

BOOK REVIEW OF DANIELLE STEEL'S KALEIDOSCOPE

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ABSTRACT

Novel is a long narrative, normally in prose, which describes fictional characters and events, usually in the form of sequential story. *Kaleidoscope* is a novel for adults that talks about the journey of life. This novel is written by a famous novelist Danielle Steel. In this novel we can see a lot of tragedy and drama, the characters are a little bit over the top but the overall story of this novel always makes us curious about the ending of the story.

1. Introduction

There are so many series of events that happen in human's life. Each event gives its own cause and effect, and one can not escape from those effects either they are bad or good, especially in the future. It is possible from those events that a person accidentally hurts someone or does something good to another person and he may never realize that what he does can affect the life of the people around him and even himself. He can not escape from this consequences, he can not run nor hide from them. However he has the chance to take them and move along with them.

The writer can see the example of this case through Danielle Steel's *Kaleidoscope* which is one of her bestseller novels that talks about the life of Sam Walker and his family. The writer thinks that this novel comes with an interesting story that can perfectly reflect people's life..

Sam Walker is a twenty-one year old guy, who begins his life from the bottom as an Ally Forces soldier in World War 2 alongside with his best friend Arthur Patterson. It is during the battle that Sam met his future wife, Solange. Going back to the United States of America, jobless Sam Walker struggled to get his dream job as an actor in Broadway. He finally succeeded, yet his career in Broadway was also the beginning of not only Sam's journey of life but also his wife and his daughters' as well.

From *Kaleidoscope* it seems that Danielle Steel is trying to make this novel as an interesting book by describing people and events in the story in a great detail and make this novel is alive yet powerful. Danielle Steel is an American novelist who is currently the bestselling author alive and the fourth bestselling author of all time, with over 800 million copies of her books sold. The experience of five times divorcements brings a great effect in most of her stories such as illness, tragedy, family or relationship issues theme. Through *Kaleidoscope* it seems that Danielle Steel is trying to bring a message about her personal life experience and trying to tell the society to reflect their life through the story of this novel. Maybe some people will think that this novel is way too melodramatic, but actually the writer thinks this novel comes up with some kind of tragic yet

good story that can perfectly reflect people's life in a more realistic way. This review looks further into the novel to see its strengths and weaknesses.

2. Summary of Danielle Steel's *Kaleidoscope*

The main character of this novel is Hillary Walker even though she does not have the important roles during the first chapters of the story. She becomes more important and takes most roles to create most part of the plot later on.

The story itself begins during World War II in Naples on the 24th of December 1943 when Sam Walker huddled with his rain gear when he met Arthur Patterson in the foxhole while they shared a lighter for their cigarettes as they introduced themselves formally. By the time, the war was over and they became best friends. During their time in France Sam also met a girl named Solange, who is going to be his future wife. Finally, they both had to come back to America. It is hard for Sam and Solange to get separated, but Sam promised her that he would bring Solange with him to America right after he could make money to pay Solange's passage from France to America. Shortly, Sam could get some money to bring Solange in America, and they got married. He also finally got a job as a waiter and enrolled in an acting school, but he had not been offered in any part and started to think that his dream job was just a wishful thinking. Eventually he got himself auditioned which brought an enormous success in his actor career which was followed by the pregnancy of his wife. Filled with the excitement from his wife's pregnancy, Sam still rehearsed night and day for his play and came home exhausted at night but still could give his time for Solange. Their first baby,

Hillary, was born when Sam was still in an enormous success on Broadway. Then several years later he got his second daughter Alexandra and followed by their third daughter Megan who was born after Christmas. By this time, Sam had already been drowned in his successful career. It was also during this time Solange knew that Sam has an affair with his leading lady for the past six months.

One day Sam fought with Solange and ended up killed his wife. Since he was in despair of regretting his sin, he finally committed suicide in jail leaving his three daughters homeless and parentless. Unable to take care of Sam's offsprings, Arthur decided to take care of them for a couple of months while he was thinking about the accommodation of his friend's children then allowed the two of them to be adopted and placed Hillary to Sam's abusive sister.

For the following years Hillary faced a lot of nightmare and pain when she stayed in Sam's sister, Eileen. The abuse that Hillary received was so terrible that only her dream about being reunited with her sisters made her survived. One day, Hillary escaped from Eileen's house and try to looking for Arthur in New York. Unfortunately, the dream of being reunited with her sisters was gone when she knew and found that Arthur is actually totally unaware about her sisters' whereabouts. Filled by hatred and anger, Hillary wanted to make a revenge to Arthur, she wanted to acquire wealth and power which she thought it is the only way to make her plan became possible.

