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Disjointed Lives: A Comparative Analysis of Dysfunctional Themes in *A Mirror Made of Rain* and *It Ends with Us*

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Abstract:

This paper examines the severe reality of society and provides a comprehensive understanding of the effects of a dysfunctional family. The novel's protagonists navigate an atmosphere of unfriendliness, irritation, and ambivalence. Their minds become a battleground of internal conflict, where unresolved issues wage war on their lucidity, causing significant psychological distress. Asha, the mother of Noomi, spirals into addiction due to her love of alcohol, while Lily's mother remains trapped by the spirits of her sadistic part. Both women remain caught in cycles they are unable to break. Consequently, Noomi and Lily are forced to confront trauma. Their idyllic romantic relationships unravel under the weight of a shattered past, as they carry invisible trauma, worn down and distressed by their mothers' flawed love and guidance. Noomi and Lily rise from their mother's mistakes, breaking the chains of trauma to ensure their daughters inherit strength, not scars. They proceeded with caution and patience, refusing to be compelled by the weight of their past, as they were aware that genuine healing required the courage to make judicious, not indolent, decisions. Noomi and Lily eventually

regain their narratives, envisioning a future that is no longer a mere gleam of hope but an intense reality that demonstrates their resilience and renaissance.

Keywords: Societal Pleasures, Self-destruction, Domestic Abuse, Emotional Manipulation.

Introduction:

The Dysfunctional family is depicted in the novel's *Mirror Made of Rain* and *It Ends with Us*. Noomi and Lily found themselves hedged in the turmoil of their dysfunctional families, where love was fragmented. From the origins, Noomi's mother descended into the depths of alcoholism, setting the first seed of dysfunction that would spread like rancour in the family, twisting love into disorder. Whereas Lily's father predominantly with brutality, his exploitation etched deep wounds into her mother's soul, initiating a pattern of dysfunction that cast a dark shadow over their family.

When limitation strengthens into fascism, the same fate develops- both extremes poison the very impetus of love and stability. Entangled in the remnants of their dysfunctional family lives, Noomi and Lily struggle through inner storms, never having been taught how to repair the world around them. The challenges of a dysfunctional family primarily influence Noomi and Lily, causing substantial difficulties in their lives. Both mothers, weighed down by their wounds, struggled to provide support, leaving their families to disintegrate and become engulfed in the pandemonium of dysfunction. Noomi is deprived of effusiveness and direction, receiving only scoldings that stimulate her annoyance. With each unmet desire, Lily's affection for her parents gradually becomes discontent. Every time she reaches for her mother, she finds only emptiness. Parents mould a child's world, but when they behave in a shambolic and painful manner, they turn their home into a battlefield where trauma is the result. The effects of mixed families permeate society like an enduring shadow, weaving disorder into the very

fabric of their existence-- even within the confines of a nuclear family. Both *Mirror Made of Rain* and *It Ends with Us* explore family dysfunction in various ways, revealing a raw and painful reality. One is stuck in the cycle of love and ferocity, while the other is drowning in trauma wounds. Despite being married, Noomi's father, Jeh, is thrust into the endless whirlpool of single parenthood, juggling countless responsibilities—a silent testament to the weight of loyalty, love, and unseen struggles. Standing by himself in the hamster cage of existence, Jeh reaches for a companion engrossed in drinking and finds only the void where support and care ought to have been. Instead, Jeh's parents criticise him, which depletes his emotions and feeds the dysfunction that penetrates the family. Their words carry more weight than silence. Lily's mother, who has been abandoned in her armed wars, stands by herself, carrying the burden of the fights without anybody to support her or listen to her suffering. Lily's mother pathetically attempts to console Lily while she struggles to keep her broken marriage together, but a glimpse of her love eludes her in her quest. In a dysfunctional family, misunderstanding creates impenetrable barriers between people who ought to be closest, misdeeds pollute the roots, and love is lost in the crossfire of conflict. The family becomes a house without foundation-- unpredictable, decaying, and unable to provide for those in greatest need--when the elders fail to offer moral guidance. Children who grow up in dysfunctional households experience love and abuse not as separate or horrible things, but as ingrained shadows in their everyday lives. They inadvertently contribute to the cycle of abuse and dysfunction that initially imprisoned them as they fumble through crisis after crisis while lost in the chaos of their nurturing. When one uses abuse as a weapon and the other carries emotional baggage, they create a dysfunctional family-- trapping themselves in a vicious cycle of suffering that is mistaken for love. Substance abuse and domestic violence permeate *Mirror Made of Rain* and *It Ends with Us*, revealing the stark, unvarnished evil that lurks behind closed doors and the quiet conflicts waged in the name of love. Noomi saw her mother give in to the grip of addiction, and Lily grew up in the shadow

