

THE ROAD- Familial Love



As there are only two main characters, a father and a son, *The Road's* principal relationship is one of paternal love. The man and boy are "each the other's world entire," and it is only the man's love for the boy that gives him the will to persevere. Their love is generally of the stark, silent kind, as the pair's whole existence consists of surviving from one day to the next. Never in the book does either one say "I love you," but when he has the chance the man shows his love in other ways, as by giving the boy a Coca-Cola. For his part, the boy constantly looks to his father for reassurance, safety, and some kind of order in his chaotic world.

Briefly contrasted with this paternal love is the maternal love of the boy's mother. The woman elected to kill herself rather than be raped and eaten, and she suggested that the man kill the boy too, as death would be better than the hellish world they now occupy. The woman is also offering a kind of familial love, but she tries to "save" the boy by protecting him from pain instead of helping him survive at whatever cost. The man and the woman both love the boy, but in such a bleak world they can only show their love out of the depths of their own hope or despair.

The boy looks to his father for protection and even when he is extremely terrified, he is able to trust him because of the strong love between them. The boy gives the man purpose, being able to provide support to him. This gives the man a reason to continue living through this hell, he no longer lives for himself, but rather to keep his son alive and reassure him.

"Just wait here, he said.

I'm going with you.

I thought you were scared.

I am scared.

Okay. Just stay close behind me" – The boy fears what may be behind the doors, but doesn't want to be left alone. Shows the trust he has in his father's ability to protect him.

"When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him" (pg.3)- Emphasises his love for his son, he can't leave him alone.

"Are they going to kill us? Papa?" – Looking to his father for protection

"He knew only that the child was his warrant. He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (pg.5)- The father sees himself as the only one who can keep his son safe

"This is my child, he said. I wash a dead man's brains out of his hair. That is my job. Then he wrapped him in the blankets and carried him to the fire" (pg.72)- Again, showing the way he sacrifices his own sanity to ensure his son has a somewhat normal life

"Are you okay? he said. The boy nodded. Then they set out along the blacktop in the gunmetal light, shuffling through the ash, each the other's world entire" (pg.6)- Both the boy and his father provide for each other. The boy encourages the father and keeps him going and the boy knows his father loves him and trusts him to keep him safe.

They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I cant. I cant... We used to talk about death, she said. We dont anymore. Why is that?

I dont know.

It's because it's here. There's nothing left to talk about. (pg.56)- The mother feels that by dying, the family would be safer than living in the world of ruined humanity

The one thing I can tell you is that you won't survive for yourself. I know because I would never have come this far. A person who had no one would be well advised to cobble together a passable ghost. Breathe it into being and coax it along with words of love. Offer it each phantom crumb and shield it from harm with your body. As for me my only hope is for eternal nothingness and I hope for it with all my heart. (pg.57)- The father's drive to continue is to keep his son alive and try and escape the destroyed world

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When he went back to the fire he knelt and smoothed her hair as she slept and he said if he were God he would have made the world just so and no different. (pg.217)- The father wants nothing more than to protect his son, highlighting the love between the two characters

You have to carry the fire. I dont know how to. Yes you do. Is it real? The fire?

Yes it is.

Where is it? I dont know where it is.

Yes you do. It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it.

Just take me with you. Please.

I cant.

Please, Papa.

I cant. I cant hold my son dead in my arms. I thought I could but I cant. (pg.277)- The father might be losing hope, but the love for his son encourages him to provide ways to hold on. It highlights the son's innocence and constant hope for a better life

They lay listening. Can you do it? When the time comes? When the time comes there will be no time. Now is the time. Curse God and die. What if it doesnt fire? It has to fire. What if it doesnt fire? Could you crush that beloved skull with a rock? Is there such a being within you of which you know nothing? Can there be? Hold him in your arms. Just so. The soul is quick. Pull him toward you. Kiss him. Quickly. (pg.112)- The father is placed in a position that questions his morals. He wants to protect his son but fears that this world will never be escaped. The strength of the love for his son is shown, providing him with the only reason now, to not give up and continue searching when left with nothing.