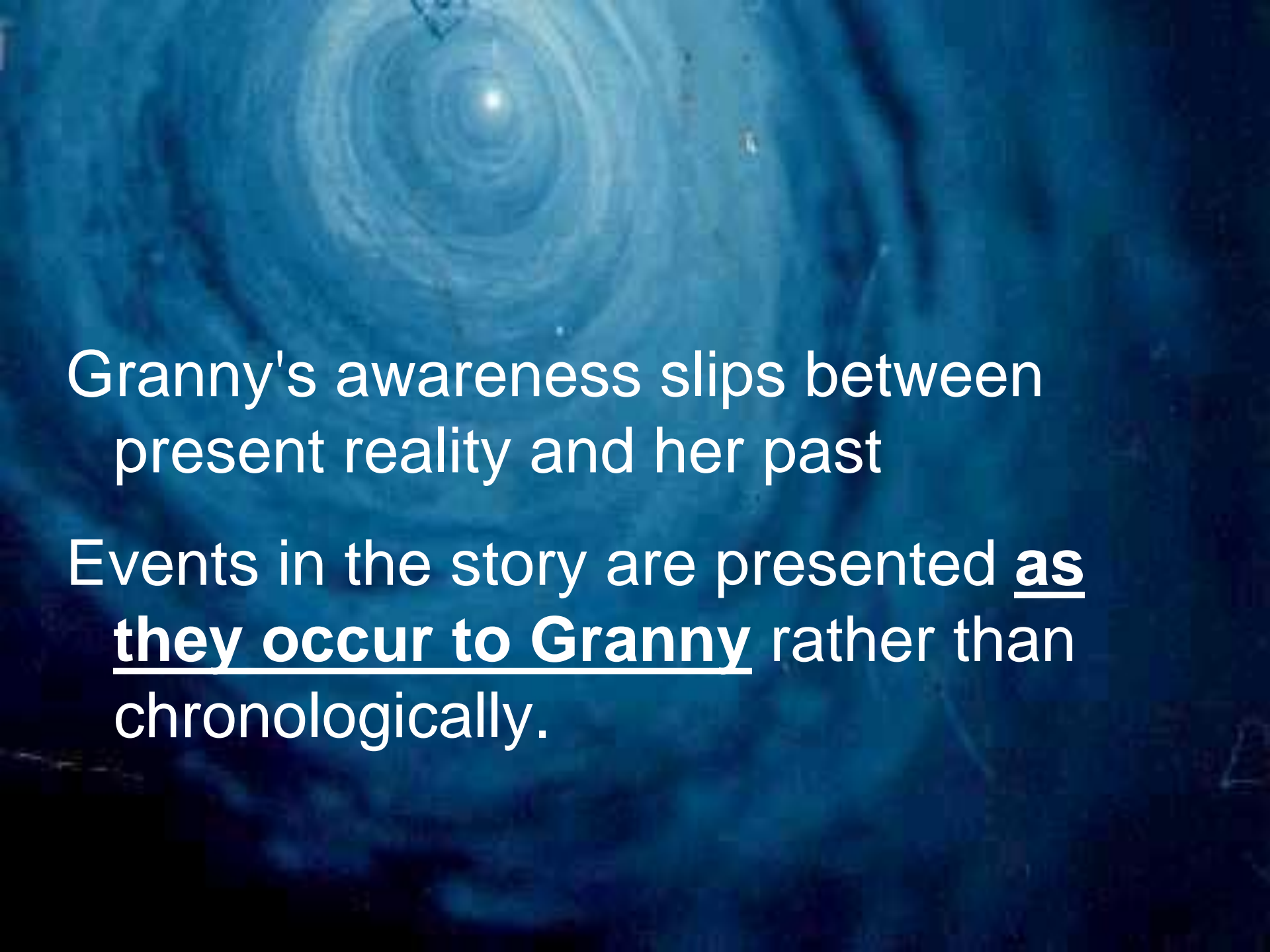
...without the
conventional
devices of dialogue
and description

Granny's thoughts are presented in a **spontaneous fashion**, as if readers had access to her thoughts at the moment each one occurs to her.





Porter skillfully conveys
Granny's **wandering
thoughts and
confusion.**



Granny's awareness slips between
present reality and her past

Events in the story are presented as
they occur to Granny rather than
chronologically.

