

Elsa Martinelli's Struggle in Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with how Elsa Martinelli struggles in Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*. Elsa lives during the Great Depression, the period when the country was in crisis and at war with herself, when millions of people were out of work and even the land seemed to have turned against them. This study uses the psychological approach that uses references from some journal, thesis, and internet articles. This study uses qualitative descriptive method. The data source in this study is *The Four Winds* novel written by Kristin Hannah. This study focuses on Elsa Martinelli's struggle and the impact of the struggle on Elsa Martinelli. Based on this study, Elsa has experienced all her struggle when she decides to move in California. She looks for a better life for her and her children since her husband abandons her. Elsa wants to find a job in foreign country to feed her children, rent a decent place to live for her children and send her children to school. However, it is very difficult to find a job with a suitable salary in such a situation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As human beings, struggle is needed to achieve the goal in this life. According to McKechnie (1989: 367) struggle is a task or goal requiring much effort to accomplish or achieve. Life without struggle is meaningless. A struggle is caused by many factors both internal and external ones. For example the internal factor is from our life, and the external factors is usually from our work place, from relationship and from society. Not every struggle has a good ending. Some will overcome, others wipes out, physically, financially or emotionally. One of the literary works that depicts

such of struggle by external factors is *The Four Winds*, written by Kristin Hannah.

The Four Winds is the novel written by Kristin Hannah. She was born on September 25, 1960. She is an American writer. Kristin Hannah is the award winning and bestselling author of more than 20 novels including *The Four Winds*. This story is set during the great depression. It is a deeply moving, powerful, story about the strength and resilience of women her name is Elsa Martinelli who has known nothing but hardship and struggle since her childhood. Despite the odds stacked against her, Elsa's spirit remains unbroken to make a better life for herself and her family. In this tale, Kristin has written a survival story about resilience, love, family, courage and the American Dream. This novel is a powerful American epic about love and heroism and hope set during the Great Depression, a time when the country was in crisis and at war with life, when millions people were out of work and even the land seemed to have turned against them. *The Four Winds* is an indelible portrait of America and the American dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation. Therefore the researcher chooses *The Four Winds* novel as the subject of the study to analyze. In *The Four Winds*, the researcher finds struggle of a women who never gives up facing obstacle in her life. She sacrifices everything in her life to gain a better life for her family.

2. METHOD

This study uses extrinsic approach in order to analyze and understand the life struggle and source of the life struggle in Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*. According to Wellek and Warren (1993:78) extrinsic approach is a kind of approach that focuses on the outside aspects of the literary work, such as culture, religion, feminism, psychology and others. In this study, the writer uses the psychological approach applies psychological theories to explain the main character personality. This study

will analyze Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*, using descriptive qualitative research. The object of the study is struggle of life in Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds* and it is analyzed by using psychological approach and struggle theory. The type of data in *The Four Winds* novel consists of phrases, sentences and some dialogues. There are two types of data source. The data source consist of secondary and primary data. Primary data in this study is Kristin Hannah's *The Four Winds*. The secondary data are taken from other references such as related previous study, journal, articles and internet sources. The research instrument is the writer herself because the writer does all the data collection and the data analysis. The writer reads the whole of the story of *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah.

The source of the data used in this research is the novel *The Four Winds* written by Kristin Hannah. It way published in 2021. The data are in the form of quotations from the novel and directly concerned with the objective of the research.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Elsa Martinelli's Struggle

3.1.1 Negative Struggle

In *The Four Winds* novel, Elsa's struggle starts when she is a teenager. She dates a man named Rafe Martinelli, and she has sex with him before marriage. Elsa is an innocent teenager. She does not know about sex or having a child. She only knows about it from the romance novel that she always reads. Her mother is suspicious because a few days before Elsa says she is sick and she says that her stomach gets upset. . It can be seen in the quotation below:

"Elsa," Mama said, her voice surprisingly sharp. "Didn't you get sick a few days ago?"
"I'm fine."

Mama pulled off her gloves, one finger at a time, as she walked toward Elsa.

She laid the back of her hand against Elsa's forehead. "You're not fevered."

"I'm fine. It's just an upset stomach."

Elsa waited for Mama to speak. It was obvious she was thinking something; her face was drawn into a frown, which was something she tried never to do. A lady doesn't reveal emotions, was one of her favorite adages. Elsa had heard it every time she'd cried from loneliness or begged to be allowed to go to a dance

Mama studied Elsa. "It couldn't be.

"What?"

"Have you dishonored us?"

"What?"

"Have you been with a man?"

Of course Mama could see Elsa's secret. Every book Elsa had ever read romanticized the mother-daughter bond. Even if Mama didn't always show her love (affection being another thing a lady should conceal), Elsa knew how bound they were.

