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The Cruel Recurring Cycle of Society

In the poem *The Dream Keeper*, Langston Hughes conveys a powerful message of how people who used to have joyful lives and wild dreams, now be obliged to face the cruel reality of society and are promised to have their full-of-roses fantasies kept from falling apart through the meaningful words:

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world. (1-8)

Looking at the world full of crimes and realizing how the wrongdoers were once children with naive yet beautiful thoughts makes people feel surprised and wonder how people adapt in such misfortune ways. Each individual desires to fulfill their dreams and make the world a better place for humanity, however, for the entire history of the human race, no one could achieve the

appear-to-be impossible. This society is so savage, even tougher for specific people, and Jason Reynolds, a black American writer, has stood up and unveiled the fierce reality of the world through his works. In Jason Reynolds' novel *Long Way Down*, he employs the symbol of The Rules to portray the theme of the cyclical trap of violence, which reveals that people are born innocent, but the environments they grow up, such as their families, schools, friends, neighborhoods that fill them with wickedness, bring them on the same path of doom that the previous ones have walked on to struggle, from least to most brutal, and thwart them from overcoming the situation.

To begin, The Rules that have quietly taken shape within the neighborhood where the main character Will resides is a solid tool that Reynolds utilizes to express his idea of how people can be trapped not merely physically but also mentally, by the conditions and what happens around them, causing them to make unwise choices. So many stories with the same deplorable ending have been told to Will in order to enlighten him, to make him give up on The Rules, and to make him know what is and is not moral, "BUT TO EXPLAIN [HIMSELF] [he] said, The Rules are the rules" (Reynolds 173). One by one, "people" who have connections with him and are no longer alive propose to Will what happened to them, how they comprehend Will's emotions, and how they want Will to bail out The Rules. By stating in the third rule that one ought to take revenge for the people they love, The Rules have been taking away lives and turning the innocents into malefactors. Despite being persuaded, living in a neighborhood that is embraced by what is believed to be true, and seeing the people who were close to him leave him behind, those issues are just too harsh for Will to deal with, and eventually, bring him into malpractice. The Rules in this situation act as a cage that keeps people's minds from rationality,

imprisoning their thoughts with what has caused so many tragedies for the people of the locality; a continuity enabler of the round of violence that has filled the area with blood. Additionally, The Rules display the difficulties a person has to face in order to escape the traditions of their family, how they let their intrusive thoughts win and continue to follow the path of wrongdoings. The moment Will meets the ghost of Shawn, the one he loves, the one that left him behind in pain, the one that he has been doing all this plan for; he cannot hold his emotions and decides to release them, to confess to Shawn “that [he] did like [Shawn] told [him], like Buck told [Shawn], like [their] grandfather told [their] uncle, like [their] uncle told [their] dad” (Reynolds 293). More than one minute staying in the vertical silver box, listening to, in Will’s opinion, the nonsense advice, and believing that what he does is all for his family; and now, his family stands in front of him and stops him. With perplexing questions that may be swirling in Will’s mind, he is presently much the same as a kid who could not make a wise and solid decision, just keeps repeating his words that he is forced to do this action, being trapped in doing this job, because what he does is what others in the family did. Disastrously, the others did because they also saw the previous did, tracing back to where all these misfortunes started from, The Rules. The further Will tries to justify his purpose, the further he shows how irreversible he has deepened into the round of violence, because revenge has been embedded into the bloodline of the Holloman. Once again, The Rules play as a maintainer of the pattern of local shootings and deaths, can be seen as a presentation of the rigorous standards that may exist in some families, and limit the understanding, actions, and decision-making skills of its members. To sum up, The Rules do a great job of demonstrating how people’s minds can be imprisoned by the environment, by what they hear and believe, which could be a factor in why they become lawbreakers and engage in

violence, although they may be educated at school to become responsible citizens and solve conflicts using words.

To draw to a close, individuals are born guiltless, however, the conditions they grow up in such as their neighborhoods, schools, or even families are what may turn them into trespassers, pave the way to lead them to adversities, and block them from subduing; this message about the cyclical trap of violence, through the symbolization of *The Rules*, is fully expressed in the great piece of literature *Long Way Down* by an impactful writer Jason Reynolds. Violence is brutal, tragic, and it fills the world with despair; still, violence is difficult for people to remove from their lives. Even if the modern citizens of the twenty-first century are doing their best to educate themselves to become better civilized, and to limit the exercise of brutal force in any situation, acts of violence still happen; eventually, more lives are lost, more money is spent on meaningless conflicts, and on top of that, more opportunities for the human race to put an end to its existence. By knowing that each person can limit the utilization of violence to the lowest, people are together assisting each other and making this world feel like home. The diminishment of violence is not just a limit in gunfights and wars in detail, or crimes in general, but also a room for economic growth, social stability, and universal advancement.

Works Cited

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Reynolds, Jason. *Long Way Down*. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2017.