



Predator or Prey? -An Estimation of Lowen Ashleigh in Colleen Hoover's Verity.

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Abstract: Verity means Truth. The truth that the novel explores is unpleasant, shocking and uncomfortably unconvincing. Colleen Hoover's credit as a writer is her ability to dig deep into the complex Psyche of the human mind wrestling with pretty ordinary challenges of existential crisis. Lowen Ashleigh is an important character in the world of Hoover who unwillingly and unwittingly gets entangled in issues over which she scarcely gains control as the issues quickly take control of her, pulling her by the scruff of her neck to a destination unimagined by her in the wildest of her dreams. Yet the characters of Hoover are very much conscious of their journey through the emotional and psychological landscapes. They keep their sides tight till they come to terms with their roller coaster experience. They therefore manage to come out of it fractured and may be damaged but not destroyed. They are people who have read closely the ways of the world and are prepared to stare at it back with guts and determination to safe guard their self-interest when need arises. The case of Lowen is quite queer. Consciously she wades through her wild wishes and wilder hopes and unconsciously refuses to listen to the inner voice of warning. Queer thoughts lead to queer actions inviting queerer consequences. Is she a predator or a prey? This article examines the question that is bound to strike the minds of the readers of Verity, the novel that is considered by many to be the masterpiece of Colleen Hoover.

Keywords:

Verity-Existential Crisis-Trauma-queer thoughts and queerer actions-Predator-Prey

Introduction

Colleen Hoover is a famous American writer who has charged the narratives that venture into the realm of dark romance with emotional and psychological intensity. The depth of suspense, forbidden passion, and thrill happen to be the source of Purple Patches for the readers of the novel as the novelist shows them with vivacity and alacrity. Nuanced characters, twisted bonds, moral ambiguity, and haunting dark imaginations, take her romantic tales into the depth of human vulnerabilities. Hoover's fictions are dark as they expose darker psychology that involves manipulation, gas-lighting, panic, and anxiety, more often clustered under the sky of Trauma that can be defined as a complex, multifaceted experience that leaves an indelible mark on a person emotionally and physically. This mark often manifests itself as perceptions behaviour affecting the relationships,

Colleen Hoover's romance mostly focuses on trauma's impact, especially on relationships. Of all of Hoover's dark romances, Verity is the darkest. It not only revolves around uncanny romance but also the weird psychology of the characters. Verity, Lowen Ashley and Jerniah are all abnormal in their own ways. This paper proposes to unveil the complex psyche of the character of Lowen in the novel Verity.

Discussion

The novel revolves around the complexity of the main character, Verity. Lowen Ashleigh, an independent writer facing mounts of hardships after the loss of her mother who has gotten her into a lot of debt, by chance or by design walks into the life of Verity, a successful writer of extraordinary fame and fan-following. The struggling writer with a few mildly successful works gets a great opportunity to be the second author of a sequel written by a very famous writer, 'Verity' who could no longer write after a terrible accident. For the price that is offered for the assignment and for the promises it holds for her future, Ashleigh Lowen signs the offer knowing that she may not be able to stand up to the task. Evicted from her house, having nowhere else to go, Lowen agrees to stay at Jeremy's house to understand Verity's writing process. The wave of trauma gets entangled gradually as she arrives at Verity's house. Though there is a lot of pain and darkness within the house like Verity's accident, her kid's death, or Verity's occasional movement, Lowen comes over there for her promising future and almost at once realises that that was a great flaw. This paper talks about the trauma and the trauma response that, Lowen Ashleigh goes through as she reads Verity's journal and falls for Verity's husband Jeremy. From the very first page of the novel where Lowen Ashleigh gets to witness a skull crack open,

a sort of feeling of gloom and doom begins to linger in the minds of the readers. The writer has beautifully set the novel's tone through her character's reaction to the accident..

I closed my eyes before his head went under the tyre, but I heard it pop like the cork of a champagne bottle (Verity p.1)

From Virginia to Manhattan she had come "to be invisible". But Life is too complex a game to let you play it the way you want to. By agreeing to complete Verity's work, she had agreed to jump from the frying pan into the fire. Life was miserable for her, earlier, thanks to her mother but that innocent anonymity proved to be a blessing in disguise as the opportunity to step into the shoes of Verity proves to be a grand curse; a curse that changes her life forever depriving her of both her individual and professional identity.

