

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

THE CHANGE OF WINNIE'S CHARACTER IN FACING DEPRESSING MOMENTS

A. THE CAUSES OF WINNIE'S DEPRESSION

A.1 Early Condition

Winnie is the major character in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. She is a woman with a leg-troubled mother and a degenerate brother, Stevie. They live in London at around 1880, before the era of reconstruction dawned upon London. What is known from the era is that London at that time has not been so advanced in development as in the twenties. The transportation is still very simple. The means of road transportation are 'cabs' and train. 'Cabs' are carriages pulled by horses. They can carry 3 passengers. 'Cabs' drivers usually use whips to give command to the horses to run faster. Another tool of transportation is by water. The device to avoid darkness is only the gas-light. It seems that

electricity has not reached the town, yet. It is said that at this era there are people who secretly work for the foreign embassies. Their jobs are usually illegal. The police call them secret agents.

Coming from an ordinary family with a temperamental hard working father and troubled mother and brother, Winnie is demanded to be tough and considerate. It seems that her fate is destined to be a sustainer. This assumption is made convincing by the fact that her victualler father has passed away leaving his family alone without a truly dependable asset, then.

Fortunately Winnie has accepted some lodgers in Belgravian Mansion, a big house with several rooms. This is the only way that Winnie's mother can do to support her family.

..., she provided for the years of widowhood by letting furnished apartments for gentlemen near Vauxhall Bridge Road in a square once of some splendour and still included in the district of Belgravia. This

topographical fact was of some advantage in advertising her rooms; but the patrons of the worthy widow were not exactly of the fashionable kind. Such as they, her daughter Winnie help to look after them (page 15).

The grown up Winnie devotes herself helping her mother do many houseworks and serve the lodgers of the house. In this case, the relationship between lodgers and the owners is not close. The family does not want to have the close relationship with the lodgers. Moreover, the condition of the neighbourhood which is not warm at all makes the family look like living alone. Therefore, Winnie, who is brought up in such a situation is accustomed to be a quiet person.

Yet, Winnie is not a queer person. Eventhough her two relatives both posses abnormal qualities but Winnie holds neither those ailments nor any other afflictions. She even grows as a normal attractive lady. She looks elegant and her appearance is that of an orderly arranged.

'Traces of the French descent' which the widow boasted of were apparent in Winnie, too. They were apparent in the extremely neat and artistic arrangement of her glossy dark hair. Winnie had also other charms : her youth; her full; rounded form; her clear complexion; ... carried on the lodger's part with animation and on hers with an equable amiability (page 15).

The quotation above describes Winnie's quality. She is said to have characteristics which are as 'traces of French descent'. It seems that Winnie's ancestors are from France and some of their qualities can be clearly seen on Winnie. Neatness and glossy dark hair which is done beautifully are included here. And she is 'a young woman with a fair skin and likeable look', too. Moreover her quality of being friendly implies a good impression to the lodger of her mother's apartment.

Winnie agreeable quality has attracted one of the gentlemen lodgers, a secret agent who conceals

his true profession by declaring himself as a businessman. His name is Verloc, an elderly fat man. Actually he is not suitable for Winnie either in appearance or in the matter of age. However, they get married at last.

Since Winnie is no longer strange with lonely living, she finds no difficulty in adjusting herself to follow her husband's disguised life. As a matter of fact, her husband's isolated kind of living without any appearance of relatives and his quiet nature are just perfect for her and her two relatives. She feels relieved by having them around. Her mother becomes free from the compulsory of seeking pennies and her brother is secure to have a non-irritant brother-in-law. Besides, Winnie herself is far from the annoyance of anyone who may cause trouble by questioning the disability of her brother or by exciting the delicate brother so that he will become uncontrollable. The fact is that Winnie hopes to find a true peace by living with Verloc.

Formerly the anger of the father was the

supremely effective sanction of these rites, but Mr Verloc's placidity in domestic life would have made all mention of anger incredible - even to poor Stevie's nervousness. The theory was that Mr Verloc would have been inexpressibly pained and shocked by any deficiency considerable consolation in the feeling that she need no longer tremble for poor Stevie. ... As a little girl she had often faced with blazing eyes the irascible licensed victualler in defence of her brother (page 40).

