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Crime and Punishment

### Nobility of Sacrificing

The idea of sacrificing oneself for someone else is purely a selfless act deemed heroic. It is not for the benefit of the individual, but for someone else. There is no pleasure in sacrificing one's body and it becomes a kind of duty that must be withheld to the very end.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonya sells her body to earn money for her family. She is tainted because of the job that she has to do, but the deed is a noble one. In her family's eyes, she is a hero that's keeping a roof over their heads and protecting them from starvation. Although young, Sonya is ensuring her families survival. That is no small job for an eighteen-year-old

Sonya's father, Marmeladov, feels pain to see his daughter sacrifice herself, yet he does nothing but drink away her money that she earns and gives to him. Her father is by no means the type of person that anyone would want to continue sacrificing themselves for, especially when he's not putting the money that is being earned to good use. He felt remorse for what his daughter had to do to support the family, but he continued to do nothing about the situation and sacrifices that his daughter was making.

Marmeladov was a burden to Sonya, but her love for him as a father would overrule that fact. She stepped in to fill her father's shoes and took on a duty that would be too much for any typical person to bear. When Marmeladov was at a tavern, drinking as usual, he saw the main character, Raskolnikov, and came over to talk to him. Marmeladov told Raskolnikov about an instance when Sonya came home with money and placed in front of her step-mother. Later on,

they fell asleep in each other's arms. Marmeladov stated that he continued to lay on the floor drunk, but stopped short (part 1 ch.2).

Marmeladov fully understands the fact that Sonya was the one who took the fall for their family. By sacrificing her body, Sonya is committing the most noblest act that no one could possibly ask for. It's difficult to refuse someone like Sonya who would care enough in order to endure all the pain that is coupled with sacrifices. She takes on this heroic figure to her family and Raskolnikov.

Sonya was not forced to choose the path of prostitution, but it was the one that she followed nonetheless. There is nothing pure about selling one's body for the sake of money. It is a weight that Sonya carries on her conscience every day and will continue to follow her for the rest of her life.

When Sonya's father was dying, her step-sister was sent to fetch her. When she arrived, she was described to be in a silk dress and "guttery finery of a special stamp" that was "unmistakably betraying its shameful purpose" (part 2 ch.7). All the strangers in the room that was present when Marmeladov was dying only saw Sonya for what she was dressed as: a prostitute. The stares and accusations of what Sonya does for a living would be nerve-racking for anyone that is placed in this type of situation, but she ignored all of this and only focused on the fact that her father was dying right in front of her eyes.

In the last few seconds of his life, Marmeladov saw his daughter and said one meaningful word to her, "Forgive" (part 2 ch.7). She showed her grief as she ran to him on his deathbed. It was lucid that Sonya held no grudge against her father. Even when he was alive, she did not accuse him of being a bad father or point out his lack of participation in bringing in money for

their family. She recognized how her father drowned out his sorrow through alcohol, but continued to give him money for his addiction.

Although Sonya was only eighteen, she saw enough events that would last her a lifetime. She appeared to be a young girl on the outside, but was actually a much older and knowledgeable person on the inside. Sonya is not simply a timid girl for she held several responsibilities that an eighteen-year-old should not have to carry. No typical teenager would have to go through the pain of sacrifice that Sonya endures. However, these obstacles that she faces define her and also make her appear even more heroic for being able to get through all of it.

When her father turned to alcohol, Sonya became responsible as being the head and sole source of income. She took on the responsibility of becoming one of the caretakers of two young children that are not even blood-related to her. She became accountable for two children and adults. It's ridiculous to think that this young girl was the one that was supporting a grown woman and man when it is their job as a parent to take care of her. Yet, when Sonya decided to sacrifice herself for her family, she took on the role of an adult and her parents became the children.

People do stupid things for love, though it does not have to be romantic for it can apply to the affection that one feels toward one's family like in this case with Sonya. The love for her family made it so that she would do anything for them, even prostitution. She placed her family above her values and did what she thought she had to do in order to keep them alive.

For love, Sonya became a prostitute. She put her family above everything else because they were that important to her. There are a limited amount of people in the world that would ever put themselves in Sonya's position let alone anyone as young as herself. The burden that

she bears is not an easy one, and the job that she needs to fulfill is not simple enough to give to another person. No one would be quick to volunteer to take her position.

Marmeladov of all people in *Crime and Punishment* knew especially how much his daughter loved their family because she was willing to sacrifice her body for them. Without any argument, everyone stepped aside and let Sonya carry this burden alone. Because Marmeladov and his family knew that they meant that much to Sonya that she would sacrifice herself for them, they would let her do it. It's difficult to turn her down when she volunteered for a job that she never wanted.

The only thing that Sonya gains from selling her body is the insured feeling that there will be money for her family. She does not spend any of the money that she earns for herself, and doesn't keep or hide any of it from her family. Everything that she earns she gives to her step-mother so that she can take care of the youngest children in the family. Even though the only person that is blood related to Sonya is Marmeladov, she does not favor her father the most or put his well-being above everyone else's. There is no favorites or self-gain. Sonya is simply doing her duty as a daughter and sister to her family. However, in turn, she loses the ability to live the life of a normal teenager.

With so much responsibility on her hands, it's amazing that Sonya did not go mad with everything that she had to do. Raskolnikov asked Sonya if it would be easier to just commit suicide. Sonya was not surprised by Raskolnikov's suggestion and simply replied, "But what would become of them?" (part 4 ch.4).

It is made clear here that Sonya had previously thought about committing suicide before, but she knew that nothing good would come out of it. Without her, there would be no one else that would be able to bring in the money. When Raskolnikov stated that Polenka, Sonya's step-

sister, would end up having to take the same road that she had taken, Sonya cried aloud her despair (part 4 ch.4). No one would want to take the same path that Sonya had taken, and it pains her to hear that the person that she's sacrificing herself for might have to do what she had to do. The fact that Sonya wants to take all the responsibility alone makes her even more heroic in Raskolnikov's eyes.

By selling herself, Sonya became admirable figure among her family and Raskolnikov. The life of prostitution is tainted, but Sonya is considered pure. Her selfless act of sacrificing herself has deemed her this title. Sonya is the heroine that saved her family and a man from a life of destruction. Through countless sacrifices that can only be described as heroic, she became their savior that they continued to countlessly depend on.

Work Cited

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, and David McDuff. *Crime And Punishment*. New York City: Penguin Classics, 2005.