e-ISSN 2549-7715 | Volume 7 | Nomor 3 | Juli 2023 | Hal: 965-978 Terakreditasi Sinta 4

# AN ANALYSIS OF DELUSION ON JAKE IN I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS FILM

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This research discusses the delusion of the character Jake, as seen in the film I'm Thinking of Ending Things. This study aims to identify the types of delusions and the causes of delusions by Jaimie Leeser and William O'Donohue. The theory of delusions is used to identify the types of delusions experienced by Jake and the causes of delusion in the film. This study also uses the theory of character and characterization by Dennis W. Petrie and Joseph M. Boggs to describe how the types and causes of delusions are depicted in the character Jake, who suffers delusions. This study uses qualitative methods as research methods. This study shows that there are three types of delusions experienced Jake's character in the film. The delusions depicted in the film are erotomania where Jake believes he has a relationship; persecutory delusions when Jake feels someone is watching them make him harmed and angry, and grandiose delusions that he believed he had a unique ability and found something new in his world until he gets the Nobel medallion and everyone recognizes and appreciates him. The causes of delusions are also depicted in the film which is environmental causes such that Jake is portrayed as a lonely person and always bullied at school and genetic causes from Jake's father who has a history of Dementia which was passed down to Jake. Delusions in the film have an important role in the plot of the story to distinguish delusion and reality to make the audience understand what happened in this film. **Key words**: delusion, character, causes of delusion.

#### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini membahas tentang delusi karakter Jake, seperti yang terlihat dalam film I'm Thinking of Ending Things. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis delusi dan penyebab terjadinya delusi menurut Jaimie Leeser dan William O'Donohue. Teori delusi digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis delusi yang dialami oleh Jake dan penyebab-penyebab delusi dalam film tersebut. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan teori karakter dan penokohan oleh Dennis W. Petrie dan Joseph M. Boggs untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana jenis-jenis dan penyebab delusi yang digambarkan pada karakter Jake yang mengalami delusi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif sebagai metode penelitian. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat tiga jenis delusi yang dialami karakter Jake dalam film. Delusi yang digambarkan dalam film tersebut adalah erotomania, dimana Jake percaya bahwa ia memiliki sebuah hubungan; delusi paranoia dimana Jake merasa ada yang memperhatikannya sehingga ia merasa tersakiti dan marah; dan delusi keagungan dimana ia percaya bahwa ia memiliki kemampuan yang unik dan menemukan hal yang baru di dunianya hingga ia mendapatkan medali Nobel dan semua orang mengakui dan menghargainya. Penyebab delusi juga digambarkan dalam film ini yaitu penyebab



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lingkungan, Jake digambarkan sebagai orang yang kesepian dan selalu di-bully di sekolah dan penyebab genetik dari ayah Jake yang memiliki riwayat penyakit Demensia yang diturunkan kepada Jake. Delusi dalam film ini memiliki peran penting dalam alur cerita untuk membedakan delusi dan kenyataan sehingga penonton dapat memahami apa yang terjadi dalam film ini.

Kata kunci: delusion, karakter, penyebab-penyebab delusi.

#### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many films talk about psychology, especially psychological disorders. Films are part of discursive and social practices that reflect the conditions and structures of society and individual life (Flick 409). Meanwhile, according to Evision, a film is a series of moving images that are projected onto a screen in a cinema or on television (140). From both statements, it can be concluded that film is one of the literary works because it mostly adapts novels which are literary works then conveyed visually to the audience on a screen and television. One of those films that talks about psychological disorders is I'm Thinking of Ending Things Film by Charlie Kaufman. This film, an adaptation of the novel by Iain Reid with the same title, presents a story of Jake's suffering from a psychological disorder called delusion. The film is related to the theory of namely delusion, one example that can be taken from one of the scenes is when Jake suffered grandiose delusion when Jake made a speech as a gifted student even though he's just the janitor. The researcher found that delusion is an inaccurate belief in which the sufferer cannot distinguish between reality and imagination, so he believes and behaves according to what he thinks.

The focus of this study is analyzing the delusion of Jake's character. The researcher used Leeser and O'Donohue's theory of delusion and also used the character and characterization theory by Joseph M. Boggs to analyze characterization. The theory from Leeser and O'Donohue is suitable and related to be used as a reference theory in the study of this research because this delusional theory fits Jake's character it can facilitate the researcher to analyze. The researcher formulates two research questions, first is to find out the types of delusion portrayed in the character of Jake in I'm Thinking of Ending Things film and the second is to find out the cause of delusion found in the character of Jake in I'm Thinking of Ending Things film.

Theoretically, this research is expected can give information and understanding about delusion, especially in I'm Thinking of Ending Things Film by Charlie Kaufman. Also, it can be used to increase knowledge about the psychological disorder, especially delusions on an individual. Meanwhile, practically, this research can be used for other researchers to reference those who want to analyze I'm Thinking of Ending Things by Charlie Kaufman or another film in the scope of delusion and cause of delusion or other problems related to this research.