Fear and dissociation; acts as the catalyst for the trauma that unfolds in the struggling writer's mind. As the story proceeds with Lowen moving into Verity's house, she gets to witness a lot of spine-chilling moments from seeing Verity immobile on her bed to seeing the same Verity staring straight into her eyes. Added on to which Lowen proceeds to read Verity's journal where Verity in her terms describes herself with the quote "No one is likable inside out". As Lowen gets intimidated by Verity's honesty and the clear description of personal, sensual exchanges between Verity and her husband, Jeromy, the main lead subconsciously gets bonded to Verity's husband.

Lowen, by repressing the traumatic memory deep inside her goes through a hurricane of psychological distress that makes her proceed to a romantic relationship with Jeromy inside the same house where his beloved wife is bedridden. She unconsciously mirrors Verity and, more often than not gets disappointed that Jeromy was anything but the person that Verity has described in her journal. This puts her in an uncalled-for competition with the sick Verity. She decides to take Jeromy the way Verity did. The writer shows the severity of Lowen's emotional and mental stability through a very smutty scene. While Jeromy and Lowen have private time in Verity's house, she looks at a tooth mark on the cot created by Verity in ecstasy. Without a second thought, she bites the cot at the same place harder to make a more dominant mark. Lowen is mentally losing. She veers away from her professional target. Instead of preparing herself as a professional substitute to Verity, she gets ready to substitute herself personally. Under the pretext of getting to know of Verity better, she reads the Journal only to move away from stark realities of Verity and of her own life. What initially appears to be a harmless escape, ultimately proves to be an entanglement.. The journal is subconsciously gas lighting her, perpetuating false beliefs, undermining her sense of self. Sex experience of a wife with her husband is hardly a subject of interest to an outsider The trauma response was that the main lead couldn't distort memory and perception. As the novel unfolds she disassociates from herself and becomes more and more of Verity. To impress upon Jeremia, she wanted to be better than Verity as a writer, as a wife and as a mother. Her mad efforts to prove herself better than Verity grows in intensity even after Verity's death, resulting in trauma and the trauma itself becomes Lowen's identity.

Lowen initially undertakes the assignment for professional up gradation and immediate payment to bail herself out of the tight corner, her dead mother had put her in. Personally she wasn't very much interested in reading the brutally frank autobiography of Verity. She was even uncomfortable as she thought it is akin to looking into the under wear of others; indecent and intolerable. But this is how the readers were given to understand through the suggestive narration of Coleen Hoover. But one cannot forget the fact that Lowen had just then lost her mother and was all alone when she first met Jeremy whose company helped her wipe off the skull cracking accident from her eyes. Verity's description of Jeremy in her manuscript, only fans the fire. His gentle treatment of Verity, his supposed affection for his children and his care and concern for herself were all reasons enough for her to fall in love with him. She looks at Jeremy as perfection personified and at Verity as the embodiment of Evil for being a bad mother and perhaps the worst wife. Not for a while it ever occurs to her that the manuscript of Verity could be a creative camouflage. Not knowing the fact that Verity was pretending to be in the stage of coma only to escape the wrath of her husband; not knowing that Jeremy already knew everything in the manuscript, she surprises him with the script and aids him in killing Verity. When the truth about Verity dawns on her, it was rather too late to do anything about it. She destroys the letter of evidence written by Verity to her husband, hoping against hope to regain his confidence and love .She perfectly understands Jeremy when he kills Verity first and Patricia later and even wonders if one day he would kill her too. Like father like son. The casual and cool cruelty of crew shocks her when he throws the baby out to watch TV without any disturbance. Yet she understands that what has been done can never be undone and her return to the state of innocence is impossible. Therefore she prefers to cling to Jeremy. Thus Lowen contributes immensely to the progress of the story as the narrator. The novelist needs to be given the credit due unto her for preferring to tell the story from Lowen's perspective. Had it been from Verity's or even Jeremy's perspective, the complications would not be so intensely complex.

Conclusion

Thus Lowen's charm as an independent woman, her innocence, her ignorance and malice and all adds to the effect of the story. Is she a predator or a prey? Perhaps, a predator turning into a prey. But, for those who are familiar with the ways of Colleen Hoover, it might even be that it is the other way round, a prey growing into a predator.

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