Sam and Arthur's friendship survived Arthur's disastrous marriage with Marjorie. Years later after the separation of Sam's daughters, Artur is aware that he is dying. Weak and full of regret, Arthur hired the service of John Chapman

who is working as a private detective, to locate Sam and Solange's children. After two decades apart, these three children were reunited, and Arthur finally able to die peacefully.

3. Review of Danielle Steel's *Kaleidoscope*

Kaleidoscope has its own strengths and weaknesses. Danielle Steel herself as an author always able to deliver her stories in an interesting way even though the writer thinks the characters in *Kaleidoscope* are kind of over-the-top and way too dramatic she is still able to bring a good story via some aspects like for instance the plot and the theme of the story itself or the conflicts between each characters that she brings in the story.

3.1. The Strengths of Danielle Steel's *Kaleidoscope*

Kaleidoscope has its strengths from the plot, theme and conflict. These strengths will be explained in this following discussion.

3.1.1. Plot

The writer thinks plot is the main strengths of the story in *Kaleidoscope*, it has a big plot twist during the first chapter that makes its readers feel curious about the ending of the story. Also the plot is able to describe the meaning of kaleidoscope itself in the story.

The plot twist that comes from the first part of the story that is started by the tragedy in Sam and Solange's marriage brings a big impact for the characters

of the story. From this first plot, it is branching itself into their own plots, which are Hillary's, Alexandra's and Megan's. These three major plots bring a different atmosphere to the story, Hillary with her bitter and terrible life and her effort to overcome any spectacles to be able to meet her sisters, make the reader to dive deeper into the story. The writer personally thinks that Hillary has the best plot in the story aside from her parents' plot.

Then the next one comes from Alexandra and Megan. Frankly speaking, the writer thinks there is not much interesting stuff from their plot. Mostly filled by generic and over-the-top stuff like noble family and rich lifestyle, the writer feels their plot is a little bit lacking compared to their bigger sister. But, their plots still have their own appeal, Danielle Steel still able to write their story in a very detailed story yet beautiful. Both of Alexandra and Megan's plot feels like a resting point after the readers filled by a lot of sadness, depression and bitterness that comes from Hillary's plot.

After these three sisters' plots, the readers will be given by their reunion as the final plot. The reunion plot comes as the melting point of the story, after being served with a roller coaster-like story during the first part until the end of the story, this plot also gives a nice overall conclusion at the end.

3.1.2. The Conflict

Like most of the story, *Kaleidoscope* also has its own conflict between its characters. According to Perrine, conflict provides the element of interest in a story. The conflict can emerge between a person against the other persons or

groups (man against man). The conflict is also between the person against some external force, such as physical nature, society, or fate (man against environment) or between the person against the element in his own nature (man against himself) (1988: 42). The conflict in this book mostly come from “man against man conflict”. The source of the conflicts in *Kaleidoscope* comes from Sam’s affair with his stage lady in his studio then goes to the conflict with Solange. These conflicts seem unimportant at first but no one expects it leads to the death of Solange and Sam’s suicide.

These conflicts do not stop here. Arthur Patterson also has his own conflict with his wife, Marjorie. He wanted to take care of his best friend’s offsprings than left them as orphans, but since Marjorie never wanted any children in her marriage then she never agree with Arthur’s plan and insists to never keep them. This thing is finally ended by Arthur’s decision to let Megan and Alexandra being adopted by other families and put Hillary in Eileen’s house.

From here, the conflict goes to Hillary Walker, who hates Arthur Patterson because she thinks that Arthur does not have guts to interfere Marjorie’s decision and insist to adopt her and her sister even she knows her father is his lifetime best friend. Instead, he put her with Sam’s sister Eileen and separate her with Megan and Alexandra. She always thinks that the sufferings and the sadness she got in his life comes from Arthur’s decision. Furthermore, the most painful part is when she needs to be separated with her sisters, and think she will never meet them again. She has too much bitterness with Arthur, because she feels that Arthur ruins her life and her sisters’.

Alexandra as Sam's second daughter also has a conflict with her step-mother and her own husband. When John Chapman came to Alexandra's and told her about her past makes Alexandra's stepmother, Margaret, feels insecure and thinks if her non-biological daughter would leave her and change her mind to abandon her family. Margaret, as Alexandra's step mother, just love and admire her too much. This feeling drives Margaret to avoid John to meet Alexandra. But because of the curiosity and the strong feeling of her past, Alexandra does not care about it and still wanted to meet John in secretly.

As Sam's youngest daughter, Megan also has the similar story with her sister Alexandra. Her step-mother, Rebecca, always hides her past and will never think or talk about it to her. She also feels that John will drag her daughter to her past which is painful and full of confusion because Megan never know if she was adopted by Rebecca and her husband about thirty years before.

