

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Problems are common things in everyone's life, from a person to another. A problem may happen to his or herself, family such as parents and siblings or even to the nearest environment, neighborhood or friends. As human beings, people should be able to handle every problem that exists in their life, whether the problem is within his or herself (inner conflict) or with other people.

Sometimes, it is too difficult even so hard for someone to face problems and conflicts in his or her life. There is someone who really feels guilty when he or she makes a mistake to another, whether it is small or big. It is indeed important to deal with a sense of feeling guilty, because if not, someone can be overwhelmed by the suffering about what he or she did in the past. Actually, there is also another type of person who keeps taking revenge because he or she could not accept the bad event and could not be able to forgive someone. Revenge, then, may appear when someone feels very difficult to face their problems or bad events that ever exist in life.

Forgiving might actually seems an easy thing to say, but not to do. It needs a big heart and a good personality to be able to forgive. The process of learning how to forgive someone is a thing that the writer got from *Cage of Stars*, a novel by Jacquelyn Mitchard. In short, this novel tells about how it is very difficult to forgive someone who kills the main character's younger sisters brutally. The

author of the novel, Jacquelyn Mitchard has worked as a high school English teacher, became a newspaper reporter in 1976, and eventually achieved a position as a lifestyle columnist for The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel newspaper, and a magazine editor. Her first book, *The Deep End of the Ocean* was the choice of Oprah Winfrey Book Club in September 1996, and it later became a movie. All of Mitchard's other novels have been bestsellers as well as gaining critical acclaim – particularly for *The Most Wanted*, *Cage of Stars* and *The Breakdown Lane*. *The Most Wanted* was nominated for Britain's Orange Prize for Fiction and *Cage of Stars* for Britain's Spread The Word Prize. (<http://www.jacquelynmitchard.com/mitchard-bio.htm>).

Cage of Stars is a novel about revenge and forgiveness with fully developed character's portrayals and a plot of surprising twists. That is why the writer took this novel as the object of the study. Jacquelyn Mitchard's novel, *Cage of Stars*, begins when a twelve year old girl named Veronica Bonham Swan (her nick name is Ronnie) finds her two younger sisters, Ruthie Swan and Becky Swan are brutally murdered by the neighbor, Scott Early, who later found that he was a schizophrenic and ended up only spending a short time in a mental hospital for almost four years.

According to the main character, Veronica, the murderer should receive more punishment than just four years stay in a mental hospital. The family is shocked, and it takes quite a while for them to be able to go on with their lives and Veronica tries to do what she can do for the others, but she cannot handle both her own emotion and anger. Although through times, Veronica's parents manage to

find the strength to forgive Scott Early, the murderer, of their two little daughters, but, Veronica, unfortunately, cannot do the same. When her parents finally find some strength by forgiving Scott Early, Veronica wants her own revenge.

Moreover, the writer thinks that it is important to explain a little about schizophrenic. According to Gerow, in *Psychology – An Introduction*, schizophrenic is a psychiatric diagnosis that describes a mental disorder characterized by abnormalities in the perception or expression of reality. It most commonly manifests as auditory hallucinations, paranoid or bizarre delusions, or disorganized speech and thinking with significant social or occupational dysfunction (273).

The writer of this thesis can imagine what Veronica has experienced. When the terrible event happened, she was only a twelve years old girl and that tragedy could affect her psychological condition. Actually, there are three fundamental phases in human's life. Childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are the three fundamental phases, which in fact have their own characteristics, which enable someone to survive in each phase during someone's life. Those phases can be seen from the main character. Based on the novel, Veronica's behavior changes can be seen from the adolescence to young adult phase, which was revealed after losing her two younger sisters. Then, it becomes more interesting when talking about her behavioral changes, which the writer wants to discuss in the analysis, because it is interesting to discuss related to what Veronica has experienced, in this case she lost her younger sisters when she is in twelve years old, And she is struggling with a sense of guilt toward her younger sisters.

The author of *Cage of Stars*, Jacquelyn Mitchard has an amazing way of showing Veronica's character. Jacquelyn Mitchard shows the true feeling of an individual who has gone through such a tragic event with the feelings of vengeance and finally could find the peace of forgiveness. Veronica's understanding of the world continues to develop as she begins her formal education and travels to California, leaving her family home. Veronica represents a strong young girl who learns many important things in her life, until she finally understands that she is important to her own life and her family's life.