of a father who used abuse as a weapon. Although both seek to move on from their pasts, they unknowingly become the very women they once vowed never to resemble—caught in a cycle they are not yet ready to break. As she navigates the torrent of abuse, Lily finds herself stuck in an uncomfortable marriage. Her pain is twisted into an uncontrollable maze of anguish as her past and present collide, leaving her unsure of how to fight or run. Despite having a happy marriage in the past, Noomi's substance abuse ultimately led to her demise. The pain of her past and the weight of a childhood left her feeling inadequate, not longing, which is what brought her to her ex-boyfriend's arms. She ultimately turned life into collateral damage by wearing down the foundation of their family, not simply by lying to her husband. *Mirror Made of Rain* briefly depicts the harsh realities of a world that measures a woman's value by her ability to comply, moving beyond merely analysing to confront the constraints of culture. She must deal with both discernment and peace in a world that dictates her behaviour, judges her appearance, and defines her by her connections. From Asha's perspective, alcohol was more than just a way to escape; it was a force she could not resist and the result of events that completely overcame her. She didn't simply falter in her role as a wife and mother; she unravelled, leaving behind a chaotic trail that deeply affected Noomi's life. Asha was a storm that never seemed to go away because she was cold, aloof, and savage in her criticism. Noomi accepted apathy in place of affection; she felt only shadows in place of solace. Noomi had to navigate a world where her mother's presence was like a locked door-- one she was never given the key to-- while starved for affection and begged for permission. Lily's mother in *It Ends with Us* lives in a cage built from anxiety, social pressure, and a desperate desire to protect Lily's future; she is more than just a victim of Andrew Blossom's abuse. She endured his rage and the physical scars it left-- not out of love, but because social criticism weighed heavily on her. Young yet determined, Lily competed to pull her mother from the wreckage, but fear was a stronger chain than love. In the silence of her mother's negligence, Lily learned a bitter truth:

sometimes, those who should protect us are too shattered to save themselves. Noomi lives under the plague of expectation; measure, her every step, and scrutinise her every action. In her wealthy upper-class Indian family, she is more than just a daughter— she incorporates tradition and serves as a vessel of propriety. “Good girls do not smoke,” they remind her, as if righteousness could be erupted and extinguished like a cigarette. However, beneath the varnished surface of wealth and reputation, Noomi feels strangled, torn between her true self and the person others expect her to be. Lily is an amorous person at heart, seeking deep meaningful connections. Her relationship with Atlas Corrigan, her first love, is embedded in their shared understanding of pain and survival. However, when she falls for Ryle Kincaid, an attractive and seemingly perfect neurosurgeon, she allows herself to welcome a new kind of love. Regardless of their romantic nature, Lily remains sensible; when love becomes mortal, she does not embrace it blindly. Her character development is visible in her ability to look beyond her sensations and recognise unhealthy patterns. The emotional distance from her mother profoundly influences Lily, leaving her feeling secluded and powerless. Nevertheless, Jenny’s silence stems not from a lack of love, it serves as adaptive behaviour. She thinks that quietly long-lasting abuse is the best way to protect Lily, even though it ultimately makes her daughter feel neglected.