From the descriptions above, the writer personally thinks Danielle Steel was trying to bring a complex cause and effect to the characters. Started from the conflict of Sam and Solange, Danielle Steel is able to bring another conflict to one of their children and Arthur as the effect that is caused by Sam and Solange's conflict.

The writer feels the ability from Danielle Steel to bring this kind of cause and effect in terms of conflict brings an impression that *Kaleidoscope* is able to bring a story that also comes really close to reality.

3.1.3. Theme

According to Oxford Dictionary, the word kaleidoscope means *a constant changing sequence* (1995: 647). It describes the main theme of *Kaleidoscope*. The theme of *Kaleidoscope* is about the constant changing events from the journey of its characters' life, where most of the part comes from a single mistake that is caused by Sam's affair affects the future of his daughters and people around him. The writer thinks Danielle Steel is trying to put this theme with the story altogether in the most real condition. Even the writer thinks if the story is kind of too tragic, *Kaleidoscope* does not lose its appeal and still has plenty of interesting part in the story.

With this kind of theme, the writer thinks Danielle Steel made *Kaleidoscope* as a very interesting book to read and very relevant with people's daily life, because in our life everything will keep changing and moving even we never realize about our choices or decisions today could make some kind of cause and effect in the future.

3.2. The Weaknesses of Danielle Steel's *Kaleidoscope*

Like most of the story out there, *Kaleidoscope* also has its own weaknesses. Those weaknesses come from the characters and the ending of the story.

3.2.1. Characters

Besides plot, characters also create the appeal of a story. According to Fotis Jannidis character can be defined as a text or media-based figure in a storyworld, usually human or human-like (1). From *Kaleidoscope* we can see some characters

who lead the atmosphere of the story like Sam and Hillary. These two major characters actually able to bring the story become interesting. In fact, the writer considers these two as the core of the story and does not bring any major weaknesses in the story itself.

The weaknesses that come from the characters itself are from the other characters like Megan and Alexandra, personally the writer considers both of these characters are also the core of the story since both of them are the reasons why Hillary can survive her terrible life, but somehow Megan and Alexandra are kind of subpar compared to Hillary. Moreover, both of them have their own chapters that also build up the entire story, which also feels like both of those are lacking in terms of comparison with Hillary's.

3.2.2. The Ending of *Kaleidoscope*

The weaknesses also come from the ending of the *Kaleidoscope*. For some reason, the writer feels the ending of the story is a bit too generic if we are looking back to the beginning until the mid part of the story.

The writer considers the ending of the story is the biggest let down from the entire novel. The writer himself wanted to have a good happy ending story, but during the ending *Kaleidoscope* lose its dramatic atmosphere which is actually the charisma of this novel.

The truth about Megan's origin, that she actually came from the affair between Solange and Arthur, also makes an unnecessary plot twist during the end.

However this is purely based on the writer biased opinion, it is possible if the ending of *Kaleidoscope* will not affect the interest of most readers.

4. Conclusion

We will never be able to put any expectation about how is our life in the future, we also cannot imagine about the result of every single step or decision we make today, even it is good or bad one. By *Kaleidoscope*, Danielle Steel wants to tell us that a single mistake can create a huge cause and effect in people's life. The writer himself, thinks that *Kaleidoscope* is a great novel with an interesting plot twist that can break the heart of its readers but still able to make them always feel curious about the ending of the story.

The writer also considers the plot in *Kaleidoscope* is the most interesting part of the story. The plot twist that comes from the beginning part of the story brings more interesting stuff later down the road which is the biggest selling point of *Kaleidoscope*. This plot twist also has the major part that creates the personality of its main character, Hillary. Even though the writer considers Hillary is not the only main character of the story, she plays the most interesting and biggest part in the story more than her sisters, since the journey of her life creates most part of the story

The conflict in *Kaleidoscope* seems like generic at first, but actually it also plays the major part of the story. The major ones are the conflict between Sam and Solange that later bring the disaster of his family, and also the conflict between Arthur and Marjorie which also creates the future of Sam's daughters. The theme

in *Kaleidoscope* is also the self explanatory of the story. The word kaleidoscope which means as a constant changing sequence is very well described via the journey of life of the characters.

Even though some of the characters and the generic ending of *Kaleidoscope* are a little bit disappointing from the writer's point of view, this novel still has a lot of interesting part in its story and still a recommended novel to be read by readers who love tragic story. Once again, the plot twist in this novel is the biggest selling point and it is also able to cover the weaknesses and bring the most interesting part of this novel.

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