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### Hope and Loneliness: Life and Death

The thematic manifestation of loneliness is not subtle, and the human need of belonging is explicit in *Klara and the Sun*. Even when the mother takes Klara to the waterfall and asks her to imitate her daughter Josie, after excluding her from the trip due to her poor health, she can only accept her as an imitation of Josie, not a replacement. The later revelation of Klara replacing Josie in the event of her death, in a more palpable way than Sal's doll after she died, reinforces Klara representing life and Josie being a symbolic embodiment of death. Josie's fragile condition has everyone contemplating her mortality and the realistic possibility of living without her and having only loneliness as a replacement.

Josie's mother, Chrissie, sought to replace that loneliness that plagued her with Sal's death with something more meaningful. That plan failed so she planned ahead seeing how sick Josie was. From the moment she met Klara, she had this in mind when she asked Klara, "Will you please reproduce for me Josie's walk?" (44). Much later, when Chrissie is speaking to Henry about the replacement situation, she expresses doubts, "But will I believe in it? When the day comes? Will I really?" (205). Every step of the way she has doubts but cannot bear to contemplate the loneliness that will replace Josie if she dies. Klara never gives in to this pessimism and relies on the healing the sun will bring, the hope that Josie can, and will, get better.

Klara's observation from the shop and even of young children quickly revealed that loneliness was a state that most people avoided at almost all costs. Klara observed the children at Josie's house and realized, "They fear loneliness and that's why they behave the way they do. Perhaps Josie too" (83). As Josie's condition worsened, Klara told Rick, "Even so, I believe there's still hope" (265), after he expressed his hope escaping him. The tasks Paul and Rick help her with regarding the Cootings machine and the Barnhouse converts them to believing in Klara, with little to no information about her actions, simply in the hope that Josie will get better because of them. Both Paul and Rick had somewhat skeptical first encounters with Klara but later found themselves trusting her, especially when they didn't fully understand her actions.

Rick's mother, Helen, said, "A mother's love for her son. Such a noble thing, to override the dread of loneliness" (152). Klara's surprise at Rick's mother's desires was vocalized to her, "I am surprised someone would desire so much a path that would leave her in loneliness," which led to Klara's revelation that "humans could choose loneliness." Helen explains how she chose loneliness before leaving Rick's father, and that her love for Rick would lead her to accept that loneliness again for her son's future prosperity. In this way, the choice of loneliness is a sacrifice someone makes for someone they love, which is a selfless act for another. The creation of the AFs could be attributed to the simplistic concept of relieving loneliness, something Klara always understood. Even after Klara parted ways from the Arhtur family, she understood this, as she told Manager "Yes, I believe I gave good service and prevented Josie from feeling lonely" (300).

The irony of Klara representing life is that she is the only main character who happens to be the center of the story that is not human. Her observations reveal everyone's insecurities and unspoken fears, primarily that of facing death, grief, and loneliness. It could even be perceived that there are worse things than death, living a life filled with loneliness. Worse than facing your

own death is that of a loved one, especially a child, and more so a second child, which is the only one left in the Arthur family. Klara swayed everyone who doubted her and introduced faith in her hope, a contagious energy that was further reflected by the sun. The grim truth of her replacing Josie was reversed by her overwhelming optimism, one which everyone around her adopted. As in most cases, those who truly love someone else sacrifice everything they can for them. In this case, Klara sacrificed herself and was later forgotten by the Arthur family, reminding them of the dark truth of why they purchased her to begin with. They forgot the hope she reinvigorated in their lives, something that Klara wouldn't have changed so Josie would have a bright future. In the end, Klara's abandonment replaces Josie's death and Klara's life is given in Josie's place. Klara embodies loneliness so that the Arthur family and Josie could embrace the hope she taught them, and live their lives without loneliness.

Works Cited

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Klara and the Sun: A Novel*. 1st ed., Vintage International, Vintage Books, a Division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2022.