Noomi lives under the meticulous examination of her mother, Asha. Her mother's love often feels like an endless test that Noomi never seems to pass. Every word, every choice, and every glance in the mirror invites criticism, serving as a reminder that she is never quite good enough. Asha suffers from her deep wounds. Discarded and unsolicited in Jeh’s family, she tries to numb her agony with alcohol, seeking escape from a universe that refuses to let her. Meanwhile, Jeh, her dedicated husband, stands by her side, providing the assimilation and support she desperately needs. In his deeds to save his wife, he, unfortunately, leaves unnoticed the silent distress of his daughter. While he gives priority to his wife’s needs, he unconsciously

allows his daughter, Noomi, to navigate the emotional void left by a delinquent mother and an obvious father alone, the beginning of the dysfunctional family. For women like Noomi, marriage is beyond an assumption- it portrays a finish line, a measure of success. Even as her marriage worsens into resentment and constriction, Asha clings to tradition, pushing Noomi toward the same alley, as if a wedding ring could persuade her worth. At 23, Noomi is aggressive, outspoken, and fearless in challenging the world. However, beneath her false exterior lies a deep vulnerability. When it comes to sexual relationships with Sidharth and Arjun, she feels lost, unable to express her needs, which exposes the cracks in her strength. This happens because of the dysfunctional family. Then enters Veer, a man, unlike others, her husband. He is romantic, patient, and kind; he does not just love her, he truly sees her. For the first time, Noomi starts to think that love does not have to be a battlefield; it can be protected.

Andrew Bloom is not just a domineering father; he controls his home with fear. His abuse of Lily's mother is persistent, creating a harsh and inhuman environment. He physically abused his wife, often without guilt, and induced Lily to a deep sense of helplessness. His character symbolises the horrifying reality of domestic violence: a man who appears honourable to the world but is a monster behind closed doors. Andrew Bloom does not protect Lily in any way. Lily longs for love in its purest form— not just in romantic relationships, but in every connection she values. But in her world, love was always afflicted. When her father unleashed his temper on Atlas, nearly beating him to death for simply being in the wrong room at the wrong time, it was not just a boy he massacred; it was the fragile hope that Lily had enhanced around him. In time, Lily moves forward, but the wounds of her past mould the love she allows herself to obtain. When Lily meets Ryle, she falls quickly, overwhelmed by feelings, mistaking the intensity for true devotion. When love turns brutal, Lily does what she was taught— rationalising, understanding, and remaining. With Ryle, Lily proves that pain can coexist with passion, and infatuation can silence doubt. Lily offers him her body, her conviction, and her

future—until the cycle of abuse menaces to claim her as its next victim. Lily views marriage differently than most. For Lily, it isn't about allegiance—it's a choice rooted in the desire for love and happiness, free from the weight of societal expectations. Lily does not seek marriage to please others; she embraces it only if it satisfies her heart.

Lily created hallucinations to cope with her pain and comforted herself that she was fine and that her circumstances were different until she eventually recognised she was standing in her mother's shadow, demonstrating the same silence, the same justifications, and the same slow surrender to a love that was never guarded. The Waida family created a false impression—radiant smiles, unblemished reputations, and a carefully curated portrayal of success. Beneath the surface, however, their world is decomposing, held together by secrets and silent dysfunction. This deceit is a slow-burning temper within Noomi, who sees through the cracks and reviles the lie desperately upheld. However, their abandonment didn't just frustrate her—it shaped her. Ryle Kincaid enters Lily's life like a dream—charming, aspiring, and seemingly perfect in every way. Nevertheless, perfection is a fragile illusion, and as their love deepens, the cracks start to appear.