Since Granny sometimes mistakes one daughter for another, for example, the **characters in the story sometimes dissolve** and become other characters.



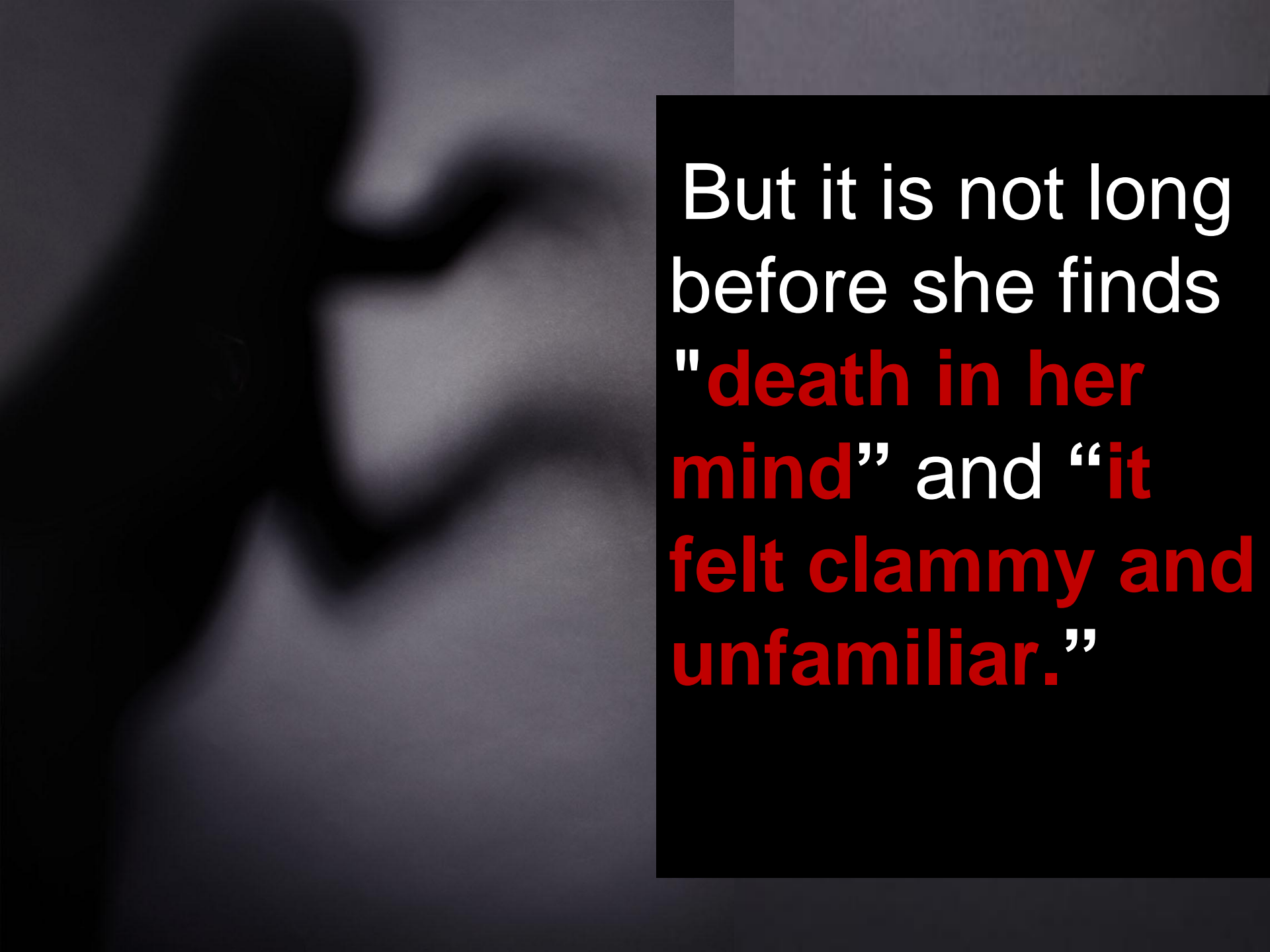
In Granny Weatherall's semi-conscious state, the past mingles with the present.



