

## **BOOK REVIEW OF LAVRYLE SPENCER'S SEPARATE BEDS**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Pada tahun 1980an, Amerika tengah dilanda sebuah krisis yang bahkan dianggap melebihi krisis yang terjadi pada saat *Great Depression Era*. Selain dikarenakan oleh krisis tersebut, era pada tahun 1980 sering disebut sebagai *Reagan Era* yang diambil dari nama presiden Amerika pada saat itu yang bernama Ronald Reagan. Ciri khas dari era 80-an tersebut antara lain terjadinya krisis ekonomi, banyaknya pengangguran, meningkatnya penggunaan kokain, perlakuan kasar terhadap anak-anak dan munculnya sebuah fenomena bernama *Yuppie*. Berdasarkan dari fenomena-fenomena tersebut, diterbitkanlah sebuah novel berjudul *Separate Beds* yang dikarang oleh LaVryle Spencer. Spencer menggunakan kondisi pada tahun 80-an sebagai latar belakang yang mendukung jalan cerita di novel ini. Secara keseluruhan *review* ini membahas mengenai isi dari novel ini yang berkaitan erat dengan kondisi sosial yang terjadi di Amerika pada tahun 1980-an. Dalam proses pengerjaan ini, metode yang diambil adalah metode penelitian kepustakaan dimana metode pengambilan data dan analisis dilakukan dengan mengambil data di buku-buku cetak dan juga internet. Berdasarkan hasil yang telah didapat setelah mengkaji novel ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa novel *Separate Beds* memiliki sebuah latar belakang yang berhubungan erat dengan kondisi sosial Amerika pada tahun 1980-an.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Writing

The 1980's era in America was known as a Reagan era. The most well-known situation during the 1980's were the insanely high taxes that needed to be cut down to stimulate the US economy growth, and the need of increasing military fund to fix the degenerating state of the American army after the Vietnam war. The social condition during 1980's was very unstable. There were many problems such as cocaine use, homeless people and child abuse. This condition happened because of the unstable economy condition in which America suffered the worst recession after the Great Depression.

High taxes made people lost their jobs and land for farming, which led people to become depressed. Interestingly, while the economic situation was getting worse, the educational situation was progressing better. Many teenagers continued their study to college with a hope to get better life and good social status. The generation of the 1980 was well known as "yuppie". *Yuppie* means a baby boomer with a college education, a well paying job and expensive taste. The *yuppie* terms applied to the graduated student who had a good job and high taste.

The condition during the 1980's was the base of LaVryle Spencer's novel *Separate Beds*. The effect of the regression of economy and the *yuppie* phenomenon was reflected inside this novel. Basically, *Separate Beds* is a novel regarding the life

of Catherine Anderson and Clay Forester who had contrastive background of life. Cathy came from a very poor family; her father was a veteran war soldier and was jobless, while her mother had to work to support their family. On the other hand, Clay came from a rich family. His father was a famous lawyer and his mother was a rich housewife. At first, the social status difference became an obstacle in Cathy and Clay's relationship. Both Clay and Cathy needed to overcome the obstacle as young couple to reach a happy family.

I chose Spencer's *Separate Beds* because it shows the hardship to build a family, trust to each other, and how to suppress personal ego so that there would be no regret in the future.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Writing**

The writer's purpose of the writing is to review the *Separate Beds*, a novel of LaVryle Spencer

## **1.3 About the Author**

LaVryle Spencer was born on July 17, 1943 in Minnesota. She attended high school and then met her future husband, Dan Spencer. She began to write during her thirties while working as a teacher's aide at Osseo Junior High School. Her first story based on her grandmother's life on a farm in Minnesota. She finished her first novel *The Fulfillment* and later it was published in 1979 by Avon.

Spencer's second novel, *Hummingbird*, was rejected by Avon and later it was published by Jove. Then, her third novel, *The Endearment* rejected again by Avon and later published by Pocket Books.

The heroines inside LaVryle's books usually experienced love, pain and bliss. Some of her heroines were charming, savvy and soft-hearted. Her books usually were about family love stories. The characters were real people with real problems. Before the characters got their happy ending, they needed to overcome some difficult conflict in their life. The trademark of LaVryle's books was how people tried to mend relationship around them. Most of her stories centered on themes of abiding love, family ties and bond when they were facing difficult times.