In a fit of a tantrum, his temper flares, and his grip strengthens, transforming the man she loves into someone disguised. p.185 “Goddammit, Lily, it's not funny. This hand is my career.” The words penetrate the moment itself, elucidating something raw inside her— a harsh reality of the silent suffering she once witnessed her mother endure. The weight of love and fear intertwines, leaving Lily imprisoned in the same emotional labyrinth her mother walked before her. Like so many survivors, she searches for vindication, telling herself that his anger is justified. Deep down, there is an unvarnished truth: love should never be justified or explained. Ryle's annoyance is like a sudden storm— unpredictable, aggressive, and overwhelming. As his desperation escalates, his love is tainted by the sting of bruises and the weight of guilt that comes too late. In losing all control, he transforms into a man Lily no longer

recognises-- his hands, once symbols of love, now become instruments of destruction. Every instance is a savage reminder that violence combined with love is no longer love. The Wadia family inherits dysfunction-- a scourge of chronic wounds passed down through generations. Asha's pain turns into the same coldness she once experienced as a result of her past being disregarded, making her both a fatality and a prelude. Instead of ending the cycle, she binds Noomi to it, incorporating diffidence into the fundamental elements of her daughter's existence. Abandonment can evolve into anticipation and manifest as criticism, which often conceals underlying affectional impulses. As another link in a family history of emotional distress, Noomi finds herself juggling the intricacies of her mother's healed traumas. Noomi is influenced by her analysis of it; she is the embodiment of a patchwork of scars from a household where mellowness was rare and love was reliant. The dysfunction she was raised in not only oppresses her but also shapes her decisions, lingers in her quiet moments, and echoes through her struggles with loss and love. She is shaped by her past and trapped by it, seeking a way to escape the very chaos that created her. Lily grows up in a home where love and sadism coexist; wounds are hidden beneath long sleeves, and silence is mistaken for stability. She observes her father's abuse leaving scars on her mother's body, yet it is her mother's quiet suffering that tortures Lily the most. Time and again, she observes the cycle of pain imposed, apologies whispered, and forgiveness granted, not out of love, but out of fearfulness of societal judgment, p.33 "Good girls don't smoke. Your dad would kill me." In this family circle, survival is measured by one's ability to endure, and Lily discovers that suffering in silence is the cost of preserving family unity. Noomi reflects on the very pain she acorns; her mother's dependence seeping into her as she floods her wounds with alcohol, seeking comfort in the same poison that once consumed Asha. It is a relentless inheritance — evidence that conditioned behaviours do not just remain; they take root deep, turning survival into self-annihilation. For Noomi, love is not an escape. Every relationship is shaped by the dysfunction

she confronted growing up, with the echoes of her parents' broken marriage influencing how she both gives and receives affection. Like her mother, she conceals her emotions instead of expressing them, suppressing her anger until it solidifies into bitterness. Thus, the cycle continues— not just of addiction but also silence, longing, and love forever intertwined with pain. Lily's cycle is just as brutal as her mother's; despite her promise never to endure abuse, she finds herself trapped in the same pattern of love and violence. In the same manner that her mother tolerated years of suffering in silence and persuaded herself that remaining in the situation was the appropriate choice for the sake of solidity, Lily also justifies Ryle's abuse. She persuades herself that his behaviour is not entirely accordant with his true nature, that his last trauma excuses his emissions, and that love can overcome the pain. Lily hears Ryle's voice as her father's p.186: "I'm sorry, Jenny. It was an accident. I'm sorry." (father)

"I'm sorry, Lily. It was an accident. I'm sorry." (Ryle)

