

A PROJECT JOURNAL
BOOK REVIEW OF *FOR ONE MORE DAY* WRITTEN BY MITCH ALBOM

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Abstract: This project focuses on the novel *For One More Day*. The purpose of this study is to find the strengths and the weaknesses of the novel. The writer uses close reading method to analyze the novel and collect the data. The strengths of the novel are found the characters and the themes of the novel. Meanwhile, the weaknesses are found by comparing the novel *For One More Day* to the novel *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Both of the books are written by the same author, Mitch Albom. The result of this project provides proofs of the quality of the novel and the evaluation of it.

Keywords: *For One More Day*, Strengths, Weaknesses

1. INTRODUCTION

For One More Day is a novel written by Mitch Albom, an American author. It is a story about a family. Charley “Chick” Benetto is a broken man, a former professional baseball player who loses his job. He gets divorced and leaves his family, and more desperately, he does not get the invitation to his only daughter’s wedding. He then comes to a decision to end his life. He intends to go back to his hometown, to end his life where it begins. As he is attempting to kill himself, something unbelievable happens. His mother, who died eight years earlier, comes back to life as if nothing happened. Thereafter, he spends one more day with his mother in his old house.

Albom’s full name is Mitchel David Albom. He is an American author, was born on 23rd May 1958 in Passaic, New Jersey, USA. Before releasing his first novel *Tuesday with Morrie* in 1997, he has already started his career as a journalist and sports writer for The Fort Lauderdale News and Sun Sentinel in Florida, and then he starts his career as a broadcaster in radio and television. He is the host of a daily talk show on WJR radio and appears regularly on ESPN Sports Reporters and SportsCenter. Other than the seven sports books he has written, his other famous books (novel) are *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* released in 2003, *For One More*

Day released in 2006, *Have a Little Faith: A True Story* released in 2009, *The Time Keeper* released in 2012, *The First Phone Call from Heaven* released in 2013, and *The Magic Strings of Frankie Presto* released in 2015.

The writer is interested to review Albom's novel entitled *For One More Day* because the story has an interesting theme. It emphasizes the mortality for its rather magical story, and it explores the question: what would you do if you have the chance to meet your lost loved one?

2. SUMMARY OF *FOR ONE MORE DAY*

The main character of the story, Charlie "Chick" Benetto, was a broken man, who lost his job, his career, and the most important thing, his family. The story started with an anonymous character recognized as a random person whose job was a writer, narrating the story. The narrator was on the way to the airport, and stopped by for a coffee across a field. As the narrator saw some kids were playing pitching and hitting, the narrator wandered over. There, the narrator met this man named Charlie "Chick" Benetto. Knowing the anonymous was walking towards him, Chick directly asked the anonymous character if he/she wanted to know why Chick attempted to kill himself. Chick began to tell the anonymous narrator about his story from the day his mother died. He was not there when it happened. He cried himself at his mother's funeral. After the funeral, he got drunk that he passed out and fell even deeper in a state of grief.

A year after his mother died, he broke himself financially. A saleswoman deceived him. He got drunk afterwards. This habit troubled him as he got fired from two sales jobs. This just made him drink more and more. As the time went by, his marriage collapsed. The family left him, so he moved and lived in an apartment all by himself. He began to remember when his mother stood there for him, but she was gone. Something pushed him over the edge. He received an envelope from his daughter. He was not invited to his daughter's wedding. He became more and more desperate, thinking that once again, in an important occasion, a critical family moment, he was not there. He looked at the envelope. There is no return address, making him questioning if her daughter did not want him to come.

Feeling disappointed, Chick prepares to end it all, by killing himself. One night, he drove his car, heading towards his old family home. He brought a gun with him. As he got near his hometown, his car collided with a truck. He survived the collision. Then he continued to walk to his hometown. As he saw a water tower he used to climb when he was a child, he climbed the

tower once again. He climbed the tower as he intended to do another attempt to end his life, by jumping off from the tower. He survived the fall, but something miraculously happened. He saw his mother who died eight years earlier.