#### **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### 1. Film

According to Flick, films are part of discursive and social practices that reflect the conditions and structures of society and individual life (409). Meanwhile, according to Evision, a film is a series of moving images projected onto a screen in a cinema or on television (140). From the statement above, it can be said that film is part of discursive and



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social practices. A film can reflect the conditions and structures of society and individual life with moving images projected onto a screen in a cinema or television.

According to Klarer, Film has some special elements to present, such as camera point of view, editing, montage, and slow or fast motion. Although films have special characteristics and terminology, they can still be analyzed using literary criticism methods because it is closely related to the traditional approach of textual studies. Films, especially videotapes, are closely similar to the novel in theory because they can be read or watched repeatedly. Films also can be played in several different cities at the same time and there is no possibility of deterioration or improvement of quality in several identical copies (54-56).

#### 2. Character and Characterization

In a literary work, there is an important element called character. A character is a person represented in a dramatic or narrative work, whom the reader interprets as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the person says and their distinctive ways of the dialogue and from what the action is (Abrams 46). For a character to be displayed with specific characteristics, a literary technique called characterization is used. Bacon stated that characterization is a name for the methods an author uses to reveal a character's values, feelings, goals, and others to the readers in literary works (1). There are several ways to find out the analysis of the characterizations in the film. Petrie (50-54) states that five types of characterizations can be understood in several ways:

#### a. Characterization through Dialogue

The character expresses himself through what is said, and a lot is also revealed from the way the character says it. This can be seen from the dialogue shown, the audience can reveal many things about the social and economic level, educational background, and character's mental processes (Joseph 51-52).

#### Characterization through External Action

The character's appearance is often deceptive, even though appearance is an important measure of personality. The character does something for his purpose because the motive is in accordance with the personality of a character so that the actions taken by the character reflect the quality of his personality (Joseph 52-53).

#### Characterization through Internal Action

Internal actions take place in the character's thoughts and emotions, which consist of secrets, unspoken thoughts, daydreams, aspirations, memories, powers, and fantasies. Internal actions are usually invisible and inaudible, but it is important to understand the character. Filmmakers express internal actions in visual ways, such as showing things that the character imagines, remembers, or thinks. Besides that, the filmmaker also provides a picture of the inner action by using cinematographic techniques such as taking close-up pictures of faces and character expressions or adding music to a film (Joseph 53).

#### 3. Psychology and Literature

According to Wellek and Warren, the psychological approach of literature is related to the author, the creative process, literary works, and readers (90). However, the psychological approach is essentially related to the three primary symptoms: author, literary work, and reader, considering that the author and the literary work are closer to the psychological approach. If the researcher attention is more focused on the author, then an expressive approach is the research model. Nevertheless, if the focus of the analysis is on



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literary work, the research model is closer to the objective approach. Therefore, the model of this research is closer to the objective approach because more focus is on the analysis of literary work. From the definition above, psychology is a science that studies human thought and behavior and its process from beginning to end and literature is a work that can be used to describe and connect human life. It can be concluded that literacy and psychology are related. However, what distinguishes the two is that the symptoms in psychology are real, whereas in literature they are fictional.

#### 4. Delusion

According to Leeser and O'Donohue, delusion is false and shows abnormalities in the person's mind content. A belief that is not counted by a person's cultural background, religion, or intelligence level (687-694). Therefore, delusion is the inability of an individual to distinguish what is real from what is imagined that shows abnormalities in the mind content of the affected person, which may be an incorrect interpretation of the experienced event or events that are exaggerated, the beliefs of the affected person are not taken into account by the background, culture, religion or level of intelligence.

Any delusion whose content is consistent with either a depressive or manic state is a mood-congruent delusion; for example, a person struggling might believe the world is going to end, or a person in a manic state (a state in which the person feels compelled to take on new projects, has much energy, and needs little sleep) believes that he or she has special talents or skills. Any delusion whose content is not compatible with either a depressed or manic state or is mood-neutral is a mood-incongruent delusion. An example is a depressed person who feels that thoughts from some outside force, person, or group of people are forced into their minds, and these thoughts are not known as the person's thoughts (called "thought insertion"). According to Leeser and O'Donohue, there are several types of delusions (688-693):

- a. Erotomania: Erotomania is a delusion in which one believes that another person is in love with him or her, and the patient has the delusional conviction that another person, usually of higher status, is in love with him or her
- b. Persecutory delusion: Patients with this type are convinced that they are being persecuted or harmed. The persecutory beliefs are often associated with querulousness, irritability, and anger, and the individual who acts out his or her anger may at times be assaultive or even homicidal (Leeser and O'Donohue 693).
- c. Grandiose delusion: An individual is convinced they have special powers, talents, or abilities. Sometimes, the individual may believe they are a famous person or character (Leeser and O'Donohue 688).

