

BOOK REVIEW OF DAVID LEVITHAN'S *EVERY DAY*

RevinaBudiyanti – RetnoWulandari, S.S.,M.A

English Department of Humanities

Diponegoro University

Semarang

1. Introduction

Every Day is a novel written by an American author David Levithan. It was published in 2012 by Ember in New York and selected as a bestseller novel according to *New York Times*. David Levithan was born in September 7th 1972 in Short Hills, New Jersey. He has written several novels both solo and collaboration. His collaboration with Billy Merrell, *The Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities*, was granted the Lambda Award for Best LGBTQ Children's/Teen Book (Levithan : 8).

The purpose of composing this book review is to present to the readers the summary of *Every Day* novel as well as the review about its strengths and weakness. The reason of choosing this novel is the unique story that this novel offers. This novel tells us about a sixteen year old genderless spirit named A who wakes up in a different body and lives different life every day. As different life means different story, it is interesting to look at how the characters in the novel are going down that road and overcoming every obstacle in almost every chapter.

2. Summary of David Levithan's *Every Day*

This novel begins with non-physical main character, the so-called free spirit, named A, who wakes up in a different body and leads a different life every day. A is actually genderless and A can inhabit either male or female body. A is sixteen years old and the different body A occupies always has the same age as A. A has his own memory and has a special ability to trace the memory of the person A is in. As A realizes that it is almost impossible for A to keep in touch with the same people and for people to recognize A, A always keeps a distance to avoid A's feeling being engaged with others. However, a decisive change suddenly happens to A's life when A meets Rhiannon for the first time.

It all started the morning A wakes up in the body of a boy named Justin whose girlfriend is Rhiannon. A meets Rhiannon at school and starts to talk to her. Then, they decided to ditch the class together and go on a trip to the beach. They spend their time talking freely about themselves. Through this moment, A is attracted by Rhiannon's loving personality that later makes A fall in love.

On the other day, A wakes up in the body of Nathan Daldry. A logs in to Justin's e-mail that A has noted before. A checks the inbox to find that there is a party invitation from Justin's friend, Steve. Hoping to see Rhiannon, A drives to that party. A disguises himself as Steve's cousin to Rhiannon and gets her email.

A quickly makes a move to Rhiannon by texting her through e-mail. Yet, not long after their first conversation, Rhiannon finally discovers A's disguise. Rhiannon demands an explanation. Then, A tries to explain to Rhiannon by making an appointment. In their meeting, A who is in the body of a girl named

Megan Powell shocks Rhiannon. Rhiannon does not easily believe in A at first until their next meeting which A can finally convince her about A's existence. Since then, they continually talk through e-mail and meet each other. Their relationship is getting closer day by day.

As time goes by, making time for Rhiannon is getting harder for A. The reasons are that A randomly wakes up miles away from her and everyone A wakes up in has their own responsibility in their daily life. Despite the hardships, their love keeps growing.

However, A realizes that A cannot keep this unusual relationship forever. When A wakes up in the body of Alexander Lin, A believes from Alexander's memory that he can be a good boy for Rhiannon. A invites Rhiannon to go on a date and arranges it like the first time a couple meet at the bookstore. Rhiannon agrees to pretend. They both enjoy their time moving from bookstore to groceries and later to Alexander's favorite place, his tree house. They end the day by lying down together in Alexander's bed. A finally tells Rhiannon that A is going to leave and hoping that Alexander could replace A. As A closes A's eyes, A attempts to put the whole memories of that day to Alexander so that the morning Alexander opens his eyes he will remember them and fall in love with Rhiannon.

The day has passed and A wakes up in the body of a girl named Katie. Instead of doing Katie's routines, A runs away as far as possible hoping to wake up further the next day and end the contact with Rhiannon.

3. Review of David Levithan's *Every Day*

3.1. The Strengths of David Levithan's *Every Day*

The strengths of this novel consist of the theme, the character, the point of view, and the relation between main character, cover, and title.

