**‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ Roald Dahl**

**Clever story, unexpected twist, Mary as an interesting character**

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| **Area** | **Details** | **Evidence** | **Effect** |
| **Mary at the start** | * Enjoys their simple routine – waiting for husband to return from work * Calm, peaceful, content * 6 months pregnant – pregnancy ‘glow’ * Warm, cosy, homely atmosphere of house – nothing out of ordinary | “Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come.” | Creates a sense of everything being ordinary at the start – Mary is a kind, loving, placid character who is unsuspecting that anything is wrong |
| **Relationship with Patrick** | * Completely devoted to Patrick – loves & dotes on him * Does everything for him – attentive & eager to please * Sympathises with his tiredness & how hard he works * Patrick seems disconnected – unresponsive to her and speaks in very short, abrupt, commanding phrases – little emotion | “She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man and to feel – almost as a sunbather feels the sun – that warm male glow that came out of him to her”  OR  “She loved the intent, far look in his eyes when they rested on her, funny shape of the mouth”  *Repetition of “She loved”* | We begin to sympathise with Mary more as relationship seems one-sided and she seems unaware of Patrick’s disconnection from her – she is the ‘lamb’ at this stage |
| **Patrick’s News - Reaction** | * Patrick does ‘unusual’ things – out of routine – pours stronger drink, not hungry – preoccupied & working up to something * Can’t look her in eye – unsettles her * Bluntly tells he is leaving her (we are not told this directly = elision – mimics Mary being in the dark) * She is helpless, powerless, unsuspecting – the lamb (naïve & innocent) * Cold, callous, selfish – understatement of it being ‘kind of a bad time’, will give money but doesn’t want a fuss – worried about his job * Mary – childish reaction – pretend it didn’t happen, go on as usual – dazed & in denial | “she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong” - swirls are symbolic of the negative/darker undercurrents in relationship about to disturb Mary’s contentedness  OR  “watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word” | Mary is completely unsuspecting – creates a lot of sympathy for her as she is left in complete shock after Patrick’s cold, heartless bombshell that completely shatters her world |
| **The Murder** | * Goes on to make dinner – Patrick doesn’t stop her * Actions are described as ‘automatic’, seems robotic & unthinking – listing (crime of passion) * ‘A leg of lamb’ on paragraph of own – makes it stand out, seem significant * Patrick standing with back to her – symbolically turned away from her – he is the ‘lamb’ now – doesn't turn around/see what is coming * Hits him with leg of lamb (unusual weapon) with such force it shatters skull * Matter-of-fact ‘So I’ve killed him’ - cold, callous, no emotion * Doesn’t care what happens to her, main concern is unborn child – return to caring, unselfish character again – motivation to cover up | “When she walked across the room she couldn’t feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn’t feel anything at all”  OR  “Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head”  OR  “It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast.” | Dramatic change in Mary’s character from opening – shows what people are capable of when pushed. Patrick does not expect it and becomes the ‘lamb to the slaughter’ - also dark humour of the literal ‘lamb to the slaughter’ in the unusual weapon |
| **The Alibi & dealings with police** | * Mary immediately begins thinking logically through what she needs to do – cooking weapon, rehearsing voice & smile * Goes to shop to buy veg/dessert for tea – explaining change in routine to shopkeeper & giving plausible alibi * Talks herself into genuine shock at discovery of body – no acting, real emotion (contrast to original reaction) * Knows detectives – they treat her kindly – she is able to manipulate them – take a drink, eat the lamb | “if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she’d become frantic with grief and horror”  OR  “it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her” | Shows a completely different side to Mary’s character – very controlled, calculating, clever, manipulative – contrast from earlier – suggests we should not judge on first appearances |
| **Ending and Irony** | * Police believe weapon must be heavy metal spanner or vase – never occurs it is the lamb cooking * Keep assuming murderer must be a man * Mary convinces them to eat the murder weapon – described in a repulsive way “voices thick and sloppy” - says it will be doing her a favour * While eating, police speak about weapon being “Probably right under our very noses” * Final line Mary’s giggle suggests sinister nature | “Get the weapon, and you’ve got the man”  “She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favour”  “And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle” | Sequence of ironies at end reinforces how unusual/unexpected murder was – weapon and murderer. Complete transformation in our understanding of Mary’s character |