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Precious



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Precious



Why do people appreciate one another? Why are there those who give and forgive, and those who get and forget? What can be the future of an Afro-American girl, who has been raped by her father since the age of three? What can be done for the rehabilitation of those, who have survived family abuse? The film *Precious: Based on the Novel 'Push'* by Sapphire, released in 2009, raises these questions in an antagonistic way.

The main character of the film is a young black girl, who lives in a dirty Harlem neighborhood in New York. The girl's name is Clarice Precious Jones, though people usually call her Precious. She is very fat, and at the age of sixteen, she is pregnant the second time and is going to have a baby (*Precious*, 5:02). Though her looks are ugly, she possesses a captivating nature, full of dreams and cherished hopes. She imagines herself loved and famous, singing or performing for people. (*Precious*, 20:52). Sometimes her dreams are interrupted by recollections of sexual intercourse (*Precious*, 6:38). Those are dark blurred pictures of the restless and daunted mind. She has no friends and cannot read or write properly. The girl constantly hopes that "one day somebody would break through to her or she would break out through the wall of uselessness and distress" (*Precious*, 2:02).

The principle of the public school, which Precious attends, sends the girl to an alternative school, where Clarice finds the understanding and support. Miss Blu Rain, her new teacher, manages to help the girl in mastering basic educational skills (*Precious*, 35:48). Precious starts

speaking, reading and writing about her life and daily impressions. She begins to keep a diary and visit a social worker, Ms. Weiss, who tries to perceive the nature of relations in Clarice's family (Precious, 43:50).

Precious bears a healthy boy, and all her new friends attend her regularly at hospital. (Precious, 55:20). It clears up that Clarice bore her first child at home without any medical aid. The girl's daughter, named Mango, has a Down syndrome. She lives with Precious' grandmother. The little girl appears at her mother's habitat only when a social worker is to come. Clarice's mother does not work and lives on the welfare and money, given by the government for children upbringing (Precious, 45:40). When Clarice returns home with a little son, mother throws the baby on the floor and beats her daughter. The girl and her newly born child fall from stairs and have to flee away in nowhere on a winter night. (Precious, 64:15). Clarice goes to the office of the alternative school and lives there until Miss Rain helps her to find another place. In a touching manner, her teacher, social assistant, other girls of the alternative school group and a medical worker from the hospital support Clarice and her son Adam in their hardships.

Soon the girl's mother comes and declares that Clarice's father has died of AIDS. (Precious, 80:02). After learning that she is a HIV positive, the girl falls in despair. (Precious, 85:04). Nevertheless, her child is healthy; thus, Clarice finds the strength to go further and pass the test for getting a secondary school certificate. The girl steals her personal file from a social worker's drawer and analyzes her family situation from another point of view (Precious, 88:07). The climax scene of the film is the meeting of Clarice with her mother at the social worker's office. In a

casual manner, the woman reveals horrible facts regarding the family abuse (Precious, 92:50). Clarice's mother wants her daughter to come back, but Precious declares that this is their last meeting. Clarice takes her daughter Mango from her mother. The film ends at the point when Precious and her two children go along a sunny street in the hope for a better future.

Interpersonal communication means the exchange of messages between communicants by verbal, vocal or visual means (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2010). It is an important part of socializing, and people cannot function successfully and fully without elementary communication skills.

Modern scholarly researches admit that non-verbal signs transfer more information than verbal ones (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2010). For example, Clarice's communication with her classmates or teachers at public school is mostly silent. The girl's ugly looks, obesity and absence of elementary writing, reading or communication skills make Precious a disabled in the modern society.

The film watchers have an opportunity to perceive the girl's inner world through perspectives of her imagination, but in real life, it is difficult to understand the dreams of another person without using words. Dreams and imagination are too abstract for that. When someone irritates or intrudes upon Clarice, she simply beats her offenders, because she has perceived the same attitude in her family. Her instincts and behavior are plain, but her experience is unique in its cruelty. The girl cannot speak about her problems, because her mother does not let

her open “her lousy mouth”. Precious lives in the atmosphere of the constant abuse and humiliation. Her mother’s language is vulgar and full of spicy similes like “big ass”, “you beach”, etc.

