



## **ESCAPING FROM ADVERSITY IN NOVEL *A MILLION LITTLE PIECES* BY JAMES FREY (2003)**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue of escaping adversity in the Novel *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey (2003). The issue of escaping adversity refers to the ways the character when the character wants to get out of drug addiction. This analysis is text-based interpretation based on the theory life instinct by Sigmund Freud. This analysis uses fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and setting that contribute in revealing the issue. The result of the study reveals the man escapes his adversity. It can be seen through his behaviour such as create new life, cooperate with others, and his pro-social action.

**Key words:** Escaping Adversity, create new life, cooperate, pro-social action, A Million Little Pieces

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Every people face different difficulties in their lives. Humans can certainly solve any problem in a variety of ways. Some of them can solve problems wisely, while others cannot. A lot of people try to avoid problems by going down the wrong path. One of the wrong ways is to abuse alcohol and drugs. People commonly use the drug out of curiosity or to feel better as they try to alleviate the stress they are feeling. However, the ability of drugs to temporarily reduce panic and anxiety causes people to believe in these things. This trust develops into habits, making people unable to stop using drugs. They will become dependent on these dangerous substances. This is what drives a person to become a drug addict. Some people, on the other hand, are strong and persistent in dealing with their problems. Their efforts to confront

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problems frequently result in good solutions. Those brave people will face their life's problems, no matter how difficult the problems.

The result of facing problems make people strive for life. People do their best efforts to escape from adversity in their life. According to Cambridge, (2022) escaping means to get free for something or to avoid something. Furthermore, according to Stolz (2007:8) states that adversity is the intelligence that a person has in overcoming difficulties and surviving. Meanwhile, in Cambridge dictionary (2022) adversity means a difficult or unlucky situation or event. According to National Library of Medicine (2019) adversity can be identified as suffering and discomfort aroused by difficulty, misfortune, or potentially traumatic events. The suffering and discomfort aroused by the difficulty that can be find or faced by a drug addict. The protagonist in this novel is a drug addict. In this analysis, escaping from adversity can be seen from the ways of the main character to survive and maintain himself from a drug addict to be a good person and get a better life. The ways to survive and maintain his good life happens because of his life instinct. According to Sigmund Freud (1920) life instinct can be seen through behavior. In this novel, the main character shows the behaviors of wanting to survive, such as he wants to get well because there is someone he loves. He does not want to lose his loved ones, so he tries hard to recover from drug addiction. The other behavior that Sigmund Freud categorizes is a desire or need to cooperate with others; for example, he wants to be rehabilitated and carry out all rehabilitation procedures. The last behavior is pro-social actions, such as helping and woman he loves to recover from drug addiction.

The suffering from addiction can be treated and recovered. According to BNN (*Badan Nasional Narkotika*) People who are addicted to the drug must be treated immediately by rehabilitation (BBN, 2017). Through this recovery, they have to pass several treatment processes properly even though they are in a harsh situation. It is because the dangerous substances in their body already damaged them physically and mentally.

In reality, there are several people who can survive from the addiction. One of them is Robert Downey Jr. He is a Hollywood actor. In 2002, Robert Downey Jr made it through rehab and returned to his acting career. Robert Downey Jr.'s success out of addiction was also sparked when he fell in love with film producer Susan Levin. He committed to his recovery. He commits to recovering from reliving and reviving his acting career to achieve his greatest success starring Tony Stark in Marvel's Iron Man and The Avengers film franchises. Today Robert Downey Jr. enjoys a relatively quiet life. The

negative activities he did when he was an addict have now been replaced with positive ones, such as spending weekends with family. He said that his wife, his children, Eastern martial arts, yoga, and a twelve-step program help him overcome his addiction and stay sober.

The phenomenon of people who have escaped from adversity is not only can be find in real life, but also literary works. One of them is in the novel *A Million Little Pieces* written by James Frey (2003). It is an interesting issue because it shows the ways experienced by the main character, who is an addict in getting well and escaping from the addiction. The issue is important to be discussed because it will be an insightful shot for people who also have the same problems to get a better life.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The analysis of the novel *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey (2003) is done through text-based interpretation. The next important instrument is data in the form of a quote from the novel *A Million Little Pieces by James Frey (2003)*. The researcher will make notes on the relevant quotation to the topic and problems. In doing so, the researcher approached close reading. The fictional devices such as character, setting, and plot are used to analyze this novel.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this analysis escaping from adversity can be seen in the ways of the main character, James, to survive and maintain himself from a drug addict to be a good person and get a better life. He can get out of drug addiction in several ways. In this analysis, escaping from adversity can be seen in three ways: create new life, desire or need to cooperate with others, and doing some pro-social actions.