When Winnie's father was still alive, Winnie was often worried by her father's hard treatment towards Stevie. Now as her father has gone forever and she has married Verloc she can experience an ease since Verloc is a calm person. In fact, this is her reason of getting married.

After the marriage Winnie's charm still exist.

Winnie Verloc was a young woman with a full

bust, in a tight bodice, and with broad hips. Her hair was very tidy. Steady-eyed like her husband, ... behind the rampart of the counter (page 14).

She is still a neat woman implied from her hair just like at the beginning. She is also still a woman with basically the same figure and shape as well although one thing is rather different here. She is now said to have cautious sight just like her secret agent husband. It means that Winnie develops in character. She seems to be more mature. But it is understandable since she is at present a person with bigger responsibility and she is aware of those duties. She believes herself to be able to become a good daughter for her mother, a good sister for her brother as well as a good wife for her husband. She proves it by presenting good conduct towards the three people she feels responsible for. One example is described below.

'Keep your feet quiet, dear,' said Mrs. Verloc, with authority and tenderness; ... (page 146).

We sense a sign of compassion in this quotation. The word "dear" suggests the sense. In this quotation Winnie prefers to use "dear" instead of just "Stevie"; but it is understandable since Stevie is a delicate person. He can not accept rough treatment. He may be on a state of excitement. Winnie knows this very well. Therefore she always uses gentle words everytime she speaks to Stevie. By speaking like that Winnie has exhibited her quality of "being patient and loving". Stevie is a hard person to handle, if someone lacks patience one will not be able to deal with him. His unstable emotion which often renders him to produce weird action may cause somebody to be easily irritated and hit the boy. This is the conduct used to be possessed by Winnie's late father. He is ashamed to have degenerate son and frequently hurts the son accordingly. Having the feeling of pity and love Winnie does the opposite and makes the brother feel comfortable and safe with her.

After the marriage, Winnie takes her mother and her brother live with her and her husband in Verloc's

place, a shop-house in Brett street. The street is in Soho, a district in London. The word 'shop-house' means that in this place the owner uses the building to keep the shop as well as to live in. In this case, Verloc, Winnie's husband is the owner of the shop. By having a store, Verloc conceals his true profession as a secret agent. The building is small. The only means to enter the house is the front door of the shop. Behind the counter of the shop there is a parlour and a kitchen near it. A fireplace also decorates the downstairs. While Verloc's room with a dark window pane is placed upstairs.

The residence is situated among grimy brick houses. The building itself is in fact grimy or dirty. Since Verloc's job is in a way political and has the side of secrecy so the unclean neighbourhood is considered suitable to live in. It is the perfect place to disguise. Moreover, Verloc's false appearance as an owner of a shop who also has a family makes his camouflage perfect.

However, if we look at the goods sold at

Verloc's shop closely, we may get an indication of the frivolity of Verloc's business in the shop. We can also find the proof that the shop is also a media to convey everything that is needed to by Verloc's political job and his political friends. Therefore, in order to get the complete description about the shop we should take the quotation from the novel cited as follows:

The windows contained ...; non descript packages in wrappers like patent medicines; closed yellow papers envelopes, very flimsy, and mark two and six in heavy black figures; a few number of ancient French comic publication hung across a string as if to dry; a dingy blue china bowl, a casket of black wood, bottles of marking ink, and rubber stamps; a few books with titles hinting at impropriety; a few apparently old copies of obscure newspaper, badly printed, with the title like the *Torch*, the *Gong-rousing* titles, (page 13).

The things appear worthless. Some of them, like printing materials including newspapers, are provocative. Furthermore, they are not orderly arranged. Besides, the sorts of exhibited stuff are not clear. That is the description of substances found in Verloc's shop. While the customers of the shop are portrayed below.

