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How does Leslie Silko challenge our sense of living without fear, knowing the dangers as  
an adult?

When I started reading *Yellow Woman* by Leslie Marmon Silko I realized diving into the book that it seemed like the interpretation was that this girl was getting her fairy tale dream man and it that came true. Although it suggests at one point in the book that she was seduced, I think that she was then raped by this guy. The girl in this book was said to be kidnapped but wanted to go back with this man Silva. The yellow woman could not get enough of him but barely even knew who he was. This is a level of toxicity that I think is existent in the world we live in today. I am going to be providing a literary analysis of how men manipulate women into doing what they want with emotional control and their discreet methods to maintain control. I will also say that living freely without regard for consequences can get you in danger.

Throughout this story, you are presented with the idea of traditional woman's roles and expectations. The yellow woman goes off with the Ka'tsina spirit even though she is married to someone else and has an active role in their relationship. "My thigh clung to

his with dampness, and I watched the sun rising up through the tamaracks and willows. The small brown water birds came to the river and hopped across the mud, leaving brown scratches in the alkali-white crust.” (Silko pg. 1298). She was looking to do something, in a very real sense sinful, to enjoy cheating on her husband with another man. She wakes up on that first day to the Cinderella story with beautiful scenery and the animals, knowing what she is doing is wrong. “I looked at him for the last time, sleeping on the white river sand.” (Silko pg. 1298).

The yellow woman then has the opportunity to leave after she wakes up. She could have stopped everything right there, but she could not stay away. The man in this part of the story was not even awake yet, she could have slid off without him even noticing. But what does she do? She goes and wakes him up to tell him that she’s leaving because she misses his absence. Silva is seducing her without even having to open his eyes. He responds to her that saying, “You are coming with me, remember?” (Silko pg. 1298). I believe it was the Yellow Woman’s mission to stay with Silva as long as she could, she did not want the fairy tale to end.

In the next part of the plot, it seems that the girl does not seem to remember the night before. Could she have been drunk the night before and made the bad decision then? I do not think so. Immediately, the Yellow Woman story enters the narrator’s thoughts again, and she thinks about how Yellow Woman left to live with the ka’tsina spirit for many years before returning to her home with twin boys. The woman is skeptical about if she is the mythical Yellow Woman Silva keeps referring her to. I

believe that she loses her sense of self when she realizes what she has done to her family. The guilt of doing something bad behind a loved one's back is enough to make a person lose themselves. "I felt hungry and wondered what they were doing at home now-my mother, my grandmother, my husband, and the baby." (Silko pg. 1300). If you have a baby back at home, why are you out doing what you are doing? Even after thinking about her life and family back home she still decided to stay with Silva. She is convincing herself that she is different from the rest.

When the Yellow Woman is in the house eating with Silva, she has a self-realization moment that might not be the first time that he has pulled this by the river trick. So, the Yellow Woman ends up asking him if he does this often. "Have you brought a woman here before?" (Silko pg. 1300). Silva ends up playing dumb acting like he has no clue what she is talking about. That is another sign of someone being toxic and he is intentionally trying to mentally play with his woman. He does not even answer the question and avoids even furthering the conversation by changing the subject. This man Silva seems to have a lot of levels of immaturity mixed with manipulation.

The danger comes and is felt in two instances. The first time is when the Yellow Woman lies down with Silva in his house in the mountains. This fling that started out as a fairy tale turns into a situation way worse. She climbs under the blanket with him, and she turns away from him. He uses brute force to show her that he can dominate her physically. He then reminds her by saying, "You don't understand, do you, little Yellow Woman? You will do what I want." (Silko pg. 1301).

This is the part of the story where the fairy tale turns dark. The man had an instance earlier in the story where he was holding the Yellow Woman's arm while they were walking, and she stops trying to pull away. She knows he has that kind of control over her. It is clear that they are saying that he would continue to do what he pleased with or without her consent and she knows that. "... and I was afraid because I understood that his strength could hurt me." (Silko pg. 1301). This is the danger that she is exposed to by doing something she should not have. Also, she is in the woods, in the mountains, super far away from her house, this is how bad things happen to you no matter who you are. Even though she was fearful she still blinded herself to the bad things he was doing, justifying him. "But later, while he slept beside me, I touched his face and I had a feeling- the kind of feeling for him that overcame me that morning along the river. The yellow woman has another opportunity after spending this second night with Silva to leave but she chooses to stay again.

The second instance where the yellow woman was in danger was when they encountered the white man looking for a cattle thief. They go out to try to sell the cattle he hunted. Had she forgotten that Silva had already told her that he was the thief that stole the cattle? When they encounter this guy, he knows that Silva is the man they had been looking for. He knows the situation and does not want the yellow woman to see what he's going to do. Silva had a rifle, and the other guy was unarmed he ended up killing him after the yellow woman rides off. Now I believe that if the white man was

armed that the situation would have been a lot different. But of all the things Silva did I can respect that he did not let the lady see him killing.

In the end, she feels sad about leaving him. This is the level of toxicity that I had mentioned before. To have a mental constraint on someone and to be able to manipulate them leads to bad things. Even after the Yellow Woman was put in real danger, she cannot help but ignore all of those bad things and only look at the good things. She is blinded by a fake sense of love and belonging, thinking about him the whole way back to her actual family. "I saw the leaves and I wanted to go back to him- to kiss him and to touch him- but the mountains were too far away now." (Silko pg. 1304). I believe that if she was closer to him when having these thoughts, she might have gone back to him. But because she is too far away from her secret romance she decides to go back home, still thinking to herself that he is going to come back for her at some point. "And I told myself, because I believe it, he will come back sometime and be walking again by the river."

The yellow woman had experienced all of these traumatic situations that most people would be shocked by. But she is not bothered by the guy she was just with that killed someone, or the forceful acts towards her. She is only really sorry at the end that she could not tell her grandpa the Yellow Woman stories because those were the ones he liked. She had no regret walking through the door back to her family, knowing what she had done the last couple of days. She follows it up by lying and saying she had gotten kidnapped, which we all know was not true.

Overall, I think that Silva was the driving factor for her staying for multiple days with him, but I do not think that he was the initial reason for the yellow woman to be by that river in the first place. The relationship here was short-lived but a very toxic one. Silva used tactics of manipulation on a woman who seems to be struggling with her identity in the end. The fairy tale then turned into horror story was a good one.