Her tragic experience leads emotion, anger and revenge toward the murderer of her two younger sisters, Becky and Ruthie. In fact, the process of how it changes her heart to discover the true meaning of maturity until she realizes the meaning of forgiveness and love is very interesting at the end of the novel. Moreover, the writer would like to explore these issues more deeply through the analysis.

B. Statement of the Problems

In accordance with the background of the study, there are questions the writer is interested in analyzing it. The writer formulates the problems as follow:

1. How does Veronica's sense of guilt over the death of her younger sisters affect her life?
2. How does Veronica's behavior change?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problems, the study aims:

1. To find out the effect of Veronica's sense of guilt over the death of her younger sisters.
2. To find out that Veronica's behavior changes after losing her younger sisters.

D. Significance of the Study

Through this study, the writer expects that the readers will be interested in Jacquelyn Mitchard's novels, especially *Cage of Stars*. This novel offers interesting plot, and the dynamic of the story is shown through the main character, Veronica. Veronica has to deal with her sense of guilt due to death of her younger sisters and she has deal either to forgive the murderer or not. The readers will also gain better knowledge in understanding the role of environment, the influence of the existence of family in shaping the psychological background of the main character during the transition period from adolescence to young adult phase. Hopefully, this study may also give useful inputs for other students who are interested in studying character and psychological background of the main character.

E. Scope and Limitation

There are many aspects the writer can get from the novel, *Cage of Stars* that are interesting to be analyzed. Then, the writer will focus on the study of the

main character, Veronica Bonham Swan, in which, who suffers from a sense of guilt because of the death of her younger sisters which leads to her behavioral changes.

In order to gain a comprehensive analysis, a scope and limitation will be applied in analyzing the novel. The analysis will be based on the main plot of the novel and focused on the behavioral change of the main character, in this case Veronica, in *Cage of Stars*, a novel by Jacquelyn Mitchard.

Therefore, the writer finds that it is important to study the correlation between Veronica's character and other characters, such as the parents, the murderer, and the society surrounds her, in order to get clear explanation of her behavioral change that elaborates the transition from adolescence to young adult. Then, to support the analysis of the main character, it is also important to discuss the plot.

F. Theoretical Background

According to Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature*, the starting point for work of literature itself, and the study of literature should in the first place, concentrate on the actual work (139). It means that to begin an analysis of a literary work, the first thing to do is discussing the intrinsic elements in order to give clearer understanding about the literary work itself. The intrinsic element including character and plot will be used.

In this study, the writer focuses on analyzing the main character, Veronica, whose behavior changes after she lost her younger sisters. The characterization is

used to analyze the characteristic of the main character who should continue her life without the existence of her younger sisters. The plot is used to understand the chronological event that the main character experiences.

Furthermore, psychological background of the main character will be supported by psychosocial – developmental stages suggested by Erik H. Erikson, to reveal the inner conflict faced by the main character, Veronica Bonham Swan, since, the analysis needs to attach the psychological condition of the main character. It will, indeed, help the writer to make a better and deeper understanding in the analysis.

G. Method of the Study

To help analyzing the problems, the writer needs to find information that is important for the analysis. The information is collected from the novel *Cage of Stars* itself, various books, articles, the Internet, and any kind of matter of this writing. The method of data collection used in writing this thesis is library research, in which the writer collects information by searching books in the library and browsing the online library.

The analysis is conducted by applying qualitative method, because it will give clearer and deeper understanding in comprehending the literary work. The main source of the data is obviously the novel *Cage of Stars* itself. Then, some sources related to the analysis of this topic will be added such as other literary books related to the study on character, theory of psychology and other books related to adolescence and behavior.

H. Definition of Key Terms

- Adolescence* : The phase of transition from being a child to an adult. And in fact, this stage is usually becomes the most difficult phase of life. It is a phase when the child is not yet mature but he or she is no longer a child.
- Behavior* : Someone's act to express their feeling toward others.
- Guilty feeling* : An emotional conflict when someone should feels sorry about what he or she did. Someone who feels in pain about what he or she should not do.
- Forgiveness* : Being absolved of someone's sins. However real forgiveness means more than just the forgiveness of the wrong actions. Divine forgiveness involves illumination. The ignorance becomes not just temporarily absolved but transformed.