These customers were either very young men, who hung about the window for a time before slipping in suddenly; or men of a more mature age, but looking generally as if they were not in funds. Some of that last kind had the collars of their overcoat turned right up to their moustaches, and traces of mud on the bottom of their nether garments, which have the appearance of being much worn and not very valuable. And the leg inside them did not, as a general rule, seem of much account either. With their hands plunged deep in the side pockets of their coats, they dodged in side

ways, one shoulder first, as if afraid to start the bell going (page 13).

It seems that Verloc's customers are poor people or men with no money. They are from low class society who are usually easy to be provoked. Their behaviour indicates that they are kind of people who have no certainty in facing the future. Their doubtful manners signify that they possess no constant principle to use in running their life. In dealing with Verloc's shop they show doubtful action, too. At one side they seem to be eager to come inside Verloc's place and find out whether there is something offering chances for them; but at the other side they look afraid of the opposite thing which may appear and cause more difficulties for them.

Meanwhile, there are other 'customers' who frequently come to Verloc's shop in the evening. These evening visitors, as the novel says so, are not similar with the previous customers. They are the kind of people who have particular destination in their life. They make a visit to Verloc's place

because they have the same kind of interest with Verloc. These people are Verloc's political friends. They are said to be the men with collars turn up and soft hats rammed down. They nod familiarly to Winnie and directly go inside the house through the passage at the end of the counter at the shop, (page 14).

Winnie's marriage runs smoothly for about seven years. The family are supporting each other. Stevie needs Winnie to take care of him and Winnie provides a full protection for him, her dear brother. Winnie needs her mother beside her to help her in handling Stevie and her mother is there to obtain financial and soul secure. Verloc needs Winnie and family to make his disguise keep safe from suspicion and Winnie needs Verloc to sustain her family.

A.2 External Causes

The perfect condition of Winnie's marriage does not last forever. It is disturbed by unexpected things that comes to the family. First, Verloc's superintendent is changed. The new chief is different

from the old one. He demands more tasks and applies stricter regulations. Verloc finds difficulties in adjusting with the chief. He gets upset and uneasy. Moreover, the recent duty, to set a bomb in Greenwich observatory, a scientific place bothers Verloc a lot because he is not familiar with such outrageous action. He needs someone to help but none of his political friends is ready to give him a hand. This event will later influence Winnie's change of character although it is not in direct way.

The family matters are added with the leaving of Winnie's mother to join a charity cottage in which childless widow lives. Winnie's mother is ashamed of being continuously dependent on Winnie and her husband. In her opinion to let Stevie be taken care by Winnie is actually an improper thing to do by a mother because a mother should take care of her son by herself and not give the responsibility to other especially to a daughter. But she does it to Winnie. Therefore, she decides to move to the cottage so that Winnie's burden will be less. In fact, she makes

Winnie's burden heavier since Winnie will lose the only friend she has. Unfortunately Winnie's mother is not aware of it.

Winnie herself finds that she has inner conflict. At one side she does not want to let her mother go but at another side it is impossible for her to tell it to her mother because she is not in the habit of expressing something openly. Besides, she believes her mother to do what she thinks the best and Winnie does not want to give an obstacle to it.

Finally the family gets its biggest shock when Verloc fails his duty. The bomb has blown a person into pieces and that person is Verloc's brother-in-law, Winnie's dear brother, Stevie. Stevie's death is really a disaster. It is a disaster for Verloc not only because it marks the end of his career as a secret agent after eleven years of hard spying work but also it indicates that his marriage is going to be over for his wife. Winnie will never forgive him. Stevie's tragedy is like a nightmare for Winnie will

never forgive him. It is so because Stevie is the only one she cares so much in this world as being implied from the below quotation.

"But her only real concern was Stevie's welfare," (page 161).

The external causes are complete in pushing Winnie into depression with the help of Winnie's ignorance surrounding, the next external cause. All of them take significant part in the happening of Winnie's conflicts. And they give big support to the change of her character.

