Like A Winding Sheet By Anne Petry Essay, Research Paper

Pressure from the Women In "Like a Winding Sheet" Anne Petry chooses

not to fully develop the female characters of the story but still used them as a

major part of the story to bring on the climax. Petry chose to do this by using

each woman’s appearance and in some cases their rank in society to bring out the

violent doings of Johnson. Petry first used Johnson’s boss as a crisis in the

plot. Johnson was described as a man in pain and being tired which is assumed by

the reader was from working the long hours at work. After repeatedly being late

to work his boss finally scolds him for arriving so late, making her the first

lady to start the conflict in the story. By Johnson’s boss yelling at him he

becomes angered as thoughts of striking his white, female boss enter his mind.

The only things that keeps Johnson from hitting the boss was that it was

extremely immoral to hit a woman, and the fact that she is a superior to him as

his boss. The second woman in the story to create a complication in the story

was the next young white girl who is working at the coffee shop. On his way home

from work Johnson stopped at the coffee shop for the obvious cup of coffee.

Johnson had waited in line for quite a while for the cup of coffee but when he

finally got to the front for his coffee, the young white girl said that they

were out of coffee. When she told Johnson this he didn’t think that she did it

in a polite manner at all. Johnson thought that he deserved more respect due to

him being an elder to the girl, he felt that the girl didn’t show this respect.

Once again Johnson had thoughts of striking the young girl but for morality

reasons, he refrained. The final woman was the one that pushed the story to its’

climax. Johnson returned home a very tired and aggravated man from working and

the disrespectful women through out the day. This woman happened to be his wife

Mae, waiting for Johnson at home. Mae verbally abused him similarly to what his

boss had done. His wife told him that he was being a "tough old

nigger," and continued with similar statements. Although her meaning of the

term wasn’t as serious as the bosses was, it still added to Johnson’s pressure.

Once again the thoughts of raising a hand and striking the woman passed through

his mind. This time Johnson couldn’t refrain from striking his

"abuser." Although the person was again a woman, the pressure on the

man had been too much, and he released all of his pressure. All the women

throughout the day contributed to the pressure that the man had building inside

which finally became too much for Johnson to contain.