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On sacrifice in writing – and in life

Just recently I finished a book where, to spare her son from a lifetime of slavery and abuse, a mother kills him at the end. A few weeks ago, I read one where a guy loses his magical abilities, which are the definition of who he is as a person. Both were heartbreaking to read and, I imagine, even more heartbreaking to write.

I'm lucky enough to have had a privileged life up to now. I have a loving family who raised me, a husband and puppy I love, never struggled with money, had access to education, have a functioning body and mind and currently live in a first world country I chose to be in, working in a field I studied for. Now, that isn't to say I haven't known any form of hardship, but that probably the sacrifices I've had to make (the biggest one being leaving my family behind) and the pain I've had to endure are small compared to a vast majority.

The reason I bring this up is because I've been thinking a lot about sacrifice lately. Specifically in writing. If you don't know, before I left Brazil, I was an author. I published four Young Adult novels and have been writing a lot more lately, working on a new book. And when, like before, I was faced with a decision to make for my character, to make them suffer great loss or basically *Deus Ex Machina* that shit and find a loophole, I almost always pick the loophole. At least at first. And maybe it's because I've lived the way I have, because I more often than not **have** found a loophole, a workaround, a way to lose less or nothing at all. I'm scared of sacrifices because a sacrifice meant you made a choice to lose something and that choice **STILL** might not make you happy. It's a gamble and one that doesn't always pay off.

We all know the saying that "nothing worth having comes easy." And while it's not always true, in writing it's necessary. If you want a character's achievements to mean something, they need to have been acquired at great cost. Nobody wants to read a story where everything goes right, where the doors just open and everyone helps and the hero wins at the end not by his/hers own merit at all, but because life just took it easy on them. We like hardship. We like suffering. I think it's because it makes us believe we can power through and benefit from our own pain, because respect doesn't come from success, it comes from the journey **TO** success.

I'm trying to apply that to my writing. And, like everything, practice helps. Experience helps. The older we get, the more we realize things might not turn out the way we want them to, but that's ok because there are paths untaken leading to much grander and more beautiful and worthwhile things than the one you thought you wanted. Making your protagonist lose something gives the things they win far more impact and value. So we shouldn't be scared to take

these big leaps, as authors or just as people: something truly spectacular could be waiting for you just across that chasm.