The story then continued with the encounter between Chick and his mother on their old home. Each of them stood in disbelief of how come they could be there, in such a magical moment. Meanwhile, on the other side, deep inside Chick also hoped that it was real somehow, meeting his mother. Chick was feeling grateful for the chance of “one more day” with his mother. Everything seemed normal at first. Her mother, named Posey, just looked like how she was back then. She liked to scold Chick, talked too much, got busy with her friends, the whole behavior she had just as the same as it used to be in the past.

Chick’s experience with mother was at times interrupted with a strange voice which can be heard no one else but him. Chick had been in a near death state, the strange voice he heard was actually the voice of an ambulance that brought his consciousness back to the real world. The story finished with the narrator making an epilogue about Chick. He died five years after his attempts on suicide, and three years after the encounter between him and the narrator. He died at the age of fifty-eight. The cause of the death was a sudden stroke. A few family members were there. Chick’s ex-wife, Chick’s father, and some of his childhood friends from Pepperville Beach were in the small funeral. In the end, the narrator who encountered Chick in the first place told that she was actually Chick’s daughter, Maria Benetto.

3. STRENGTHS

3.1. Theme

Theme is an important element because it shows the main idea of the story. There are some interesting themes that can be discussed and learned from the novel. The first theme of *For One More Day* is about regret. This theme directly points out as the cause of the disharmony between family members. There are several examples of the moment of regret experienced by the main character in the story. When Chick is still a kid, he is faced with hard decisions. His parents have divorced. His father tells him to choose between being a daddy’s boy or a mama’s boy. It is shown in the paragraph below.

MY FATHER ONCE TOLD ME, “You can be a mama’s boy or a daddy’s boy. But you can’t be both.” So I was a daddy’s boy. I mimicked his walk. I mimicked his deep, smoky laugh. I carried a baseball glove because he loves baseball, and I took every hardball he

threw, even the ones that stung my hands so badly I thought I would scream. (Albom, 2006: 21)

When Chick has grown up and build his own family, he still cannot avoid the disharmony. He gets divorced, and lives alone in an apartment. He regrets that his mother is no longer there to support him anymore. It is shown in the paragraph below.

My mother, had she been alive, might have found a way through to me because she was always good at that, taking my arm and saying, “Come on, Charley, what’s the story?” But she wasn’t around, and that’s the thing when your parents die, you feel like instead of going into every fight with backup, you are going into every fight alone. (Albom, 2006: 5)

From Chick’s experience, the readers can learn that people will only regret the chance that they do not take, and the decision they wait too long to make. It may take only a moment to be grateful fThe other theme that can be discussed and learned is about forgiveness. The main character, Charlie Benetto, is suffering from guilty and self-hatred, but after meeting his mother he finally is able to learn to forgive himself. It is shown in the paragraph below.

I feel ashamed now that I tried to take my life. It is such a precious thing. I had no one to talk me out of my despair, and that was a mistake. You need to keep people close. You need to give them access to your heart. (Albom, 2006 :194)

The paragraph above shows that Chick finally sees how precious a life of a human is. After meeting his mother for one more time, he can finally understand that to be kind is to forgive. Therefore he learns to forgive himself and let go of all the negative thoughts that has been burdening himor someone, but a lifetime of regret if the chance is gone.

3.2. Characters

3.2.1. Charlie Benetto

In *For One More Day*, the author Mitch Albom writes a story about a self-hating character named Charlie “Chick” Benetto. Since he was a kid, Chick has had an experience of hardships. Firstly, it is where his parents divorced, and living with a divorced mother. His father had left him since the divorce. The world is not as the same as when his parents still live in the same house. Chick is really unhappy with the situation. In the end, through the experience with

his mother, who actually died years earlier, Chick is finally able to learn to forgive, and find a solution for his problem.

I've thought a lot about that night. I believe my mother saved my life. I also believe that parents, if they love you, will hold you up safely, above their swirling waters, and sometimes means you'll never know what they endured, and you may treat them unkindly, in a way you otherwise wouldn't. (Albom, 2006:194)

From the paragraph above, what the readers can learn about the character of Charlie Benetto is that he is able to overcome his depression and all the negative thoughts that had been haunting him. This character inspires the readers to bravely overcome depression by being open towards the others, especially the closest ones. Once a person is able to open their mind to the others, help will surely come to ease the burden and fix problem.