### **Create New Life**

Create new life is one of the ways of the main character escapes from adversity in his life. The process of creating new life happens when the main character experiences worse situations because of the drug addict. Creating new life also can be seen when the main character finds someone he loves; because of that person, the main character proves and is determined to recover from his addiction.

The way of create new life that convinces the main character wants to escape from adversity to better life can be seen in the following quotation:

*“... There are a lot of Rules here, I try to follow most of them, but this Girl, her name is Lilly, has been good for me. She’s cool, smart, she listens to me, I listen to her, we understand each other. We’re different and we come from different places, but in a lot of ways we’re the same. We’re both wrecked we’re both trying to get better. We both need help and we’re trying to help each other.” (p. 292)*

The quotation above reflects that the main character wants to escape from adversity for a better life because of someone he loves. From the sentence *“We're both wrecked we're both trying to get better. We both need help, and we're trying to help each other”*. This sentence shows that the main character has a life instinct because not all drug addictions have the motivation to recover for a better life, but this sentence, it expresses that he wants a better new version of himself. This sentence also clearly mentions that he has self-awareness because he knows that he is an addict, which makes worse situations in his life. However, the presence of someone he loves gives him the power to recover because he wants a better life and live together with his loved one. So, in this case, falling in love gives him the positive thing that makes him aware, and he wants to create a better new life.

Another evidence that the main character wants to create new life can be seen from the quotation below:

*“I tell her I’m glad she didn’t leave. More than glad. I tell her that if she had left I would have followed her. I would have found her, I will not let her say good-bye to me or to her Grandmother or to life. It is all we have and it is not to be wasted. We have wasted too much she and I and the others like us. Wasted far too much. We have to hold on to what we have left. Fight for it. Cherish it. Try to survive it. Try to love it. I would have followed her. I’m going to hold on to her. I will fight for her. Cherish it. Try to survive myself. Try to survive myself so that I can love her. I hold her hands in mine. I keep them warm.” (p.317)*

From the sentences above, it can be expressed that the main character truly wants better life together with a loved one. The woman that he loves gives him motivation and power for himself that makes him aware that he still has a chance to change his worse life to be better. The sentence *“we have wasted too much she and I and the others like us. Wasted far too much”* it shows that the main character has emotional self-awareness because he is aware of the

relationship between what he feels and what he thinks. It is an awareness that can be used as a guide for making individual goals. His goal is to have a better life with Lilly, someone he loves. It is not only emotional self-awareness, but also he has life instinct that motivates him to create new life. The main character has a life instinct more dominant than a death instinct. It can be shown from the sentences, *"I will fight for her. Cherish it. Try to survive myself. Try to survive myself so that I can love her. I hold her hands in mine. I keep them warm"* these sentences indicate that he indeed has life instinct that triggers him to get out of his adversity. He is determined to survive in his better life. He will not give up and start having a life plan. That sentence also expresses that he has self-awareness because he can only get a better life together with his loved ones by staying sober and without drugs. It also motivates him to have aimed for his future. It indirectly makes him want to live longer with a better version of himself.

### **Desire to Cooperation with Others**

The other way that is done by the main character in seeking to escape from adversity is through his desire to cooperate with others, such as a doctor, nurse, etc.

The main character decides to deal with medical treatment in his rehabilitation clinic. It can be seen in the below quotation:

*"The door opens, and a Nurse walks into the Room. She wears white, all white, and she is carrying a clipboard. She sits in the chair by the desk.*

*Hi, James.*

*Hi.*

*I need to ask you some questions. All right. I also need to check your blood pressure and your pulse.*

*All right." (p.13)*

From the quotation above, it can be expressed that the main character desires to cooperate with the nurse. The setting refers to the main character's motivation to recover from drug addiction to be better. It can be seen through the phrase *"all right"* when the nurse wants to check his condition. It can be

said that the main character cooperating with others is a better way for him which can make him escape from adversity as a drug addict.

