CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

When discussing human development, it is important to look at the characters that shapes a person's identity and how they behave in society. Before proceeding to further discussion, an understanding of character development is necessary. Hasanah defines character development as follows: "Character development is personality transformation process by the character, from bad to good character, or even good to bad character" (2018: 271).

Developing one's character is very important for success in all areas of life. Character development shows how a person's morals and mindset grow. It also shows how a person helps others. In other words, character development is not just about learning and education. It can also be seen in how a person acts and thinks in society. Lerner explains this idea in more detail as follows:

> "Character development can be […] the foundation on which other key facets of a person's thriving can be built (competence, confidence, connection, and caring), and can provide a key basis for enabling every young person to contribute positively to their own lives and to the betterment of their families, schools, and communities." (2017: 8).

Character development occurs through conflict. Conflicts may take the form of internal conflict and external conflict. Through these conflicts, individuals are forced to evaluate their values and priorities, leading them to make decisions that reveal their true character and contribute to their personal growth. Villegas offers

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a useful framework for understanding these challenges by dividing these obstacles into two categories.

> "Internal conflict occurs within a character's mind, often involving a struggle with emotions, and desires […] Along with internal conflict, characters also experience external conflict. This involves a character facing challenges from outside forces, such as other characters, societal expectations" (2024: 12-13).

Both internal and external conflicts not only contribute to a person's character development, but also reveal the deeper psychological struggles involved in fulfilling human needs. Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory explained that human in a natural way push by desire for achieving psychological well-being. Maslow's approach is unique in how it views human nature, as explained by Feist, he describes the framework as a "holistic-dynamic theory because it assumes that the whole person is constantly being motivated by one need or another […] that is, self-actualization" (2021: 273). However, self-actualization is difficult for many people to achieve because it is the highest level of human development, which can only be reached after basic lower-level needs are gradually fulfilled. "To attain self-actualization, people must satisfy lower level needs such as hunger, safety, love, and esteem." (Maslow in Feist et al., 2021: 273).

Self-actualization involves more than just fulfilling hierarchical needs because it is also marked by a commitment to Being-values (B-values). These lasting principles are important signs of a person's psychological health. The difference between simply reaching the top of the hierarchy and truly growing lies in one's dedication to these values. As Maslow explained in Feist, the absence of

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these values can lead to a certain kind of psychological decline in which individuals lose their sense of purpose, fulfillment, and personal growth.

> "People who highly respect such values as truth, beauty, and the other B-values become self-actualizing after their esteem needs are met, whereas people who do not embrace these values are frustrated in their self-actualization needs even though they have satisfied each of their other basic needs" (2021: 281).

Self-actualization and B-values are particularly useful for analyzing characters who are suddenly placed in survival situations and shaped by the experiences they encounter. A perfect example of this is Evelyn Skye's Damsel, a fantasy novel that was created through an interesting partnership, Dan Mazeau's first version for the movie and Skye's book was both written at the same time. This made it hard to tell the difference between the movie version and the book. The book Damsel was published on April 18, 2023, by Random House Worlds. The novel was written by Evelyn Skye, an American author known for writing fantasy stories. The story takes place in the fictional Kingdom of Aurea, a fantasy setting created by Skye. The book was later tied to the Netflix film released in March 2024.

Princess Elodie from Evelyn Skye's *Damsel* gets married to Prince Henry of Aurea because she feels it is her duty to do so for her people. They made this choice to help others, and they had good reasons for it. But then something bad happens. After the wedding, Elodie is pushed into a cave and made an offer by a dragon. This is an important tradition in Aurea. They have been choosing to sacrifice brides for a long time to protect the kingdom. Elodie is alone inside a cave that really dangerous. She starving, afraid, and hopeless. She started to

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realized three bitter truths about Aurea history and things that do not ever be spoke to her from royal family. Elodie had an experience and that experience did not make Elodie destroyed; but that things can make her see herself to keep it real. Elodie did not have a support system, but she always learned that she is stronger, smarter, and braver than she thought. She did not wait for someone else to save her. Instead of waiting for the dragon to kill her, she uses her intelligence and her own power to defeat that dragon. Elodie is safe and sound and she is successfully getting out of the cave and survive because she is never giving up.

This reasearch of course has a main question, and that is how conflict hits different of character Elodie. She experiences a lot of mental shifts, and these changes makes the story really good. Also, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a useful framework for understanding these changes. This whole story shows off how elodie deal with her problems and develop into a leader. But, this breakdown far more than survival. The story shows how she grows as an individual by fulfilling important needs and moving closer to achieving her full potential. It is about becoming something more, a person shaped by deeper, higher human values.