Societal pressures to preserve traditional roles and maintain appearances further aggravate Asha's emotional detachment. The same dysfunction shapes Noomi's insurgency despite her defiance of these expectations. Her self-destructive actions are a response to the constraints imposed by her family and society. The early stage of breaking the cycle is Noomi's enhanced visibility of the emotional wounds she has experienced and the source of her suffering. Noomi's opulence affords her the freedom and opportunities she yearns for, but it also imposes the constraint of adhering to the values and traditions of the upper class. Breaking these cycles proves to be both ongoing and traumatic. Lily witnesses her mother's anguish and embodies the adverse message that women must sacrifice their happiness and safety for the sake of their families. When Ryle is behind in demonstrating abusive tendencies, Lily feels the weight of cultural expectations urging her to stay in the marriage. Noomi's father and other men are unaccustomed to acquitting themselves similarly. While others strongly disapprove of Noomi's drinking and independence, they accept his nicotine addiction. The novel reveals how social

etiquette fosters a culture of subduing and pretence by placing a higher value on appearance than on true well-being. Lily carries the heavy weight of society's condemnation in addition to her agony. According to the world, a woman's failure is a broken marriage, and a mother should stay quiet for the sake of her child. She is concerned about the mutters, the pointed fingers, and the unstated condemnation. However, Lily eventually realises that freedom is far more powerful than reputation. She vows to break the cycle of misery for her daughter and refuses to become another woman lost to abandonment. By walking away, she not only protects herself but also disproves the idea that morality dictates endurance, proving that strength comes from leaving rather than staying. The damaging relationship Noomi has with her mother is more just a wound; it slow poison that permeates every part of Noomi's existence. Her silent rage, which stems from years of rejection and unfulfilled love, is aimed internally rather than outside, which ultimately leads to her demise. However, beneath her defiance is a more profound conflict, a struggle for identity, as she endeavours to break free from the influence of her mother's decisions while simultaneously being influenced by them. Noomi's struggle is not only with her past, but also with the unseen burdens of sacrifice and survival-- she was never given the tools to escape. Ryle's violence is not merely an act; it is a cycle, a crafted pattern of redemption and destruction. A moment of pain, a burst of fury, and the repercussions of an avalanche of guilt, desperate apologies, and whispered assurances that resemble prayers. He begs for forgiveness, declaring that love will adequately to transform him, thereby trapping Lily between the man she admires and the man she dreads. Ryle does not solely request dispensation; rather, he manipulates it. He overwhelms Lily with affection, surrounding her with tenderness and carefully timid gestures. Each gesture, whether it be a lavish gift, whispered declarations, or lingering touches, was designed to evoke a sense of adoration and equivocate the distinction between devotion and devastation. This disorienting contrast is the force that binds her, compelling her to question the existence of love within violence and the

possibility of a villain being a man who loves her. Society further exacerbates her confusion. In the eyes of the public, Ryle is the epitome of perfection: a brilliant surgeon, a charming spouse, and a man that any woman would be fortunate to have. Lily's reality is becoming increasingly difficult to comprehend due to his status, which serves as his armour. How could the world see him as anything but good? How could she walk away from a man everyone else admires? However, Lily has witnessed what others have not: the darkness behind the charm and the fissures beneath the glossy exterior. She must, therefore, make the impossible choice: to stay and lose herself, or leave and risk becoming the antagonist in a story that no one else will ever understand. In *Mirror Made of Rain*, names are more than just labels-- they are paradoxes, contradictions, and unfulfilled destinies. Noomi is a name that implies delicacy and light, conceals a soul scared by neglect, sharp-edged and rebellious, yet fragile in the moments that matter most. Asha, signifying hope, is anything but her tenderness, long extinguished by the situation, leaving behind a woman who is resentful, sharp-tongued, and unreachable. And then there is Jeh, a name whispered with dread in the Parsi community, indicating shadows, yet he is the novel's quiet force of kindness, a man who epitomises the gentleness his name should reject. In an environment where names are meant to define, these characters defy expectations, proving that identity is never as simple as the meaning we assign to it. In "It Ends with Us," Lily is more than just a name; she embodies innocence, resilience, and the quiet strength that rises even in the most difficult circumstances. Her name parallels her essence, an image of being innocent, yet she is not delicate; she is a survivor, among others, a force of her own. In "A Mirror Made of Rain," surnames often contradict their bearers, but Veer stands as the rare truth; his name means hero, and he exemplifies it in every manner. Consistent, courteous, and unwavering, he is the centre of a world of turmoil. Nevertheless, there is Ryle, whose name bears an eerie significance. In medicine, "Ryle" refers to a feeding tube, a tool designed to preserve life; however, in Lily's reality, Ryle serves a contrary purpose. He