Another quotation proves the main character's desire to cooperate with others. It can be seen in the quote below:

*“He hands me more pills.*

*Are Librium and Diazepam.*

*I take them.*

*They're detoxification drugs and important medically because they stabilize your heart, keep your blood pressure down and help ease you through withdrawal. Without them, you could suffer a stroke, a heart attack, or both.*

*He leans forward and looks at my cheek.*

*You'll be taking them every four hours, in decreasing doses, for the next five days.*

*I look at his eyes.*

*We're going to take some tests.*

*He's seen this before. And start planning a Program for you.*

*All right.” (p.22)*

From the quotation above, it can be expressed that the main character gets treatment from a doctor. The setting for that quotation refers to a positive atmosphere because not all addicts are willing to do detoxification. It is because that treatment feels so torturous for drug addicts, but the main character wants to undergo treatment with confidence. It can be seen in the sentence, *“I look at his eyes”* which means that the main character is very confident and ready for all of the treatment procedures to recover from drug addiction. The other quotation that emphasizes that the main character wants to recover is contained in the phrase, *"All right."* The quotation above shows the main character is willing to cooperate with a doctor or nurse when he is being rehabilitated. It shows that the main character really wants to recover from his addiction and get out of his worse condition for a better life. In this situation, the cooperation among himself between the doctor and nurse happens.

### **Does Pro-social Action**

The main character does pro-social action as proof that he wants to escape his adversity. The example of his pro-social action can be seen when he helps a woman who is also a drug addict to continue his rehabilitation, so they can recover and make their dream come true, like having normal and better life without drugs.

The main character helps a woman who is not motivated to continue her rehabilitation. In this situation, the main character has self-awareness, so he chooses to help that woman because if he wants to have a better life with that woman, they have to recover to make their dream come true.

It can be proven in the below quotation:

*“Tell me where she is.*

*He smiles. It is not a friendly smile.*

*Why you gotta find this Girl?*

*She's in trouble. She needs help.*

*What do I get if I tell you what I know?*

*The satisfaction of knowing you did the right thing.*

*He chuckles.*

*That ain't worth much to me.*

*I don't have anything else.” (p.356)*

In the quotation above, it can be said that the main character has self-awareness. The main character knows what is good and bad and the impact of an action. In this case, the main character wants to help his loved ones not to fall back on drugs. This is because if he wants to recover and have a better life, then the thing to avoid is reusing. The setting in this quote is tense because the main character has to fight with himself, who is in a rehabilitation condition to help his friends who have fallen back into drugs. Of course, this is not easy for the main character, but with self-awareness in this condition, the main character can control himself.

The other proof can be seen in the following quotation:

*“He starts pulling up his pants, looking around the floor for whatever he has with him. I turn back to Lilly, who is clutching the bag of crack and the pipe and crawling backward into a corner. I reach toward her with one hand.*

*Come here, Lilly.*

*She crawls backward, shake her head.*

*We’re going to leave that shit here and we’re going Home.*

*She clutches, shakes her head, her eyes are gone, she is gone. She speaks.*

*No.*

*I step toward her.*

*Yes”.* (p.360)

From the quotation above, it can be expressed that the main character does pro-social actions, like helping Lilly to escape from adversity. It is because he knows that getting out of drug addicted it is really hard, and if she tries to use the drug, all of her treatments fail, and maybe she wants to return to the clinic where she gets rehabilitation. In this problem, the main character is aware he has to help that woman before it is late. The other reason why he helps her is that if the woman does not continue her rehabilitation, she will never recover from her addiction. When it happens, they cannot make their dreams come true, like having a better life together in the future. So that is why the main character wants and tries so hard to help the woman not lose sight of her life.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

In conclusion, Everyone has experienced adversity in their life. This adversity is a form of a worse situation or difficult situation, as described in this analysis, as a result of a problem that makes him a drug addict and makes his life worse. It, of course, will affect the life of an individual. Many of them do not have the spirit to live due to the adversity they have experienced. However, this will not happen to someone who chooses to struggle and rise in life and start looking for a way out of all the difficult situations that make their



life worse. Therefore, every individual must have motivation, self-awareness, and life goals, like what he wants to achieve in his life. They can eliminate negative things such as the desire to retake drugs, depression, loss of motivation, etc. Everyone can escape adversity as long as the individual has motivation and purpose in life.

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