



**THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEER RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN OLIVER MARKS AND JAMES FARROW
IN M. L. RIO'S *IF WE WERE VILLAINS***

A THESIS

**In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For S-1 Degree Majoring Literature in the English Department
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University**

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2026

PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer hereby declares that this thesis is the result of her own original work and has been completed without plagiarizing other academic works from any undergraduate, masters, or doctorate levels. Any ideas, quotations, or data taken from other sources have been properly acknowledged and cited in accordance with academic standards.

Semarang, 2nd February 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Dyah Anggreini', written in a cursive style.

Melissa Dyah Anggreini

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who time ambles withal, who time trots withal, who time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.”

- William Shakespeare, in *As You Like It*

“A great sorrow, and one that I am only beginning to understand: we don't get to choose our own hearts. We can't make ourselves want what's good for us or what's good for other people. We don't get to choose the people we are.”

- Donna Tartt, in *The Goldfinch*

*This thesis is dedicated
to those who feel like
they are only allowed
to exist within subtexts
and suffer in silence.
You are seen.*

APPROVAL

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
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VALIDATION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUEER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OLIVER MARKS AND JAMES FARROW IN M. L. RIO'S *IF WE WERE VILLAINS*

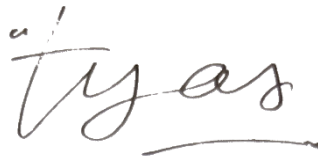
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The writer acknowledges that this research thesis is still far from perfection. Therefore, any constructive criticisms and suggestions for improving this work would be greatly appreciated. Lastly, the writer hopes that this thesis will provide a valuable reading and resource for those studying literature or any related fields.

Semarang, 2nd February 2026



Melissa Dyah Anggreini

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ABSTRACT

This research thesis discusses the development of queer relationship between Oliver Marks and James Farrow in M. L. Rio's debut novel titled *If We Were Villains* (2017). This research thesis aims to analyze the sexual identities of Oliver Marks and James Farrow and to examine the development of their queer relationship as constructed in the narrative. To achieve this aim, the study applies queer theory by Michel Foucault as recontextualized by Tamsin Spargo and the relationship development model proposed by sociologist George Levinger. In order to answer the research questions, this essay uses descriptive qualitative and contextual methods in analyzing data and library research methods in gathering data. The results of this extended essay prove that both Oliver Marks and James Farrow resonate with the bisexual identity, while their queer relationship is proven to have contributing factors and progresses throughout the novel in accordance to Levinger's relationship development model despite the absence of explicit romantic acknowledgement. This research thesis displays that queer relationships in literary works can be meaningfully analyzed through narrative development and character dynamics rather than overt representation.

Keywords: Sexual identity, queer relationship development, literary analysis