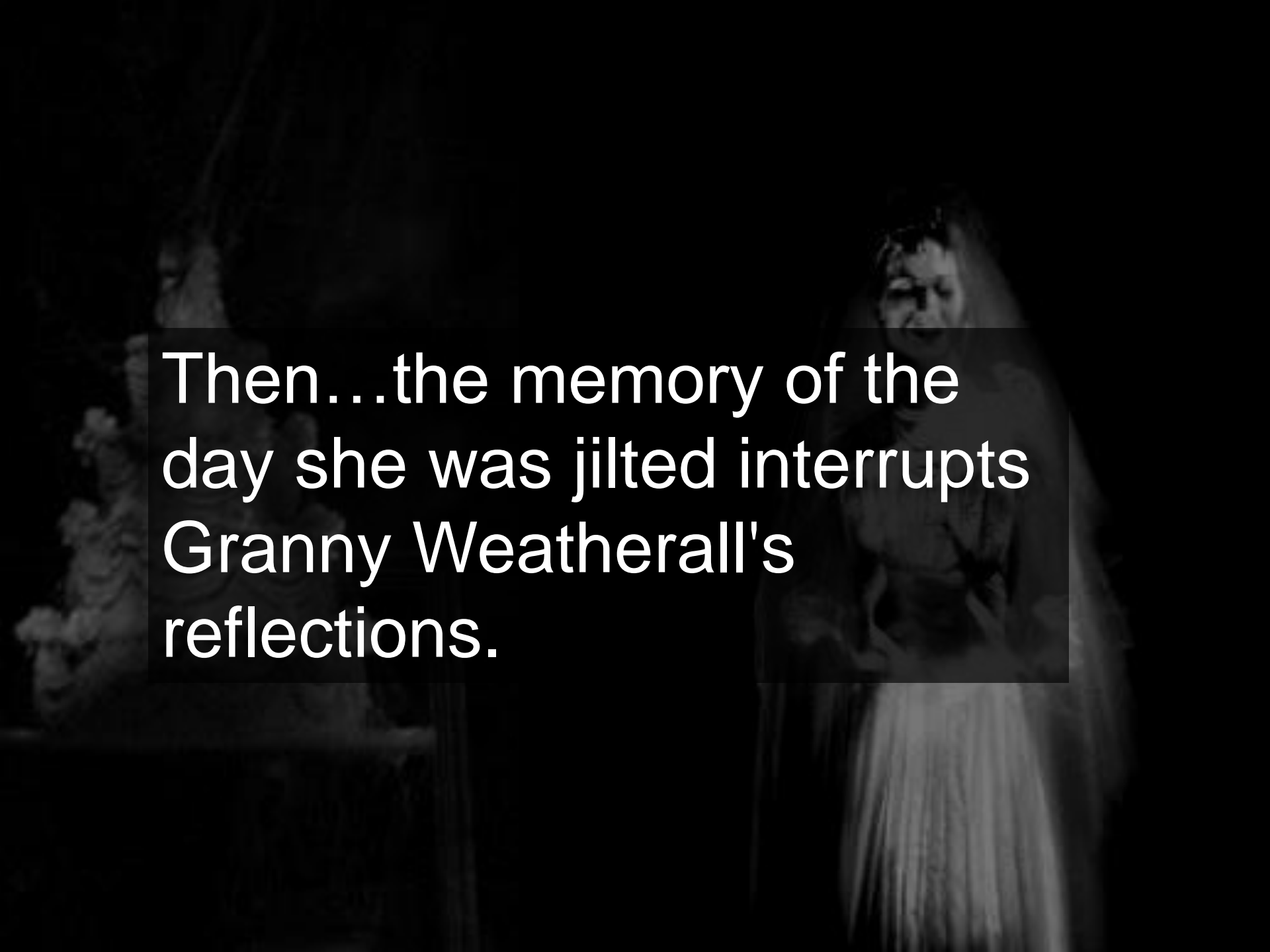


After the doctor leaves her alone, Granny Weatherall takes stock of her life, thinking:

“...a person could spread out the plan of life and tuck the edges in orderly.”



But it is not long
before she finds
"death in her
mind" and "it
felt clammy and
unfamiliar."