3.1.1. Theme

Theme plays an important role in a novel as the main idea or the meaning of the story. There are two appealing themes of this novel to discuss and learn. The first theme is about love regardless of the appearance. A is told as a character without gender and specific physical appearance. When A falls in love with a girl named Rhiannon, both of them are challenged by A's condition in which A changes figure randomly every day. Although A's condition is kind of bothersome to Rhiannon, the fact that she still loves A explains that her love is actually not measured by A's appearance because A's appearance is always changing. The quotation below shows an e-mail from Rhiannon to A stating that she loves A and wants to see A.

I want to see you, but I'm not sure if we should do that. I want to hear about what's going on, but I'm afraid that will only start everything again. I love you – I do – but I'm afraid of making that love too important. Because you're going to leave me, A. We can't deny it. You're always going to leave

R (Levithan, 2012 : 305).

Despite A's fictional condition that becomes the obstacle, the readers can learn that loving someone is not always looking at a person's outer appearance but more importantly is the inside of one's heart.

The second theme is about the struggle in life. As it is told that the character A is the one who lives somebody else's life every day, every chapter of

this novel shows many kinds of different struggles that A has to live. One of them is the day when A is in the body of an illegal maid named Valeria. Living the life of a maid has A to work hard to earn money for living. “After two hours, we are done with the house. I think that will be it, but there are four more houses after that” (Levithan, 2012 : 180). The hard work left A feeling sore and exhausted but that is the consequence of A’s life. Another example is when A struggles inside the body of a depressed girl named Kelsea who tries to commit suicide and the deadline is six days. The quotation below shows that A attempts to save Kelsea from hurting herself because A realizes that the body A inhabits is in danger.

There’s no threat in the present – I am in control of the body, and as long as I am in control of the body, I will not allow it to hurt itself. But I will not be in control six days from now. I know I’m not supposed to interfere. It is Kelsea’s life, not mine (Levithan, 2012 : 127).

Although not every chapter in this novel presents a painful situation but the bad ones can bring the readers in mind that some teenagers are struggling with some serious issues and they are in need of help.

The struggles also come from A’s relationship with Rhiannon. Since A is not the same person who lives in the same place every day, A has to struggle to meet her. One of the examples is when A wakes up as a metalhead teen named Michael. Michael has no driving license and there is no chance he could take a bus to meet Rhiannon. Instead of giving up, A decides to take a walk. The quotation below shows that A does not care about whatever shape of body A is in and how far the distance is, A insists to meet Rhiannon.

School isn't out yet when I get there, having walked about a mile from the center of town. Again, nobody stops me, even though I'm a big, hairy, sweaty guy in a Metallica T-shirts storming up the steps (Levithan, 2012:244).

From what character A has gone through in the story, the readers can learn that to live is to struggle. People need to struggle to keep living. Even a relationship needs struggle to keep it going.

3.1.2. Character

The second strength of this novel is character and the characterization. In *Every Day* novel, A stands as the main character. The main character's actions and thoughts upon its complicated life are described vividly by the author, giving a strong feeling that steals the readers' sympathy. The actions and thoughts portrayed in the story indicate this character's traits which have something to be learned for the readers.

Being put into someone else's body randomly means that A has to survive in every different situation. The quotation below shows that A has learned from A's experience that A has to respect whatever bodies A is put into.

It's hard being in the body of someone you don't like, because you still have to respect it. I've harmed people's lives in the past, and I've found that every time I slip up, it haunts me. So I try to be careful (Levithan, 2012 : 2).

If A harms someone the guilt will haunt A. Consequently, A holds the responsibility to take care of it as long as A lives in it.

The move of A's spirit has been happening since A was a kid until now A is sixteen years old. The quotation below shows that A has to make peace with A's own life because A cannot do anything to stop the spirit from moving.

Eventually I came to peace with it. I had to. I realized that this was my life, and there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't fight the tide, so I decided to float along (Levithan, 2012 : 106).