During her career as novelist, LaVryle Spencer has written twelve New York Times Best-sellers novel. Her books have been sold both in the US and around the world. Some of her novels also became television movies. *Home Song* and *Family Blessings* were her notable works that turned into television movies aired in April 1996. Her biggest leap of work from pages into movie was when two of her books became a major motion picture. Aside from *Home Song* and *Family Blessings*, her first novel *The Fulfillment* was turned into a CBS-TV and *Morning Glory* later turned into major motion picture under the same title.

LaVryle Spencer retired from her job as a novelist in 1997. She and her husband, Dan Spencer, lived in Stillwater, Minnesota. During her free time, LaVryle loved to do her hobbies such as gardening, gourmet cooking, playing bass guitar and electric piano, photography and observing nature.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SUMMARY OF THE BOOK**

Catherine Anderson, a freshman in university, accidentally met Clay Forrester, a handsome and rich law student. Both of them met during a blind date set by their friend. During the date, Clay and Catherine were drunk and had a one-night stand that made Catherine pregnant.

Catherine's father, Herb Anderson, an abusive man, later noticed Catherine's condition, and then he stormed into Clay's house, dragging his wife, Ada Anderson, and Catherine with him. He knew that Clay's family was rich, so he wanted them to take the responsibility of her pregnant daughter so that he could enjoy their money.

Catherine confronted her father and said that she did not want Clay's money; she only wanted Clay to know about her pregnancy. Later, Clay decided that he would take responsibility by marrying Catherine. Afraid of her father, Catherine ran away from her house, and she spent her time in a house where unmarried pregnant women gathered.

Clay and Catherine then made a decision. They would get married, and they would divorce after Catherine's child was born. After the marriage party, Clay and Catherine lived together. Catherine who sustained some inferiority complex due to the background difference between her and Clay, unconsciously built a high wall to defend herself from Clay. She felt that she was different compared to Clay who had

everything, from perfect family, wealth and parents who showered him with love. This made Catherine felt really inferior.

She became cold towards Clay, and she denied all of Clay's kindness. Clay who gradually felt bored because of Catherine coldness toward him, little by little became annoyed. Later, during the surprise graduation party that Clay's mother threw at Forrester residence, Catherine met Jill, Clay's ex-girlfriend. She bluntly asked Catherine to give Clay back to her.

Catherine who got angry because of Jill's provocation later had a big fight with Clay and it ended with their divorce. After she and Clay divorced, then Clay lived together with Jill. During her separation with Clay, Catherine realized about her big ego and pride, also she realized that she loved Clay. In the other side, Clay also realized that he loved Catherine, especially since his child was born. Clay occasionally visited Catherine and her child.

Later, Clay went back to his apartment with Jill and had some discussion with her. He asked Jill whether she wanted to have a child or not and Jill clearly refused to have any child with Clay. Her ambition in career clashed against Clay's desire, and then Clay decided that it was better for them to separate.

During Christmas time, Clay visited Catherine again, and he truthfully confessed his feeling to her. He explained everything, including his separation with Jill. Overwhelmed with Clay's brave act, Catherine then accepted Clay and they lived together again happily ever after with their child

### CHAPTER 3

#### REVIEW OF THE BOOK

During the 1980's, the condition of economy in America regressed, which was almost like what had happened during the Great Depression era. This condition led into chaos in society. Many people lost their jobs and became homeless. There were also several cases of child abuse because of the desperate situation that was happening in society during the 1980's era. Spencer also expressed the poor social and economic condition during that era in *Separate Beds*, such as economic regression, child abuse, and the *yuppie* generation.

Spencer used the effect of the economy regression as the base of Catherine's family background. Catherine came from a poor family. Her father Herb was a veteran war soldier. Because of the regression, Herb could not find a decent job. He was jobless and spent his time drinking alcohol. Hence, his family became poorer than before. His wife Ada worked to support the family; she did anything she could to support her family because her husband did nothing for the family.