Then...the memory of the
day she was jilted interrupts
Granny Weatherall's
reflections.



What Granny Remembers...

MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Granny's life: 3 major events



Event:

At age **60**, she **prepares to die** and visits her relatives to say goodbye.

She “**made her will and came down with a long fever,**” but does not die for another 20 years.

Age 60: Farewell Tour



Early in the story, the suggestion is made that Granny considers herself to be already **at peace with her mortality.**

Age 60: Farewell Tour

At 60, she had made
"farewell trips" to see
all her loved ones:

**“She had spent so
much time preparing
for death there was no
need for bringing it up
again.”**



Age 60: Farewell Tour



Granny's **need to maintain control** is evident in her tidy planning of the end of her life

Granny's life: 3 major events



Event:

At age **40**, she gives birth to her youngest child, **Hapsy**.

She also suffers from major illness (thrombosis and pneumonia) following the birth.

Age 40: Hapsy's Birth



Hapsy is the youngest and apparently the favorite of Granny Weatherall's daughters— **“the one she had truly wanted.”**

Age 40: Hapsy's Birth

Granny asks for Hapsy **five times** during the story, but Hapsy never comes to her mother's deathbed.

Most likely, **Hapsy has already died**, possibly in childbirth.



Age 40: Hapsy's Birth



At one point, Granny seems to **confuse even herself with Hapsy**, as a memory of Hapsy holding a baby comes back to her.

Age 40: Hapsy's Birth



Granny "seemed to herself to be Hapsy also, and the baby on Hapsy's arm was Hapsy and himself and herself, all at once, and there was no surprise in the meeting."

Age 40: Hapsy's Birth



Some critics have interpreted this memory of Hapsy as the sign of salvation that Granny seems to be looking for throughout the story.

Granny's life: 3 major events

Event:

At age **20**, she is **jilted** by George at the altar.



Age 20: The Jilting



As she rests against her pillow she is transported back to the day when **"she has put on the white veil and set out the white cake for a man"** who never arrived.

Age 20: The Jilting



The memory of that day
**"when the cake was
not cut, but thrown
out and wasted"** is so
powerful that sixty
years later she relives
the moment.



Age 20: The Jilting

Although “**for sixty years she had prayed against remembering him,**” she decides now as her children hover around her that she wants to settle things with George, the truant bridegroom.

The Jilting

What she wants is to even their accounts, to tell him **"I got my husband just the same and my children and my house just like any other woman."**



The Jilting



Her memory recalls when
**"the whole bottom
dropped out of the
world, and there she
was blind and sweating
with nothing under her
feet and the walls
falling away."**

(Sounds a bit like death...)



