

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents several sub chapters which consist of background of the study, statement of the research problem, objectives of the study, significances of the study, and scope and limitation.

1.1. Background of the Study

No one wants to experience a terrible thing in life. However, as a human sometimes we cannot prevent a terrible thing to happen. For instance is the death of someone loved. Indeed, as that terrible thing called death comes to take away the loved one, we will undoubtedly feel a very deep loss. It is because death is a painful experience. No wonder the death of someone closed can change someone's life completely (Crump, 2001:28). It means that the death of someone loved can make a big change in the life of the people who is left behind. It is as if life will never be the same again, because from that moment after the death of that person, everything will change forever.

Furthermore, as a response to the loss, a person will experience various emotions such as sadness, anger, guilt and etc. Here, the emotions experienced after the loss is called with grief. Grief is a natural process; it is normal. It is experienced by every person after such a loss. It means that no one will not through this process. However, although grief is normal, sometimes its effect can be so excruciating. It depends on how much someone attached to the deceased

person. The greater the love, the harder one will hit. For instance is the death of parents for children. Losing a parent can be an extremely hard blow in children's life, especially when the children are in teen-age. The intense feeling of pain as the result of the death, along with the developmental issues of adolescence makes everything complicated. No wonder, many adolescents repress or avoid the pain of grief. This is also the thing that is done by Willow Randall, the main character in the novel *Willow* by Julia Hoban.

The story of *Willow* tells about the seventeen-year-old Willow Randall who tries to cope with the death of her parents in a car crash. Since she is the one who drives the car, she feels guilty about everything, especially toward her brother, David. Because of her fault, she makes David lose his parents too. The intense feelings of guilt, sadness, and anger make Willow does not dare to face her grief. As a result, she tries to run away from it and blocks out the painful feelings of grief with a razor. Until one day, a boy named Guy comes into her life and helps her to accept her grief, to stop her destructive path, and finally to find a way back to life.

The complexity of the story as the main character's struggle with grief is the most interesting part of *Willow*. Moreover, the novel also brings a sensitive subject of cutting, which makes the story become more interesting for the reader. This happens since most of nowadays Young Adult novels rarely talk about this subject. It is because cutting is regarded as the sensitive subject by society. The topic of cutting can be something that many people may find difficult to talk about. However, in this novel Julia Hoban can bring this sensitive topic in a

different and beautiful way. She is not merely talking about the cutting itself, but she is also talking about the theme of love, faith, and hope. Through *Willow*, the readers can learn about the power of love to heal and having faith and belief in oneself. This novel inspires many people and shows the great contribution to the people with the same problem as the main character, Willow Randall.

Related with the previous statement, the success of a novel cannot be separated from the genius of a writer behind it. It is Julia Hoban, the writer who has written a great and brilliant work like *Willow* and put it as one of Young Adult hits in 2009. Hoban writes *Willow* with great detail and infuses her word with depth, emotion and conviction. In addition, due to its success, *Willow* is released to the UK in paperback edition under the different name, *Scarred* and also in eBook format entitled *Oh Brave New World*. Besides this successful novel, previously Hoban wrote several children literature including *Amy Loves the Rain*, *Amy Loves the Sun*, *Amy Loves the Snow*, and a novel entitled *Acting Normal*.

Furthermore, through the story of *Willow*, it can be seen that grief is the main focus in this novel. Therefore, the theory of grief from Alan D. Wolfelt is used to analyze the novel. This theory is suitable for analyzing the novel. Firstly, Wolfelt's theory focuses in grief that is experienced by teenager. It fits in with the story because *Willow* tells about a girl who struggle with grief. The main character of the novel, Willow Randall experiences several feelings of grief as a result of the death of her parents. This novel also shows the central need that the grieving people must meet in order to heal which are proposed by Wolfelt. Therefore, Wolfelt's theory is applied to analyze *Willow* novel.

In conclusion, *Willow* is a great novel with a deep and beautiful theme from a brilliant writer that is very interesting to analyze. Furthermore, since the novel tells about the struggle of the main character over the death of her parents, the psychological approach which focuses on grief will be used in this study. Therefore, *Willow Randal's Effort to Cope with Her Grief in Julia Hoban's Willow* is chosen to be the title of this study, since it is suitable with the main focus of this study.

Previously, grief theory is used by another writer who analyzes a different novel. The writer is Alvita Eka Fatmawati (2012) who analyzes Cecilia Ahern's *P.S. I Love You*. In her study, she focuses on the effect of grief in the main character's life. In addition, her study focuses on the symptoms of grief that is shown by the main character and how the main character overcomes her grief. Meanwhile, this study focuses on the feelings of grief that is experienced by the main character. Besides that, this study also focuses on the way the main character copes and heals her grief.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, this study will discuss about the grief experienced by Willow Randal as the result of her parents' death and the way she deals with them in Julia Hoban's *Willow*. This study is formulated as the following questions:

1. What are the feelings of grief experienced by Willow Randall?
2. How does Willow Randall cope with her grief?
3. How does Willow Randall heal her grief?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

In line with the questions above, the purpose of this study are:

1. To elaborate the feelings of grief experienced by Willow Randall.
2. To elaborate the way Willow Randall copes with her grief.
3. To elaborate the way Willow Randall heals her grief.

1.4. Significances of the Study

By analyzing the novel *Willow*, the significance of this study is based on two parts, theoretically and practically. The first, theoretically, this study is expected to give better understanding about grief theory in literary works. In addition, this study expected to give contribution for further study which analyzes the same literary work or same theory. Practically, this study is expected to enrich the reader's knowledge and understanding about grief and its effect on people's life.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is grief. The limitation of this study is the utterances of the characters and the author's narrations which are portrayed and related to the grief theory in Julia Hoban's novel, *Willow*.