

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Each person has a dream in order to fulfill his or her desire, such as being popular, clever, or a rich man. The desire of being a rich man or having a lot of money is generally related to the concept of “a better life”. Therefore, a person might make hard effort in bringing it into reality. Many things are planned and run, either legally or illegally. Some people might assume that pursuing it using legal ways takes longer time than by using illegal ways, which are known as the fastest shortcut into richness. There are many reasons for a person to practice gamble: to have recreation and fun, to support a charity, to escape from his problems and to earn money (<http://www.unsave.com>).

In other words, gambling is one way for people to get a lot of money quickly. They think that it will easily make them richer than before. They are never aware of the disadvantages of being a gambler. As a matter of fact, there are many problems which caused conflict being gambler. Gambling is defined as a behavior that is out of control and disrupts personal, family, financial and employment relations. It is linked to financial problems such as debt and bankruptcy, divorce, lost productivity, crime (such as theft and fraud), depression and suicide. (www.unsave.com) Those

conditions are similarly described clearly in the novel, *Bringing Down the House* (2002).

The novel is written by Ben Mezrich. He graduated from Harvard in 1991. Before it was published, he wrote six novels which are translated into nine languages (*Threshold, s Reaper, Fertile Ground, Skin*, and under name Holden Scott, *Skeptic* and *The Carrier*). *Fatal Error* is the title of the movie which is visualized from his second novel. It has then made it to the silver screen in 2005 entitled *21* (Mezrich 344)

Bringing Down the House is written based on a true story of a man named Jeff Ma. He offered his experience to the author, so that his real experience could be adapted into a work of fiction. Thus, Mezrich tells Kevin Lewis's life based on compatible sources without using real names to protect the confidentiality of the real persons involved.

The story starts when Kevin met Fisher and Martinez, other students of MIT. They introduced him to all of the members of the *MIT Blackjack Team*, a gamble team consisting of talented and brilliant persons. In the beginning, the team consisted of Kianna Lam (a petite, pretty young Asian woman), Michael Sloan (a transplant from Taiwan who shared his major electrical engineering), Brian Hale (Kevin's emaciated but brilliant senior whom he met during Physics class), and Micky Rosa (the team leader, once an MIT instructor, but giving up his academic career for the sake of being a professional blackjack player). Micky himself is described as a

brilliant mathematician and card counter, whose professional card counting life lasted until he was banned from the casinos. (www.bearcave.com)

After that, they played from one casino to another casino successfully. There was no proves from casino that they cheated during playing blackjack. They organized the team well by using alias names for playing in different casinos. Not only that, their mathematic skill had helped them to get a lot of money from casino. Probably, it is the meaning of the title of the novel, *Bringing Down the House*, where the house represents the casino which can give them money as much as possible. But, the money that Kevin got from playing blackjack with the team had made him feel guilty toward his parents. In Kevin's opinion, he should tell the truth to his parents about his adventure and the money that he got.

In Thanksgiving day, he came back to his home and thought that it was the right time to explain what actually he had done during a long weekend in Las Vegas. Then he explained it to his father while he was sitting together with him in the dining table. Knowing that situation, his mother could guess what he had said to his father. She thought that what her son had done was absolutely wrong. He said that he only used mathematic skill in beating blackjack. As a result, his father was not interested in his experience for the long weekend. According to his father, although it was just mathematics and not gambling, his father still did not agree with what he chose. Moreover, he broke up his relationship with his girl friend, Felicia. He thought that leaving her and having a journey with his friends in Las Vegas would be better than being together with his girlfriend.

Those sentences above show Kevin's problems and toward his parents and his girlfriend, Felicia, which is the form of his conflict. It is caused by his involvement in MIT Blackjack Team. However, his conflict does not end yet. There are many conflicts which are faced by Kevin. One of conflicts comes from his friend in MIT blackjack team and casino's officer where he plays. Those conflicts will be clearly explained in the analysis.