The Jilting

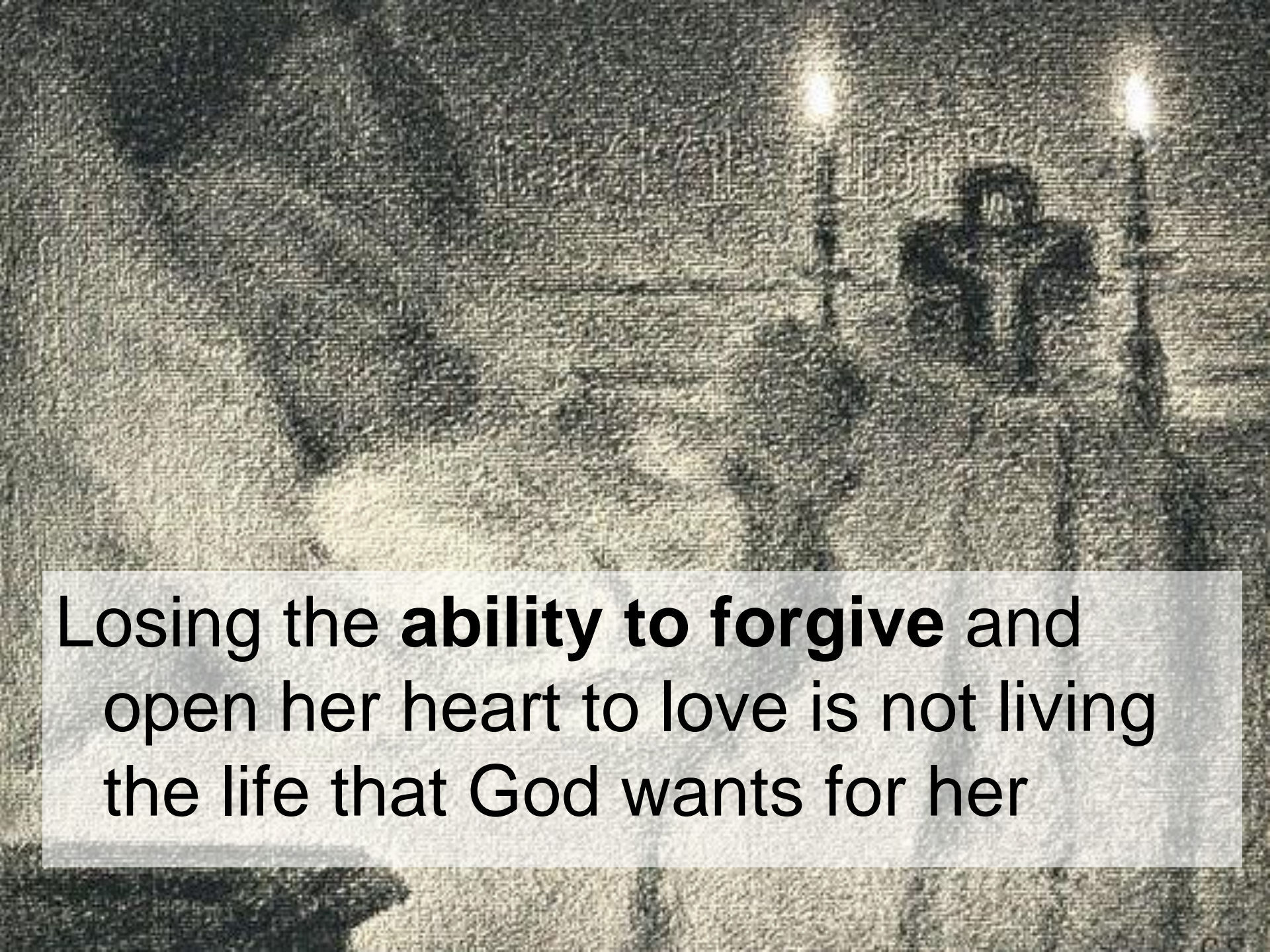
Granny equates the jilting with hell: **“that was hell”** and **“losing her soul in the deep pit of hell”**

She describes the **“whirl of dark smoke that rose and covered”** her life

The Jilting

The jilting caused Granny to **turn off her emotions**; to focus upon living a life that appeared orderly to mask her bitterness and broken heart.





Losing the **ability to forgive** and
open her heart to love is not living
the life that God wants for her



After the jilting, John steps in and marries Granny. John says, **“I’ll kill him”** in response to what George does to her.

Granny marries a man (John) she settles for after being jilted.



The Jilting

On her deathbed,
she revisits
the jilting, not
her marriage to
John or John's
death

The Jilting

**Granny separates
from her
emotional self,
choosing a life of
hard work and
exemplary
appearance to the
outside world**





The Jilting

Her lack of
closeness with her
daughters could
be a result of her
**inability to open
her heart**

The Jilting



Granny saved George's letters, but doesn't want anyone to know—she refers to her feelings for George as **silly and foolish**


Deep in Granny's heart,
there is the evergreen
memory of George's
rejection.





Not sharing this deep hurt with her loved ones has **cut off a central and tender part of herself from all others.**

Emotions are sacred, and, once violated, the scars may remain for a lifetime.



What happens when Granny dies?