She reached out for her mother's hands, took them in her own, felt her mother's instinctive flinch. "I've wanted to tell you. I have. I've been so alone with these feelings that confuse me. And he"

Mama wrenched her hands back. (Hannah, 2021 : 33-34)

The quotation above shows that Elsa's mother has a bad feeling about her. A mother's instinct is never wrong, the things that all parents do not want in their children happens in this family. Her mother keeps watching her, and her mother asks her an unwanted question. Her mother always knows all of Elsa's secrets because all the books that she has read are mostly about romance. Her mother is rightly suspicious about that. Elsa does not know how to explain this thing to her mother. She never has this experience before. She wants to tell everything to her mother, but she just keeps this thing alone, nobody knows about it. Elsa is afraid that something bad will happen. Elsa is an innocent teenager, who does not know how to deal with a problem like this. All she knows is just about romance in the novel that she reads. She is too young to deal with this situation.

3.1.2 Chosen Struggle

The situation in Elsa's country gets worse ; the wind become a clawing, screaming monster that shakes the house, rattles the windows and pounds at the doors. Wind blows at over forty miles an hour, day after day, no reprieve, just an endless, terrifying assault. Dust rains down from the ceiling constantly. All of them breath it in and spit it out and coughed it up. Birds are disoriented by the dust and slam into walls and telephone poles. Trains stop on the tracks. Drifts of sand move like waves across the flat land. Elsa stands at the edge of the dead wheat field. Dry brown dirt lies in dunes as far as she could see. It is nearly four o'clock and still the sun beats down hot and dry. The windmill turns slowly, creaking, doing its best. She wants to believe that rain will come back and the seeds will sprout and this land will thrive again, but hope is something she might no longer afford, not when her son is lying on a cot, coughing up the dirt in his lungs, burning with fever. She could not bear might to watch her son struggle to breath. Elsa decides to migrate with her two children in order to get a better life. Her parents in law could not go with her because they would still rely on their fields and farms, waiting for a miracle to come and change their situation to be better. Elsa wants to find a job in foreign country, to feed her children, rent a decent place to live for her children and send her children to school.

3.1.3 Inevitable Struggle

As time goes by, Elsa has two children, their names are Loreda and Anthony. Things get worse, because the country where they live is on crisis, and Rafe leaves a letter stating that he would leave all his family to go to California. Rafe is a selfish husband and a selfish father at the same time. Now Elsa is a single mother who fights for her children. After Rafe leaves the house, Loreda always blames Elsa, she says that it Elsa's fault. Loreda is a daughter who is not close with her mother, she always blames her mother, and argues over anything that Elsa does, but her mother always loves her no matter what. It can be seen in the quotation below:

Elsa,
I'm sorry. I know the words don't matter, may be worse than nothing.

I'm dying here, that's all I know. One more day on this farm and I might put a gun to my head. I'm weak. You are strong. You love this land and this life in a way I never could.

Tell my parents and my children I love them. You are all better off without me. Please, don't look for me. I don't want to be found. I don't know where I'm going anyway

Rafe. (Hannah, 2021: 96).

The quotation above shows that Elsa could not even cry. Heartache has been a part of her life so long it has become as familiar as the color of her hair or the slight curve in her spine. Sometimes it is the lens through which she views her world and sometimes it is the blindfold she wears so she does not see. However it is always there. She knows it is her own fault, somehow, her doing, even though in all her desperate musings for the foundation of it, she has never been able to see the flaw in herself that has proven to be so defining. Her parents have seen it. Also, her younger and beautiful sisters. They have all sensed the lack in Elsa. Lorenda certainly sees it. The children's lives might never be the same after today. Their opinions of everything will change, but especially their opinions of themselves, of the durability of love and the truth of their family. They might know forever that their father does not love their mother or them enough to stay with them through hard times.

3.1.4 Positive Struggle

With such a bad situation, Elsa is always thinking about her children's future. Going to school is important for her children's future. At seven o'clock, she wakes her children up, gets them dressed, and herds them out of the tent, where she feeds them some hot mush even though it is not enough, but she knows now she has to save every single penny, and uses the newly boiled, strained, and cooled water to wash their hair and faces. She is so grateful the kids have done laundry the day before.