1.2 Research Questions

This study, entitled "From Survival to Achieve Self-Actualization: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and B-Values of Elodie in Evelyn Skye's Novel *"Damsel"* (2023)", focuses on examining Elodie's developmental journey from a state of deficiency to self-actualization throughout the novel *Damsel* (2023) by Evelyn Skye. Therefore, the research problems of this study are formulated as follows:

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1. How is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs reflected in Elodie's character in the novel?
2. How are Maslow's B-values reflected in Elodie's character after she achieves self-actualization in the novel?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is reflected in Elodie's character in Evelyn Skye's *Damsel*.
2. To explain how are Maslow's B-values reflected in Elodie's character after she achieves self-actualization in Evelyn Skye's *Damsel*.

1.4 Previous Studies

Since the novel is relatively new and limited research has been conducted on it, with only one study identified, the writer has therefore referred to previous studies that examined the same object, namely *Damsel*, although in its film adaptation rather than the novel.

The first study is "*Perlawanan Terhadap Ketidakadilan Gender Dalam Novel Damsel Karya Evelyn Skye*" by Bareta Amelia Putri in 2025 (Journal Article, Pakuan University). This study examines the representation of women's oppression and resistance against patriarchal systems in Evelyn Skye's *Damsel* through the lens of liberal feminism. The analysis shows that *Damsel* does not avoid showing how gender inequality actually works. Elodie cannot make her own decisions about her life. Her marriage is not built on love or shared interests. Instead, her marriage was political. She got married because it was better for her

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kingdom, not because she wanted to. People treat her as if she has no thoughts or desires of her own. She is being used as a negotiation tool, pretending to be a married woman.

The second study is "Breaking the Damsel in Distress Stereotype: Exploring Gender and Social Class Dynamics in Netflix's *Damsel*" by Dahlia Salsabila Ryana Putri in 2024 (Journal Article, Padjajaran University). In this analysis, Elodie is presented in the 2024 Netflix show. The film does not follow the usual story of a damsel in distress. Elodie is not a weak, powerless princess. She is a strong woman who is not afraid to face the challenges of the world. She is also not afraid to face the differences between high society and the working class. Her style is both special and powerful. Research shows that *Damsel* is worried about the problem. It starts by talking about how gender roles and social class together create stereotypes for women. Elodie is the same. When the story begins, her freedom is almost completely gone. She has no power to make decisions for herself, and she cannot express her own thoughts and feelings. Her change starts there. While the story continues, her situation improves and she learns to escape the problems caused by the people in charge. She is not controlled by the people in charge; instead, she controls them. The only thing Elodie has to do is to find a way to free herself.

The third study is "Gender Role and Power Dynamic in *Damsel* Movie: A Feminist Stylistic Analysis" by Mutiara, Putri Aulia Nasution, Maha Lhaksmi, Rahmadsyah Rangkuti in 2025 (Journal Article, University of North Sumatra). This basically focuses on to feminist approach in the film study that built by Sara

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Mills. Using this theory, this analysis using *Damsel* (2023) movie. Based on Mills, Movie can use a language for telling a message for women. *Damsel* did not show a princess that weak character and helpless as usual. The dialogue feels like real, the flow of the story is smooth, and the plot of the story develop plain and simple. Everything in this movie proved that a women character that cast in the movie is smart, always keep it up, and not just waiting that something might happened. Everything in this movie is involved Elodie, the way she talks, her choice, and how is the story place all of these show that she is beyond of someone that always wants to stay alive. This film explained a woman that they have a power to make a choice for themselves. This movie too taugth women to support each other and work together to destroy the people and the system that making their life chaos.

The fourth study is "The Hierarchy of Needs in The Movie *Damsel* (2024)" by Alifia Shafa Mafhilda (Thesis, National University of Jakarta). So based on this, common theory that explain about human needs that created by Maslow used for break down this movie *Damsel*. The study found that Elodie's character development in *Damsel* (2024) reflects the fulfillment of all five levels of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Through her struggle to survive and overcome various challenges, Elodie gradually develops from a vulnerable victim into a brave, confident, and self-actualized individual. The findings demonstrate that Maslow's theory is effective in explaining Elodie's personal growth and transformation throughout the movie.