A.3 Internal Causes

Winnie's quality of being a silent lady does not always bring advantages for her. Sometimes being a person with few words creates some difficulties for her. Her habit of not asking further about her husband's occupation has dragged her into a misunderstanding situation that endangers her relationship with Verloc. And the tendency of not expressing her feeling openly cannot prevent her

mother from being misjudging her conduct. For example when Winnie's mother tells Winnie about her intention to leave the house, Winnie does not utter her own personal objection that she needs her mother beside her and that she wants her mother to keep staying with the family. Instead, she says other words which make her mother unable to know Winnie's real intention.

Besides, the big affection Winnie has for Stevie has led her to be dependent on Stevie's existence. It is because her intention to be a concerned sister has extended to the actions of a very protecting sister. Her being attentive goes beyond limit. She wants Stevie to be secure from everything not only from provoking words that may excite him or from seeing 'hard' treatment like a cabman who whips the horse, but also from any kind of danger. Winnie feels responsible for it. At this moment, nobody has ever reminded Winnie for being a very protecting sister. On the contrary, everybody and everything around her have in fact given supporting aids for her to keep

holding that way of thinking.

Her husband, the secret agent, Verloc, who is a taciturn person never feels troubled about her wife's great attention towards his brother-in-law. He thinks that he has other more important business to be dealt with. He is really grateful to her wife because of her being in-charge of her brother-in-law and particularly of the shop-house. He needs that to free himself from the suspicion of his political enemies and to keep his disguise safe. While Winnie's mother never prohibits Winnie's deep affection towards Stevie because it is in other side a big advantage for her. She even feels relieved that Winnie cares so much about her brother.

But in view of Winnie's fondness for her delicate brother, and of Mr Verloc's kind and generous disposition, she felt that the poor boy was pretty safe in this rough world. And in her heart of hearts she was not perhaps displeased that the Verlocs had no children. As that circumstance seemed

perfectly indifferent to Mr Verloc, and as Winnie found an object of quasi - maternal affection in her brother, perhaps this was just as well for poor Stevie (page 17).

Winnie's mother is not only happy for Winnie's great attention towards Stevie, but also for Verloc's good nature and the fact that they are childless. In this case, Winnie's mother has given a big support to Winnie's view.

In addition, the atmosphere of Winnie's places of stay especially in the new smaller house provides a space for Winnie to have anybody who may utter any disagreeable comment on what she does. A narrow street usually creates a close warm friendly relationship among its citizens. But in Brett Street, where Winnie lives after she gets married, the fact that the street is narrow reflects opposite description. It indicates the shallow relationship between the residents. Winnie never seems to get along closely with her neighbours; there is no indication that she knows them at all or tries to

recognize them.

Furthermore, the mysterious aspects of the shop-house has in fact emerged a doubtful feeling for a person to enter it. It is strengthened by the condition that the only means to get into the house is through the shop-door. It reflects the formality of the house and shows how the owners of the house do not like to be visited informally. As a matter of fact, in a great extent Winnie's over protecting tendency weakens her character. It causes her to have conflicts either in side her ownself or with others later.

B. THE CHANGE OF WINNIE'S CHARACTER

The unexpected events that come have somehow brought a big influence to the family, particularly Winnie. The change of Verloc's superintendent has made Verloc worry about his future. It means that if his future is uncertain so in a great extent the future of the whole family will have the same fate. Thinking about that matter Verloc feels terribly

dizzy. Unfortunately he is not accustomed to tell his real business to his wife and cannot get help from her accordingly. Furthermore, when he finds that his political friends are not available for him Verloc feels confused. There is conflict inside himself. At one side he is pressed by the demand to maintain his work for the family's sake but on the other side he actually wants to walk out since he no longer finds peace and comfort in work.

Verloc is in a difficult position right now but Winnie has no idea about it and it makes her difficult to understand the real situation as Verloc fails his duty. So the replacement of Verloc's chief which arises conflict inside Verloc's self is the beginning of Winnie's conflict although they are indirectly related.

The conflict does appears later as her mother leaves the family.

... and remembering her mother's empty room across the landing, she felt an acute pang of loneliness. She had never been parted before.