She does not care how much it costs to send her children to school. She will struggle to get some money to send her children to school. It can be seen in the quotation below:

Ant tried to wiggle free. "Why do I gotta be cleaner?"
"Because today is the first day of school," Elsa said.
"Yippee!" Ant said, jumping up and down.
Loreda took a step back. "Tell me you're kidding."
"Education is everything, Loreda. You know that. You will be the first Martinelli to go to college."
"But-"
"No buts. Hard times don't last. Education does and y'all are behind the grind these days. Hurry up. We have a walk ahead of us."(Hannah, 2021: 195-196)

The quotation above shows that Elsa really cares about her children's education, no matter how hard things are, and she tells Loreda that she will go to college someday and be the first Martinelli that goes to college. Loreda thinks it is unbelievable to go to school in such situation, because it is even difficult to get something to eat. Elsa sees the way the clean, well dressed children snicker at her daughter. A few of the girls even lean away from Loreda as she passes them. A boy with red hair holds his nose and a bunch of them laugh. It take all the strength Elsa has to turn away from the closed door.

3.2 The Impacts of The Struggle on Elsa Martinelli

As human being in this life there will be risks and impacts for something that has been done. In that case, it can be a good impact or a bad impact. As discussed in this research, a woman who lives during the Great Depression, when the country was in crisis and at war with itself, when millions are out of work and even the land seemes to have turned, there are so many impacts of the struggle she has faced. Elsa has been through many phases in her life, it starts when she is being kicked out from home by her parents it's because she is pregnant before marriage, after that she is abandoned by her husband and she has bad experiences while she is migrating. There are two types of impact; it's negative impact and positive impact.

3.2.1 Positive Impact

Elsa learns more about what life means to her, since before she has children until she become a great and powerful mother with all the efforts she

has been doing without her husband to live a better life, by going away from the homeland, seeking experience and looking for a better job to provide for her and her children. It can be seen in the quotation below:

Elsa stared down the long, empty road. Not far away, a crow sat on a shed that was buried almost to the peak in black dirt.

She almost said, I'm scared, but what kind of mother said those words to a child who counted on her?

«I've never been on my own," Elsa said.

«you're not on your own, Mom.

Ant popped his head out of the window of the cab of the truck. "I'm here, too!" he chirped. "Don't forget me!"

Elsa felt a rush of love for these children of hers, a soul-deep sense that was akin to longing; she drew in a deep breath, exhaled, and smelled the dry Panhandle Texas air that was as much a part of her life as God and her children.

She'd been born in this county and always thought she'd die here. "This is home," she said. "I thought you'd grow up here and be the first Martinelli to go to college here. Austin, I thought. Or Dallas, a place big enough to hold your dreams."(Hannah, 2021: 160)

The quotation above shows that Elsa tries to turn her fear into courage, it is just because she does not want to look weak in front of her children. This struggle has a huge impact on Elsa's life, she is a responsible mother for her children.

3.2.2 Negative Impact

The negative impact that Elsa experiences is that she becomes pregnant before marriage. After that, her parents kick her out and no longer recognize her as a child. It can be seen in the quotation below:

"Oh, no, you don't, missy." Papa looked at Mr. Martinelli. "The Wolcotts are a good family. Respected in Dalhart. I expect your boy to make this right." He gave Elsa one last look of disgust. "Either way, I don't ever want to see you again, Elsinore. You're no daughter of mine."(Hannah, 2021: 38)

The quotation above shows that her parents kick her out from the house. Her parents feel ashamed to have a daughter who gets pregnant before marriage.

Elsa's parents are shocked because the man who impregnates her is Rafe Martinelli. Elsa's family is a respected family in Dalhart. It is different from The Martinelli's family. Elsa's family really cares about their chastity and dignity.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on this research, Elsa Martinelli has struggled a lot in her life. Elsa's struggle starts when she gets pregnant before marriage, she get kicked out by her parents, and she has to live with Rafe's family. At that time life goes normally. When the great depression hits their lives, it changes Rafe a lot and Rafe suddenly decides to leave his family. After her husband abandons her, Elsa's life loses direction, but she has two children to take care as best as she could. Now her children are her support system. Elsa has plans to leave her homeland because the country is on crisis. She has to leave her parents in law to look for a better life for her and for her children. She has to face all of the obstacles that would get in her way. Fortunately, Elsa is a tireless woman. She faces all the big obstacles, like when in California she meets a racist local community, and a boss who has no humanity, and California's high crime rate. Elsa is a warrior, she could struggle and face it until the end of her life.

It is also found that the impact of her struggle is she becomes a mother who is more independent and she is required to be creative in every action, she has the ability to solve her own problems. Elsa can put aside her fear for the sake of justice for her and other people. Being a single mother is very difficult, but Elsa has done it with her best for herself and her children. She will do anything as long as she can live properly. Until the end of her life, she will be remembered as a woman who has a high sense of humanity, fearless, independent, and she deserves to be called as tireless warrior in facing all obstacles in her life. Elsa's struggle is not in vain because the struggle that she has done is meaningful. There are no meaningless struggles, it is only struggles that end differently. Not all struggles have a

happy ending, it can be a struggle that creates many lessons with a sad ending.

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