By understanding the character of A, it is impressive how the character has been shaped into a tough and wise person to finally accept the character's complicated life. At this point, the readers can learn about the acceptance in life. Furthermore, A's condition has also made A to be a wise person who learns from mistakes and respects anything that has been given.

3.1.3. Point of View

The next strength of *Every Day* is its point of view. In this novel, David Levithan applies the first-person point of view which is taken from A's point of view. This first-person perspective actually helps accentuate the main character and the story itself with its advantages. This point of view gives direct connection from the main character to the readers. This intimacy is created as the readers are able to see inside A's mind and feel A's feeling. The way the feeling and thoughts are told directly takes the readers closer to the character and makes the readers feel how it feels to be in A's side. Furthermore, the first-person point of view lets the readers to identify A's traits as it is proved by the previous explanation about A's character as the strength of the novel in which the writer are able to identify A's traits as a wise and tough person in facing A's complicated life.

Thus, the first-person point of view here is the strength of this novel because it makes the readers feel like they are going deep into the main character's own life and sense how the main character's feeling.

3.1.4. The Relation between Main Character, Cover, and Title

There is a relation between main character, cover, and title of *Every Day*. The main character of this novel is given the name of only one letter, A. There are two possibilities of the reference of A as the main character's name in this novel. First, the letter A can refer to A as in the first letter of the word "anonym". As the use of name in a character of a story can be attached to another person's identity, gender, ethnic group, or social background, the author seems to prevent the readers from unconsciously attaching the character's name to those matters. Second, A can also refer to A as in the front letter of "anima" and "animus". Anima is the inner feminine personality in men while animus is the inner masculine personality in women. Hence, A as the name of *Every Day*'s main character can be referred to the feminine element and the masculine one.

Hereafter, the main character can be related to the cover of *Every Day*. The cover of the novel displays a boy and a girl floating between clouds which represent the body that A inhabits which can be female or male body. The bodies that float between clouds can be interpreted that there is no exact sex of A as A is only a spirit that flies from one body to another. A can be a male and a female and it depends on the body A is put into every day.

It is then related to the title of the novel which is *Every Day*. *Every Day* emphasizes the changing body of A that happens every day which can be male or female. Hence, how the main character, the cover, and the title are related to each other is something unique of this novel which becomes the strength of this novel.

3.2. The Weakness of *Every Day*

The weakness of this novel lays on the ending of this story. The story is ended by A running away with the body A inhabits in attempt to break the contact with Rhiannon. The last chapter is told shortly with no further explanation about the life of both Rhiannon and A. It leads the readers to question whether A manages to wake up further by running away or not and whether Rhiannon successfully let Alexander Lin into her life or reject him to search for A. The ending seems to be intentionally left for the readers to make up their own imagination.

The indefinite ending is less satisfying. However, this kind of ending is something that makes this novel both interesting and disappointing. It depends on the readers' preferences.

4. Conclusion

Every Day is a young adult romance novel by David Levithan. It was published in 2012 by Ember in New York and became *New York Times* bestselling novel. This novel tells about love story between Rhiannon and A, a

genderless free spirit who wakes up in different body and lives a new life every day.

This novel presents interesting themes, character, point of view, and the relation between the main character, the cover, and the title as its strengths. The themes of this novel are 'love regardless appearance' and 'the struggles of life'. As the main character of this novel, A will impress the readers about how this character becomes tough and wise in dealing with the character's complicated life. The other strength is this novel's first-person point of view which takes the readers to step into the character's life deeply and feel this character's feeling. How the meaning of the main character's name, the cover, and the title are related to each other is also the uniqueness of this novel that becomes its strength. However, the indefinite ending of this novel may become a letdown for some readers.

Lastly, David Levithan's *Every Day* is recommended for those who like reading romance novel and searching for the unique one. The heartrending story and the good messages that it carries makes this novel worth reading.

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