

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN STEPHEN KING'S *ROSE MADDER*

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Abstract

I read it somewhere, “You’ve given him the benefit of the doubt long enough. Now it’s time to give yourself the benefit of the truth.” Marriages have not been a cup of tea for everyone. You are lucky enough if your marriage is a loving one but not everyone is as lucky. Sometimes the wrong marriages or our wrong partners force us to think that it wasn’t a cakewalk, especially when the matter is of **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**. As painful as it is to admit that we are being abused, it is even more painful to come to the conclusion that the person we love is someone we cannot afford to be around. This research paper will focus on the theme of Domestic Violence in the novel of Stephen King’s *ROSE MADDER*. It focuses on the main protagonist Rosie’s life. How She escapes from her eccentric husband and then makes a path to overcome her fear for her husband, leaves him and finally live a happy Life marrying the right person.

Keywords:- Domestic Violence, eccentric, wrong Marriage.

“All marriages are sacred, but not all are safe.”

- Rob Jackson

This paper entitled, “ Domestic Violence in Stephen King’s *Rose Madder*” aims to explore the life of a young woman named Rosie who is married and is being tortured by her husband by consistent beating. She tries and helps herself and escapes. It is a story of a tender wife changing to a strong individual and giving back her husband what she has received from him, from the last 14 years of her marriage.

As per Stephen King’s words, there’s a phrase, “the elephant in the living room,” which purports to describe what it’s like to live with a drug addict, an alcoholic, an abuser. People outside such relationships will sometimes ask, “How could you let such a business go on for so many years? Didn’t you see the elephant in the living room?” And it’s so hard for anyone living in a more normal situation to understand the answer that comes closest to the truth; “I’m sorry, but it was there when I moved in. I didn’t know it was an elephant; I thought it was part of the furniture.” There comes an aha-moment for some folks – the lucky ones – when they suddenly recognize the difference.”

Stephen Edwin King is an American author of contemporary horror, suspense, science fiction and fantasy. *Rose Madder* is a 1995 novel written by him. It deals with the effects of domestic violence and relies on a Greek mythology. Though Stephen King may be a household name of “horror”, *Rose Madder* isn’t quite horror, though- “it’s dark fantasies mixed with what some people called an “issues” novel. *Rose Madder* is a story about a married couple Rosie Daniels and Norman Daniels. Rosie Daniels' husband, Norman, beats her while she is four months pregnant, causing her to suffer a miscarriage. Rosie briefly considers leaving Norman but dismisses the idea: Norman is a policeman, and is excellent at finding people. Norman also has a violent temper and was recently accused of assaulting an African-American woman named Wendy Yarrow. Nine years later, when Rose is making the bed, she notices a drop of blood on the sheet from her nose the night before; Norman had punched her in the face for spilling iced tea on him. Rose realizes that she has passively suffered through Norman's abuse for 14 years and that if she continues to put up with it, he may well eventually kill her. Rose decides to leave Norman, departing from her unidentified city on a bus, with their bank card. Once Norman realizes that Rose is gone, he resolves to hunt her down and kill her. But as the story progresses we see that a Greek myth takes place and Norman Daniels is killed and Rosie leads a happy life.

In *Rosie Daniels* we find a sweet, remarkable woman whose journey from a frightened spouse to powerful, realized individual is seen. Rosie Daniels is an abused woman in the story, who suffers her abuse in a confused, semi-silent state- which she takes it as a ‘sleep’. Her husband Norman is a police officer, who cannot see beyond his anger for his wife and which results in beating and punching his wife- Rosie Daniels. At the starting of the book we experience a most tragic and brutal incident by Norman of beating Rosie when she was four months pregnant leading to her miscarriage. She stays in the state of panic for a course of nine long years and readers are not given a chance to see through these nine years as it’s not mentioned in the book. What rouses her is a single drop of blood on her bed- sheet one morning, and the dual thoughts that come in her mind- that he might kill her if this keeps going on...and that he might not.

And one day, she escapes from her husband’s clutches and travels to an unknown city and starts anew. She reclaims her maiden name- Rosie McClendon- the identity she thinks of as real Rosie. We watch Rosie move on to a shelter named Daughters and Sisters and begin to construct a new, independent life and on the other hand, Norman, consumed by rage, is searching for her. Norman is actually tottering on the brink of insanity. On one level, peeking into Norman’s psychoses and watching them worsen is deeply fascinating and helps reader to understand Norman’s madness. Norman’s insanity grows so exponential it approaches parody. His diatribes against every person who is not white, male or straight goes tiresome. Rosie gets a job and buys an apartment. And then we see that Rosie buys a strange painting, which she calls *Rose Madder*. Although she can't see her face, Rosie feels a strange connection to the woman in the painting. Soon, the differences between the real Rosie and *Rose Madder* start to blur, paralleling Rosie's transformation into a new woman. But what kind of woman is *Rose Madder*? And what will Rosie have to become to face Norman?

Rose Madder is a perfect blend of realism, surrealism and suspense. King develops Rosie's character expertly from a scared, abused wife to a survivor to the heroine of the novel. Possibly the most insightful part of this journey comes in the denouement, the part of Greek myth which is blended with the main part of the story. Rose discovers that the painting seems to periodically change. Rosie then took the picture off the wall and then she flipped it over. She tore off the paper lining over the back of the picture and looked underneath. There were some dead

leaves, few dead grasshoppers and few purple colour flowers. She touched it and then walked in the picture. There was a woman in a reddish purple colour dress called Rose Madder. She was about to go over to her, when a woman came up to her and told her that the woman in the rose madder dress had gone crazy and “hasn’t been herself”. The woman looked like the past murder victim of Norman named Wendy Yarrow. Rosie went over to Rose Madder and realized that all her skin has decayed. The woman who looked like Wendy told Rosie not to look at Rose Madder’s face otherwise she’ll go insane. Rose Madder asked Rosie to go to the Temple of Bull and get Rose Madder’s baby. Rosie agreed and entered the tomb. She reaches there by facing many obstacles. Finally she comes near the maze and at the centre of the maze is the baby. But the bull is also there. She waits quietly there till the bull is gone and finally holds the baby and runs, but the bull saw her and it started chasing Rosie but she finally makes her way out of the maze. She returns Rose Madder’s baby and in return Rose Madder gives her a gold armlet.

This Greek myth one way or the other gives strength to Rose to face Norman and to lead her life more positively. Norman, after searching Rosie everywhere, reaches her apartment. Rosie tricks Norman into following her into the painting where Rose Madder kills him. And after that she finally welcomes the love of her life Bill Steiner, the man who sold her the painting. He proposes her and finally marries her by the end of the novel and has a daughter.

So, while concluding we can say that the novel gives a message to all the victims of domestic violence that staying with the situations which hurt oneself constantly is not a right idea. We have to collect our spirit and courage to shun that person and the situation the right very moment. And this message by Stephen King, is left open to the readers understanding. According to Beverly Engel “You have the right to your own ideas and opinions, to make your own decisions, and to have things go your way at times. Stand up for those rights.

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