GRANNY'S DEATH

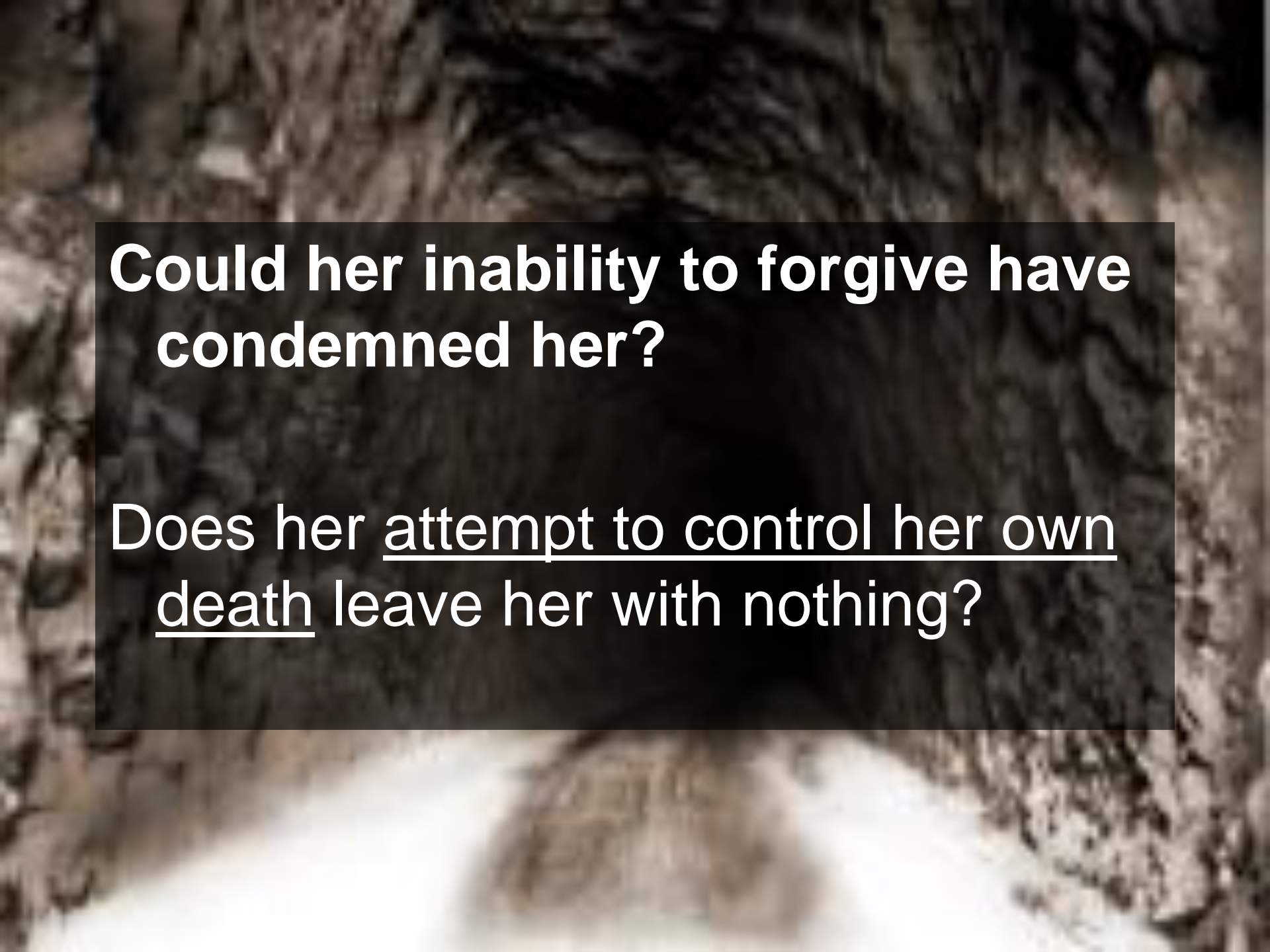


Granny's Death

What is meant
by “**Again no
bridegroom
and the
priest in the
house**” ?



Is she “jilted”
by God, who
is not there
for her when
she dies?



**Could her inability to forgive have
condemned her?**

Does her attempt to control her own
death leave her with nothing?

A blue-tinted photograph of laundry hanging on a line. A rainbow is visible in the background, arching over the clothes. The scene is outdoors, with trees and foliage visible in the distance. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

RESOLUTION



The final sentence describes her death: **“She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light.”**



Resolution?

Yet, there is **no sense of closure to Granny's life**, no sense that the conflicts raised in her memories have been **resolved**.



The final realization
in the story is that
**"there was no
bottom to death,
she couldn't
come to the end
of it."**



**“Because I could not stop for death
He kindly stopped for me...”**

--Emily Dickinson

End of Presentation.