In the other hand, Chick's passion for baseball can be considered as a good example. Although Chick is stubborn that he did not listen to his mother, his hard work in getting the position in the baseball team that he plays in World Series is also quite inspiring. It is shown in the paragraph below.

I made it to the end of the baseball rainbow: the World Series. I was only twenty-three. The Pirates' backup catcher broke his ankle in early September and they needed a replacement, so I was called up. I still remember the day I walked into that carpeted locker room. I couldn't believe the size of it. (Albom, 2006:139)

The readers can learn from Chick Benetto that hard work is always paid off with something great. The author, Albom, encourages the readers to chase their dream.

3.2.2. Posey Benetto

Beside Chick Benetto, the author of *For One More Day*, Mitch Albom, also includes a strong willed, self-sacrificing character named Posey Benetto. She is the mother of Charlie Benetto. She is very affectionate, kind, and loving. Although she has divorced, and is responsible for her two children, she still supports her child. She was once worked as a nurse in the County Hospital, but then she becomes a hairdresser. There are many times when Posey stands up for her child, Charlie Benetto. She even willingly helps her neighbors with a beauty parlor. She goes house to house to help her neighbor to dress up nicely. It is shown in the paragraph below.

MAYBE YOU'RE WONDERING how my mother came to be a hairdresser. As I mentioned, she had been a nurse, and she truly loved being a nurse. She had that deep well of patience to carefully dress bandages, draw blood, and answer endless worried questions with upbeat reassurances. The male patients liked having someone young and pretty around. And the female patients were grateful when she brushed out their hair or helped them put on lipstick. I doubt it was protocol back then, but my mother applied makeup to more than a few occupants of our county hospital. (Albom, 2006: 81)

When Posey encounters Chick, she invites him to come along with her to visit the neighbors. Posey wants to help the neighbors, Rose and Miss Thelma to do their hair. It is shown in the paragraph below.

ROSE HAD HER HEAD TIPPED BACK in the sink, and my mother was gently spraying her with water from a faucet attachment. Apparently, they had a whole routine worked out. They propped pillows and towels until Rose's head was just so, and my mother could run her free hand through Rose's wet hair. (Albom, 2006: 87)

Besides her pure willingness in helping the neighbors, Posey is also very forgiving person. She knows all along why Chick did not come to see her when she died, but she does not get angry for it. It is shown in the paragraph below.

Across the room, the Italian woman pulled her bathrobe tighter. She clasped her hands as if in prayer. Such a strange trio we made, each of us, at some point, longing to be loved by the same man. I could still hear his words, forcing my decision: mama's boy or daddy's boy, Chick? What's it gonna be?

"I made the wrong choice," I whispered.

My mother shook her head.

"A child should never have to choose." (Albom, 2006: 188)

The character of Posey is really inspiring. She is really affectionate to the other characters in the story. She really depicts the kindness of a mother, a woman who sacrifices everything for her children, and a true dedication towards people around her. According to Fromm (1956, 49), Motherly love is to support or to encourage the child's life and his/her needs. She willingly helps other character to get ready by doing their hair as a hairdresser. She also protects and helps their children whenever the children needs to. Other than that, she is also very forgiving person. She really is representing the love of a mother for her children. Posey is a true representation of a motherly love.

4. WEAKNESSES

Beside the strengths, the writer also finds the weaknesses in the novel *For One More Day*. If compared to the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, which is also the book by the same author, Mitch Albom, the book *For One More Day* has similar themes to *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Both have the themes about seeking forgiveness, but the weaknesses of the book *For One More Day* is found by looking at the setting of both of the novel.

4.1. Setting of Place

If compared to the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, the book *For One More day* has several weaknesses. The first weakness is found by looking at the setting of place. In the book *For One More Day*, the setting of place only takes place mainly in the old house where he used to live with his mother in the younger age. In the other hand, in the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, The setting of place is in various places in heaven. This means that for the readers, the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* is a lot more imaginative. It is more common for the readers to imagine how an old house looks like, but it is more unusual for the readers to imagine how heaven looks like, because nobody has ever witness how heaven is really like. Also, although the setting of place is basically in heaven, each of Eddie's encounters with the five people takes place in various different pictures.