Clarice’s mother is not interested in the girl’s inner world or dreams. Foundations of interpersonal communication are self disclosure and trust. Precious suffers from the absence of a trustful and healthy relationship since her early childhood. Initially, the communication she experiences is mostly of non-verbal character. She has no friends to talk or chat with. Her mother constantly shouts at her and uses a foul language. When the girl objects or does not succumb to her mother’s orders, she gets either beaten or kicked.

Interpersonal communication skills are the basic foundations of individual socializing (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2010). When the girl comes to the alternative school, she starts from developing her writing, listening, speaking and reading skills. She finds a personal enjoyment in the process of learning and writes about it in her diary. Precious’ response to studies and a friendly attitude give her a chance to improve and realize herself, get a certificate of the secondary education and develop some professional skills in the future.

The interpersonal communication relationship is a crucial result of the process of feelings, thoughts and attitudes exchange between individuals (Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, 2010). The film viewers have the opportunity to observe the evolution of Clarice’s relations with her teacher and friends from the alternative school. At first, the girl is not disposed to speak, but when she finds herself in a trustful and friendly

environment, she reveals unusual precious features of her kind nature and love for people. The encouragement and patience of her teacher, sound humor of her group mates and the social worker's closer look at the extent of abuse in Clarice's family show a new perspective in understanding of what love is. In the scene, when Precious learns that she is HIV positive, she exclaims that love has given her nothing. Her family never cared for her indeed, though she needed them so much. The only thing she inherited from her parents is an incurable disease and a complete frustration in the face of life difficulties.

Some people are disposed to think that they can possess others as their property. Clarice's mother reveals such an attitude to her daughter. The woman convinces the girl that she will never have success in life. Though Precious' mother strongly objects to drugs, the place, where the family lives, is always smoked because of the woman's addiction to nicotine. The food habits are far from the healthy mode of life. The meals are fattish and lacking vitamins. Such poor environment stipulates unhealthy interpersonal relationships. Stubborn and blind minds are not ready to accept changes or see the advantages and possibilities of education. Clarice's mother does not see any other possibility of survival than to live on the welfare.

When people have no possibility of the self-realization in life, they start believing that the world is in debt to them. Clarice's mother is an example of a completely lost and socially useless personality. She takes revenge on her family as she has no one else for the exploitation or self justification. The parents' disbelief and absence of encouragement, poor cultural and social examples kill any sprouts of future success in

many young souls, similar to Precious.

The family abuse paradox is in its unexpectedness. It is so painful to admit that people whom one loves and trusts can cause a harm or injury. Violence is not expected from the loved ones. Precious is not an exception, and, as any child, she feels attached to her parents and serves their evil propensities. The girl cannot imagine her life without them and, consequently, their abuse and humiliation. Precious' mother sees a love competitor and a child in her daughter. The woman appreciates the girl in some horrible manner and needs her mostly for selfish purposes. Unlike Precious, her mother has never admitted the necessity to develop and learn, and shows no signs of imagination or self-criticism. These are some of the distinguished differences between those, who get out of poor environments, and those, who die in them.

Interpersonal relations are an important and usually very personal realm. People often refuse to speak up their sexual or mental problems. As it refers to a subconscious sphere, some individuals may have difficulties in interpreting their natural desires and instinctive behaviors. Misbalance between body and mental needs can result in serious disorders and misbehaviors. For example, Precious' mother puts up with her husband raping her daughter, because she is afraid to lose her lover as she explains. Her body needs are more crucial to her than her maternity instincts. She allows such outrage subconsciously, led by her sexual desires and needs. The indifference of the people around, horrors of such Ghetto neighborhoods as Harlem, as well as a poor social, cultural and mental development of individuals engaged in the affair, let the family abuse thrive even in a high-tech age of progress

and science.

In the scene of the last meeting with her mother, Clarice exclaims to the social worker that no one can change anything in a situation like hers. (Precious, 100:10). She perceives the depth of her mother's abuse to her and understands that being a mother means the ability to give children some opportunity in life. Clarice promises to complete education and give her children love and care. She takes her daughter Mongo from her destitute mother, because she is sure the girl would be better with her real mother.