

Purgatory - Reaction Paper

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The short film “Purgatory” illustrates the dynamics between husband and wife in their daily life. The viewers get to see their established routines, methods of communication, functional and dysfunctional traits in the marriage & even their interaction or lack of interaction with their family and community. Due to the nature of the film where there is a direct presence of abuse in several ways it was unsettling to watch, but more so unsettling in coming to terms with the fact that these issues are relatively common. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV, 2020) fact sheet, “on average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States.” Another startling statistic by NCADV (2020) states that, “1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner contact sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking with impacts such as injury, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder, use of victim services, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, etc.” This paper will discuss the terms of disposition and attitude of both the male and female characters, signs of abuse, the role of isolation, power and control and specifically for the female victim safety planning and harm reduction techniques that would help her best in this situation.

In terms of the male character, the husband's disposition was very jealous, controlling and easily angered. You could say that he showed a lack of sensitivity towards his wife and her experiences. He down played bigger issues such as, his wife’s pain and bleeding when peeing in the mornings. He showed manipulative behaviors when he purposely got his wife drunk and then began name calling his wife things such as “drunkard.” It was insinuated that he was being sexually abusive while wife passed out after drinking and taking medication.

In regard to the main female character in terms of her disposition and attitude I observed that she is apologetic when seemingly unnecessary, extremely submissive, and even afraid at

times. The wife is dependent on her husband for almost everything and seems to have lower self-esteem. She has a loving and caring attitude towards her husband and truly wants to please him. She goes out of her way to get all dressed up for him, and make dinner for them to enjoy together. She generally seems happy and pleasant when she's alone in the house. However, in the midst of trying to please her husband, if he gets angry or seems bothered she becomes timid, emotional and scared.

There were several signs of abuse throughout the film such as gaslighting , name calling, controlling and manipulative behavior, emotional and sexual abuse. The wife was overly apologetic. The isolation from family, personal errands or even medical care kept her solely reliant on her husband for the answers to everything. She was restricted from running her own personal errands as we saw the husband have groceries delivered to the house. Because of the strained relationship between the husband and his wife's mother he even strictly forbids any kind of get together unless its with his own family. We can see how much this affects the female character because even when she receives calls from her mother, regardless of how she feels she refrains from answering due to her husband. Another important person of contact that she has been refrained from seeing is a doctor. This pain and quite possibly depression that she is feeling from the unknown sexual abuse is consistent and taking a toll on her physically and emotionally. The tactic of isolation plays a part in abuse within the couple because there is no guidance or outside advice from her own mother/family or outside resources.

Regardless of how detrimental the abuse is to the female characters wellbeing, just leaving the relationship might also be very harmful. She may fear she is in more danger if she just leaves the relationship. The lack of financial security would present more of a problem in having to support herself when its likely she has never done so before. While her mom could be

an option she may feel as though she has nowhere to go, or that her husband could find her eventually. Emotionally speaking she may feel as though she won't find love elsewhere or be unworthy of remarrying as well.

If I was the female character's therapist, it would be of utmost importance to fully understand what is going on and even getting her to acknowledge abusive behaviors or patterns within the relationship, because she genuinely may not even know that these are abnormal/toxic behaviors. Once the client successfully identifies these things for what they truly are it would be important to assess the client's safety. Even if the next steps were not to leave her husband what measures can be made to ensure her safety? Implementing a safety plan could look like dressing modestly, no drinking in the evening, and becoming familiar with all medications she's taking and their side-effects. If the client decided she was ready to leave the abuser, the counselor should develop a safety plan with the main goal of keeping the client physically safe, identifying realistic and reliable resources, and/or deciding to call the authorities on her husband or not.

References

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2020). Domestic violence. Retrieved from https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/domestic_violence-2020080709350855.pdf?1596811079991.

Purgatory. (2021). Retrieved March 10, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVTyu1CfVpw>.