Actually, the novel is a part of literature products. Literature itself is the work of the author that come from deep inside mind and the imagination of him or her. It can be the influence from the environment where the author lives. Sometime it is also the reflection from the society issue in some age in the past and writes down in different way to make the reader interesting to read. In this case, Mezrich tries to serve the issues above such as human life and human problems in his novel. It shows that literature cannot be separated from human life, while human life consists of various aspects. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their book *Theory of Literature*; "literature represents life, and life is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner of subjective world of the individual has also been object of literary imitation. (94)

In this case, it tells the readers that being a gambler will cause conflicts. The conflict towards the main character itself is the reason why the writer chooses the novel as his study. He thinks that through intrinsic approach such as plot, characterization, setting, and conflict, the reader can see how Kevin faces with his

conflict. According to Alwisol, conflict and anxiety can be solved by fixing the wrong interpersonal relationship (180).

Based on the statements above, this research is a study of literature and it is applied by intrinsic approach. As we know, study of literature involves the study of creative works such as novels, short stories and poetry. It is mostly based upon imagination, and it needs interpretation and analysis in order to understand literary works. It provides opportunities to discuss how authors create and craft quality literature. Each person has different set of values due to different backgrounds to the reading. Understanding a literary work, such as novel should be use intrinsic approach which describes structure of the novel.

Thus, the writer of the study will analyze the novel by using the intrinsic approach. It great deal with all things inside of the literature such as, plot, character, setting, theme, message, point of view, style, and etc. The plot makes the story interesting. The characters in the story make it more real and lovely. The environment of novel or the setting is not crucial as plot or character but it supports the story. Physical places and cultural settings not only frame but also determine character's conflicts, aspiration and destinies (Phillip, 706). In this case, the writer uses intrinsic approach which consists of plot, characterization, setting and conflict. In short, he will not present all elements, only the plot, characterization, setting, and conflict which are important and it can give brief explanation in the analysis.

B. Statement of the problem

In analyzing Kevin's problems, as the main character of *Bringing Down the House*, there are two research questions to be elaborated, which are:

1. How is the characterization of Kevin Lewis depicted in the story?
2. What kinds of conflicts that Kevin Lewis suffered?

C. Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are to obtain answers for the questions mentioned in the statement of the problems. Regarding to the statement of the problems, the objectives of this study are:

1. To explain the characterization of Kevin Lewis that is depicted in the story.
2. To explain conflicts that Kevin Lewis suffered.

D. Significance of the Study

By studying the novel, it is hoped that besides the readers will be able to deepen their understanding in the content of the story and could determine the problem represent in the story, the readers also can get many interpretations of literary works where they can get more knowledge about values caught from the reading.

The result of this thesis would become a basis or reference for those who want to make analysis in the same fields especially the students of English department of Airlangga University.

E. Scope and Limitation

The writer of this thesis limits his analysis into a narrow scope in order to avoid misinterpretation or misunderstanding and also to make his thesis more specific. That is why the writer will limit his analysis only to discuss one element of the novel. There are plot, characterization, setting, and conflict. There are two conflicts in this study, internal conflict and external conflict.

F. Theoretical Background

In analyzing the novel, the writer tries to elaborate the conflicts of the main character using the intrinsic approach, which is quoted from; *Writing Themes about Literature* by Edgar V Roberts. Those elements are character, plot, and setting, and *Theoretical Framework for Conflict Resolution* by William Cunningham as the supporting theory.

G. Method of the Study

In the process of writing this study, the writer uses the library and online research. This research is done by collecting data from various books, articles, critics, reviews, commentaries, and other printed materials from both library and internet which can be used to support the analysis. Those printed materials include the main source of the analysis, that is the novel and its other supporting information about the novel itself, the author, the background, and everything that are related with the novel.

In analyzing the thesis, the writer use intrinsic approach. It is also called textual analysis intrinsic approach deals with an attempt to analyze literary works

focusing only on the text of the literary works. This approach doesn't need the help of outside sources, such as philosophy or psychology, in the analysis of literary works.

As Wellek and Warren say in their book *Theory of Literature* that the natural and sensible starting point for works of literature themselves (139). It means that it is important to analyze in order to get good interpretation of the literary work.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Blackjack : Card game whose object is to be dealt cards having a higher count than those of the dealer, up to but not exceeding 21.

Card Counting : A card game strategy used to determine when a player has a probability advantage.

Dealer : The one who share the card on the table to the player.

Pit Boss : A managerial position in the gambling industry.

Spotter : Part of the division in MIT Blackjack team