Another example about the poor social condition concerned the child abuse. While working as a soldier, Herb was away from his family. Because of this condition, accidentally Ada cheated and got pregnant with another man, and she gave birth to Catherine. When Herb came back to the family, he found out that Ada had a daughter with another man. Herb was angry and he hated both his wife and Catherine.

Herb's being jobless and drinking behavior made him unable to control himself, and he started to abuse Ada and Catherine.

Herb's abusive attitude and action made Catherine an introvert and sensitive person. She set a high wall to protect her feelings so that no one would be able to hurt her. Catherine could not trust other people because she did not want to be hurt anymore.

Another thing that happened in the 1980's in America was that young people tended to seek better status, search for a good carrier, and they had high standard of life. This case was also depicted in the *Separate Beds*. The *yuppie* phenomenon can be seen from Catherine and Clay's contract marriage where Catherine and Clay decided to be married until Catherine gave birth to their baby. This agreement happened because Clay needed to protect his image as a future lawyer. He also needed to protect his family's image because his family was influential and had a big role in the law department.

Spencer also showed the *yuppie* phenomenon in her novel during the revelation of one minor character, Jill. As the daughter of rich family, Jill needed a husband who had a high social status. When Clay and Jill were living together, he asked her that he wanted a baby and she disagreed with him. She disagreed with Clay because she preferred her career to become a mother. She held that a child would only become a burden for her career.

The positive thing from the American young people in the 1980's that is shown in this novel is related to how the young generation takes responsibility. The term of



responsibility came from the word *responsible*. While responsible meant able to respond or answer for one's conduct and obligations, trustworthy, financially or otherwise; as, to have a responsible man for surety (Cassidy, 2014); responsibility meant the state of being responsible, accountable, or answerable, as for trust, debt, or obligation (Cassidy, 2014).

The example from the state of taking responsibility is that when Clay took his responsibility by giving Catherine and his baby living cost although he and Catherine had already been separated. Similarly, in Catherine's case, she took her responsibility as a mother by raising her baby with full of care.

In addition to the previous matters, some positive things appeared in this novel. First thing first, this book shows the hardship of building a family for young couple. Young people tend to have high pride, and it is hard for them to lower their ego. If the couple could not lower their ego, surely there would be a lot of problem later. That is why marriage needs patience, sacrifice and cooperation from the couple.

This book also suggests that women should be strong in any condition. Although Catherine was in bad condition, she never gave up. She always struggled and fought for her life. Even when her father abused her, Catherine never gave up and she faced her father's abusive treatment. She never wailed nor complained.

Although this novel was written beautifully and carefully, I as the writer of this review, have some personal opinion about this novel. Aside from the positive aspects mentioned before, there are some criticisms about this novel. The detailed description of the violence inside this novel, such as hitting, slapping and cursing, would

probably make some reader uncomfortable. Mostly the violence in this novel happened when Herb abused both Ada and Catherine. If the readers are not good with violence, they should consider skipping the parts where the violence pictured.

This book also has slow development in the story line. The reader can easily become bored when reading it. It can be seen in Catherine and Clay's relationship. Catherine tended to choose not to believe Clay. She was always giving Clay hard time during their relationship before and after the marriage. When she realized that she loved Clay, it was too late because she and Clay had already divorced. The same thing happened with Clay; he had never realized that he had been in love with Catherine until they divorced. Because of this slow development in Catherine and Clay's relationship, the reader might become bored.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

*Separate Beds* is a novel about the life of Catherine Anderson and Clay Forrester; it concerns how Catherine and Clay managed their life after Catherine's pregnancy. Catherine's life is full of hardship because of her poor family condition and abusive father, and her life becomes even more complicated after her encounter with Clay. However, after she met Clay, Catherine actually learned many things. She learns about for instance, how to compromise and believe other person, including how to trust Clay.

This novel shows to the reader the life in America in the 1980's. There are some notable events in the 1980's in this novel, like poor social and economy condition and the *yuppie* phenomenon. This book also shows to the reader how to build a family in young age and maintain the relationship and how to build trust between the couple and to take responsibility of their action.

Although this book also shows some violence and has a slow development in the relationship between the main characters, this book gives many lessons of life. Thus, this book is one of the good books that I read, and I recommended that the reader give this book a shot.

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