They had stood by each other (page 147-148).

It is the condition after Winnie's mother leaves the house to join a charity cottage for childless widow. Loneliness comes because Winnie and her mother are used to stick together and her mother is the only friend she has in fact. Her mother is the one she can ask direct help concerning Stevie's matter.

He glared at me, as if he didn't know who I was when I went downstairs. His heart was going like a hammer. He can't help being excitable. I woke mother up, and asked her to sit with him till he went to sleep (page 57).

The word 'he' in the quotation refers to Stevie and the statement is being uttered by Winnie after an accident when Stevie is once uncontrollable. Here we can see that when Winnie finds difficulties in handling Stevie it is her mother she needs not Verloc although he is trusted by Winnie. In one way or another Winnie needs her mother either for a companion or in a great extent as her helper. Winnie seems to feel tranquil if she has her mother besides

her so that she can perform her duties well.

Therefore when her mother leaves her, it is not just a small deal to face for Winnie. It bothers her very much. It slowly disturbs her calmness. In this case, as she is an implicit person, it is not easy for her to convey her uneasy feeling in the form of words. It is expressed by her face, her stare and it causes her to be more difficult to understand as Verloc thinks as follows:

She moved not, massive and shapeless like a recumbent statue in the rough; he remembered her wide-open eyes looking into the empty room. She was mysterious, with the mysteriousness of living beings, (page 149).

This is what happens on Winnie after she feels lonely. This time it is Verloc who makes an observation. By looking at Winnie's lifeless state at being and reminiscing how she stares at her mother's room. He has a thought that she is mysterious. It is difficult to guess what she actually feels. Verloc is puzzled by her. Yet, she is still able to control

herself.

At this stage, Winnie's character tends to be complex. It means that her traits are complicated. She is often times unpredictable. Winnie can be categorized as a round character. However, she is still emotionally under control. She understands that she has two duties to perform, to be a good wife and a nice sister.

At last, Winnie's change of character can be clearly seen from Winnie's response as her brother dies.

'I don't want to look at you as long as I live', (page 190).

What happens here is Winnie feels disappointed because Stevie has accidentally died while helping Verloc setting the bomb. Winnie's disappointment causes her to say that. She thinks Verloc is guilty in this accident. We can also see that her warm speeches she used to give for Verloc exist no more. It has been replaced by anger. The worst thing is that anger leads to the feeling of hatred and

revenge. At this moment Winnie also seems to lose her trust towards Verloc. This time Winnie's soundless conduct scares him.

Silent, and out of his line in the kitchen, she frightened him. If only she had her mother with her, (page 192).

After knowing about Stevie's death, Winnie's being silent becomes truly apparent. This time her silence scares Verloc. It is annoying him. Due to Verloc's involvement in Stevie's death, Winnie's conduct seems to hide a terrible thing for Verloc, which is waiting to explode. It may be destroying. Verloc expects Winnie's mother to be there at that time. This hope arises in Verloc's mind because if Winnie's mother still stays at Verloc's place it is possible that she will be able to make Winnie feel comfortable.

Winnie's capability in developing and growing indicates that Winnie is a dynamic character. As a dynamic character Winnie undergoes some kinds of change of character. Her character keeps changing until she is almost completely altered. Her

difficulty in facing her mother's leaving shows that she has become a fragile person. Her independency and her state of self confident that she used to demonstrate are missing. Winnie's failure to cope her problem in accepting Stevie's accidental death suggests the meaning that now she is a dependent person. She has depended her life on Stevie all this long. Therefore, as Stevie has gone her life seems to be worthless. She loses the spirit of life, and becomes a different person. Stevie's death has hurt her very much.

But lamentable circumstances of Stevie's end which to Mr Verloc's mind had only an episodic character, as a part of a greater disaster, dried her tears at their very source. It was the effect of a white hot iron drawn across her eyes; at the time her heart, hardened and chilled into a lump of ice, kept her body in an inward shudder, set her features into a frozen, contemplative immobility addressed to a whitewashed

wall with no writing on it (page 196). These are description of Winnie's feeling. It is so terrible and painful. It makes her lose the confidence as a wife, a daughter, even as human being. She can not stand facing her own mother and can not go on living as Verloc's wife.