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Previous studies on *Damsel* have explored various issues, including liberal feminism, feminist stylistics, gender dynamics, social class, and Elodie's psychological development through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Similar to Mafhilda's study, the present research employs Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to examine Elodie's journey toward self-actualization. Both studies focus on understanding Elodie's psychological growth through the fulfillment of her needs.

However, this research differs from previous studies in several significant ways. First, most earlier studies approached *Damsel* from feminist perspectives, whereas the present study choose a psychological approach. Second, while previous researchers primarily analyzed the movie adaptation, this study focuses on the novel *Damsel* by Evelyn Skye. By examining the novel, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the story beyond its film adaptation. Finally, this study extends Mafhilda's analysis by not only investigating how Elodie fulfills the stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but also examining her B-values after reaching self-actualization. Through this additional analysis, the research seeks to identify the values that characterize Elodie's self-actualized personality and to provide a deeper understanding of her character development.

1.5 Research Method

1.5.1 Type of Research

This research was conducted using a library research method. "Library research involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information […] on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some point" (George, 2008: 6). There are two main sources that are used in the

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library research, that is primary source and secondary source. These categories are defined by the origin of the information; as Ajayi explains, the distinction depends on how the researcher obtains the data, since primary and secondary data are classified based on their sources.

> "Gathering data can be accomplished through a primary source (researcher is the first person to obtain the data) or a secondary source (the researcher obtains the data that has already been collected by other sources, such as data disseminated in a scientific journal)" (2017: 1).

In accordance with Ajayi's classification, this research utilizes both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Evelyn Skye's *Damsel* (2023), which provides the textual data analyzed in this study. Meanwhile, the secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, and previous studies that offer theoretical and contextual support for the analysis of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and B-values,

The writer presents the use of a qualitative research approach. "Qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can include […] how people experience aspects of their lives […]" (Teherani et al., 2015: 669). This framework can be used when reading literature. These factors made the process of reading more complex. Through close reading and interpretation, the researcher can explore how characters perceive their experiences and how these experiences shape their identity, behavior, and development throughout the story.

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1.5.2 Research Approach

Psychoanalysis is used in this study for revealing a psychological problem that is hidden within a story. Analyzing the text this way helps us figure out the deeper stuff that is actually getting in the way of a character's recovery. Burrow explains that psychoanalysis serves as a method of psychotherapy aimed at understanding and treating enduring psychological difficulties that hinder an individual's ability to function effectively, including those associated with nervous disorders (1917: 58-59).

This research is really focused on how characters develop and change in the story. We can totally see this in the way Elodie evolves in *Damsel*. That is why this research uses Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and B-Values in order to break down how Elodie does not just survive, but actually levels up as a person over time.

1.5.3 Data Source

This research pulls data from two main sources. The primary one is Evelyn Skye's novel *Damsel* (2023), where the story, thought within a character, and dialogues are used to track how Elodie's personality changes as she moves using Hierarchy of Needs and B-Values.

Then, secondary sources are also use to back things up, stuff like Maslow's own books on humanistic psychology, journal articles on literary criticism, and relevant academic papers. These sources are not merely additional readings. They

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form the foundation of the entire analysis and ensure that the study is properly supported.

1.5.4 Method of Data Collection

Most of the data comes from a close reading of texts. The reason for this is that the purpose of a text is often difficult to understand at first. To do this, the writer carefully looks at the text of *Damsel* by Evelyn Skye several times. By reading the text, the readers can learn more about what Elodie is thinking and feeling.

Another way to analyze data is to use a thematic analysis. This method puts the data into different groups that match Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and B-Values. Using this method is effective for this type of research because its structure makes the analysis easy to understand, though it is still open to new ideas and can adapt to them as they appear.

Data collection takes three steps. First, the novel is reread multiple times to make sure it is understood well. Next, parts of the book that show what Elodie is thinking and feeling are found. In the end, the writer correctly identifies the most suitable theoretical categories for those passages.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This analysis focuses on Elodie's character and her development throughout the story. It also examines the setting and the conflicts that Elodie encounters. All of these aspects are analyzed through Abraham Maslow's theory, which focuses on human behavior and motivation. With a focus on the hierarchy

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of needs, a study was conducted to understand how each level of need affects motivation and growth. Through this study, the concept of B-Values was discovered. The main idea is that the story of Elodie shows a significant change in her thinking. When she has what she needs, it helps her reach her full potential and show the best parts of being human, even when things are hard.

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