exhausts her, smothering her under the burden of his affection and his fury. A respected neurosurgeon, a man trusted to heal, yet in his household, he wounds. His name, like his devotion, is an illusion, something intended to nourish but instead leaves scars. Carrying the burden of inherited trauma, Lily and Noomi endure the agonising process of healing, but they are committed to ending the cycle before it devours another generation. They inherit the scars of their mothers, but unlike their predecessors, they do not let the past shape their daughters' prospects. Lily sacrifices everything for her child's protection, not out of pride or love. She ends her marriage with Ryle, opting for freedom instead of fear, demonstrating that true strength can lie in departure rather than perseverance. p. 326 "I wish this baby weren't yours, Ryle. With everything that I am, I wish this baby were not a part of you." Noomi also struggles with her inner demons, turning away from the alcohol that previously dulled her suffering, until her body eventually refuses what once brought her solace. Recovery is gradual, chaotic, and merciless, yet little by little, she remains her identity. Even Asha, who has been resentful for years, finds atonement in loss. The intoxicating liquor no longer controls Asha after Jeh's passing, and she begins to move cautiously in the direction of some sort of tranquillity. Similarly, Lily's mother, who had previously suffered in silence, gains understanding following Andrew Bloom's passing. She starts over, finds love the way she wants, and when Lily most needs her, she is strong and tells her daughter to leave Ryle before it is too late. Then there is Allyssa, a sane voice in a society where devotion and passion have muddled everything. As evidence that genuine friendship does not remain mute in the face of peril, she cautions Lily against Ryle. She is a beacon of what love should be, not enmeshed in toxicity like so many women before them. Despite their wounds, these women ultimately redefine their stories-- not as victims, but as survivors.

Conclusion:

Beyond merely recounting the stories of dysfunctional families, ‘Mirror Made of Rain’ by Naheed Phiroze Patel and ‘It Ends with Us’ by Colleen Hoover both exacerbate the wounds, scars, and constant acts that subtly through their lives. Innumerable women in society endure the silent torment of abuse, bound by fear. However, in the shadows of their distress, lifelines like that existing government helpline stand as an unheard whisper of hope, waiting for the moment they choose to rise. Lily and other women are not only burdened by the lasting effects of their trauma but also by society’s judgment, intensified by her husband’s esteemed position as a neurosurgeon. After Emerson’s delivery, she gets stuck in Ryle’s web of psychological manipulation, unable to set herself free. However, as a mother, Lily is determined to break the cycle and stop history from repeating itself. Lily, with the probable future of her child in her hands, develops the fortitude to end the cycle by divorcing Ryle and recovering her heart in the embrace of her first love, Atlas. To protect her daughter, Maya, from suffering the same fate as her mother, Noomi analyses the trauma her mother caused. However, the scars of her wounds are profound, as they are rooted in the pernicious patterns of her dysfunctional past. Crippling self-doubt and unrelenting anxiety continue to grip her, even though the wounds are curable. Noomi confronts her greatest enemy, her addiction, desperate to break free before history repeats itself, caught in a cycle she longs to escape. Many women remain silent, captivated by the shrewd manipulation of their partners, and confined in a reality where the outside world only sees the illusion, much like Ryle’s deception of Lily. However, amid their anguish, Lily and Noomi can overcome their pasts. In the end, they break the bonds of trauma, entering the realm of recuperation, reclaiming their narratives, and rewriting their futures. Colleen Hoover and Naheed Phiroze Patel reveal the true essence of a dysfunctional family.

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