According to her opinion, she fails the duty as a protecting sister since she can not prevent her brother from death. She lets Verloc take Stevie from her and not return him to her. Her mind seems to have gone. She can not think clearly. It is reflected from her confusing action as being impressed by Verloc below :

For that reason, when he looked up he was startled by the inappropriate character of his wife's stare. It was not a wild stare, and it was not inattentive, but its attention was peculiar and not satisfactory, in as much that it seemed concentrate upon

some point beyond Mr Verloc's person. The impression was so strong that Mr Verloc glanced over his shoulder. There was nothing behind him : there was just the whitewashed wall (page 195).

Here Winnie is like a daydreaming person. She is thinking of unclear things. She thinks Verloc is a murderer. She thinks Verloc is a liar. She is no longer able to control herself. Although she is actually aware that there are several matters that are difficult to comprehend as she calls it "things did not stand being looked into" (page 148), it is not easy for her to get her mind pure and fresh.

Verloc's opinion shows it.

She was taking it very hard - not only like herself, he thought (page 195).

This kind of thought emerges because Verloc can not understand how worthy Stevie for Winnie is.

Under the mistaken impression that the value of individuals consists in what they are in themselves, he could not possibly

comprehend the value of Stevie in the eyes of Mrs Verloc (page 190).

Stevie's death is a big thing for Winnie. Her goal of life is destroyed. There is no more demand on her to be a tough person either. When her duty to protect her brother is finished she forgets her other duties. She does not remember that she still has a mother and a husband who need her. She can not recall that she used to be a responsible person. She is neglecting the responsibility now.

"her personality seemed to have been torn in two pieces, whose mental operations did not adjust themselves very well to each other" (Page 206).

She is desperately needing help at the moment. Unfortunately there is no one available to do that for her. Her mother has left the house to live in a charity cottage so that she does not know that her daughter is in need. Her husband can not find a perfect comfort to console her.

In addition, by the atmosphere of Soho, Winnie's

despair is complete. The neighbourhood which is seldom touched by the sun shows that even the weather does not provide Winnie with a friendly air. Furthermore, the ignorance of people makes Winnie's sadness unbearable. She needs somebody to entertain her but she is a kind of an unsociable person. She has no friend except her mother who has left her alone and Mrs. Neale, a charwoman who helps her in the house once in a while. But she can not contact them both. Mrs. Neale is not close to her. Winnie does not dare face her mother since she has failed in guarding Stevie.

Nobody is there to accompany Winnie and to say that she has a shoulder to cry on. Verloc, her husband has been killed accidentally by Winnie herself when she can no longer hold her anger. And her mother, her only friend has left the house. Then the money she receives from Verloc as the last 'treasure' is gone taken by Verloc's friend. This time Winnie seems to have completely lost everything. She is afraid of being jailed as well as of going on living

friendless and penniless in this vast world.

In that condition, Winnie has completely changed in character. She loses her tenderness, kindness and patience.

"She started forward at once, as if she were still a loyal woman bound to that man by an unbroken contract" (Page 212).

The word 'as if' above shows that what has happened is quite on the opposite. Winnie is no longer a devoted wife. Her agreement with Verloc has been ruined. She is a different person. She is now a depressed woman. She is no longer a considerate person.

Winnie's character changes together with the change of her mental condition. And the change of her character is reflected in the change of her behaviour.

Unfortunately there is no such a person and a place that exist when Winnie falls. The poor situation of the neighbourhood has made Winnie's condition becomes more miserable. As a matter of fact they have given influences to each other. Winnie's

quietness and the fact of two dependent people around her have made her have no interest and motivation to go outside the house to add her acquaintances. The dirty unhealthy surrounding does not encourage its people to get to know and concern about each other since they themselves are thinking of their own problems. By living in this environment Winnie's problem is difficult to solve.