After Eddie's death, his first arrival in heaven, he encounters the Blue Man. He is the first person that Eddie encounters. The settings take place in the old Ruby Pier, the place where he works as maintenance. It is shown in paragraph below.

EDDIE AWOKE IN A TEACUP. It was a part of some old amusement park ride-a large teacup, made of dark, polished wood, with a cushioned seat and a steel-hinged door. (Albom, 2003:28)

Eddie's next encounter is with his commander from his duty as a soldier in World War II. The setting of place is in the Philippines, the place where he was assigned for a war when he was a soldier. It is shown in the paragraph below.

EDDIE FELT HIS FEET TOUCH GROUND. THE sky was changing again, from cobalt blue to charcoal gray, and Eddie was surrounded now by a fallen trees and blackened rubble. (Albom, 2003: 58)

Then he met Ruby. The third encounter experienced by Eddie in heaven is the encounter of him with the owner of the Ruby Pier amusement park. Ruby Pier is the amusement park where Eddie worked as a manager after retiring from the military. The setting of place is in a restaurant in a mountain range. It is shown in the paragraph below.

Eddie blinked. He was in the mountains now, but the most remarkable mountains, a range that went on forever, with snow-capped peaks, jagged rocks, and sheer purple slopes. In a flat between two crests was a large, black lake. A moon reflected brightly in its water. (Albom, 2003:103)

Eddie experienced the fourth encounter meeting his wife, named Marguerite. Years after their marriage, Marguerite died on an accident. She teaches her husband, Eddie, that love is eternal. Even after Marguerite death, their love is still there. The setting of place of their encounters is in a huge wedding reception. It is shown in the paragraph below.

EDDIE BLINKED, AND FOUND HIMSELF IN A small, round room. The mountains were gone and so was the jade sky. A low plaster ceiling just missed his head. The room was brown-as plain as shipping wrap-and empty, save for a wooden stool and an oval mirror on the wall. (Albom, 2003:154)

Eddie's final encounter is with a girl named Tala. She is the girl that Eddie saw in a burning tent. She died burned in that tent. The setting of place is in a white, silent and peaceful place. It is shown in the paragraph below.

WHITE. THERE WAS ONLY WHITE NOW. NO earth, no sky, no horizon between the two. Only a pure and silent white, as noiseless as the deepest snowfall at the quietest sunrise. (Albom, 2003:191)

The various settings of place in the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* build a bigger imagination for the readers rather than the dominant settings of place in the book *For One More Day*. This makes the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* more interesting imaginatively rather than the book *For One More Day*.

5. CONCLUSION

For One More Day is one of Mitch Albom's wonderful literary works. *For One More Day* is a novel that tells about the importance of forgiveness. The main character, a man named Charlie "Chick" Benetto, lost every important thing in his life that he decided to end his life, but ended up encountering his dead mother. With such magical experience, he learns that to forgive and to be forgiving is important.

In the novel *For One More Day*, the writer found some strengths and weaknesses. The strengths can be seen from the characters and the theme of the story. Meanwhile, the writer found the weaknesses after comparing the book to other novel by the same author, Mitch Albom, entitled *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Both of his book have similar theme which is seeking forgiveness. However, in the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, Mitch Albom delivers the story in a more interesting way. While *For One More Day* is mainly telling a story about the encounter of a mother and son, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* is telling a story about the encounter of a person and the five people that is correlated to his earthly life. The setting of place of *For One More Day* is dominantly in the old house where Chick and his mother encounters each other. In the other hand, the setting of place in *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* is a lot more various. From the first to the last, the setting of places are the Ruby Pire amusement park, the battlefield in the Philippines, a restaurant at a mountain range, a wedding reception, and a white peaceful place. The various settings of place in the book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* build a bigger imagination for the readers rather than the dominant settings of place in the book *For One More Day*.

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