#### 5. Causes of delusion

Leeser and O'Donohue (692-693) stated that the factors of delusional disorder are unclear. It is possible that one of these factors, namely:

#### a. Genetics

The fact that delusional disorder is more common in people who have family members with delusional disorder or schizophrenia suggests there may be genetics involved. It is believed that, like other mental disorders, the tendency to develop delusional disorders can be passed from parents to their children.



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#### b. Biological

Researchers are studying how abnormalities of certain brain areas might be involved in the development of delusional disorders. An imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain, called neurotransmitters, also has been linked to the formation of delusional symptoms. Neurotransmitters are substances that help nerve cells in the brain send messages to each other. An imbalance in these chemicals can interfere with the transmission of messages, leading to symptoms.

#### c. Environmental

Evidence suggests that delusion can be triggered by stress. People, who tend to be isolated, appear to be more vulnerable to developing delusion.

#### C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used qualitative research. Whose data consist of words and observations, not numbers. The present study also used a psychoanalysis approach to answer the research questions. This method reflects the influence of modern psychology on literature and literary criticism, and also this method focuses on the use of psychological language and methods to analyze the characters (Kennedy and Gioia 1804). This approach is interrelated to Leeser and O'Donohue's theory of 'Delusion' because Leeser and O'Donohue's theory is a branch of psychoanalysis that is part of the literary criticism approach as well and the researcher used this approach and theory to help the researcher in analyzing fictional characters of the object study. The data from this research consists of events that contain delusion and the cause of delusion from the film. The main data source for this research is from the I'm Thinking of Ending Things film directed by Charlie Kaufman. The data was also got from the actions, dialogues, and screenshots from the scenes of the film.

#### **D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The researcher presented the findings of the research questions. In analyzing the film, the researcher found the kind of delusions portrayed by Jake and the causes of the delusion through the character and characterization theory of the film. The researcher displayed the data with two different scenes, the first one is the delusion scenes and the reality scene that happened to make the reader understand what happened in Jake's mind. In the I'm Thinking of Ending Things film there are several delusions that caused Jake's character experiences something different from his reality, and they are all created by Jake's mind from things he never achieves or does one of his delusions is having a girlfriend which is actually never happened in Jake's life. The delusion in this film is depicted in the character of young Jake and the young woman who is actually Jake, an old Janitor. Thus, the findings are presented as follows:

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#### 1. Kinds of delusions

#### a. Erotomania



Figure 3 Jake talks about Lucy (08:32)

Jake : Incidentally, Wordsworth wrote a series of poems to a woman

named Lucv

The young woman: Like me!

Jake : Exactly. A beautiful, idealized woman who dies young.

The young woman: Yikes

: Ha. Well, the comparison goes only as far as your name.

The young woman: Phew

Jake : And that you are ideal, of course.

(I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, 08:32-08:54)

The second data showed, figure and dialogue 3 is the delusion scene when Jake and the young woman talked about the poet Wordsworth in the car. Jake said that Wordsworth, who wrote a series of poems for a woman named Lucy, had the same name as the young woman. The verse tells about Lucy, a woman who has a beautiful face, and she is an ideal woman who died when she was young. It can be proven in the dialogue "Exactly. A beautiful, idealized woman who dies young", which refers to the character of the young woman.





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Figure 4 William Wordsworth's book in Jake's childhood bedroom (57:57)

In fact, by characterization through internal action through scenes in the film, it is showed that Lucy and all about Lucy that is discussed during the trip when talking about William Wordsworth's work was created by Jake's delusions from the book he had read in his youth in the scene that showed William Wordsworth's book in Jake's childhood bedroom.



(I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, 57:57)

Figure 15 Jake feels that someone is watching them (01:44:18)

#### b. Persecutory delusion

In "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" Jake suffered persecutory delusion, this type is convinced that they are being persecuted or harmed. Data that showed persecutory delusion in this film, is as follows:

: There was someone watching us Jake

The Young Woman : I didn't see anyone

Jake : Well, he watching us. Like... like goddamn pervert

The young Woman : Let's go



: Believe me, I'm very familiar with that particular look Jake

The young woman : Jake, I just... what the hell does that mean? Jake : I'm going to give him a piece of my mind.

: Jake, don't be ridiculous The young woman



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Jake : it's not acceptable : Jake let's just go The young woman

Jake : No. I'll be right back, it's...unacceptable! (Jake punching the

(*I'm Thinking of Ending Things film*, 01:44:18 - 01:44:50)

In this scene, Jake and the young woman were kissing after an argument they had in the car, but when they were kissing, Jake suddenly pulls away and says, "There was someone watching us" Jake feels someone was watching them both from school. It can be seen from Jake's character that he is being harmed. Associated with the anger that is visible in Jake's character he pushes himself to attack people who are peaking at him as seen from the dialogue "I'm going to give him a piece of my mind" and Jake gets out of the car to go to the person who is peering at him.

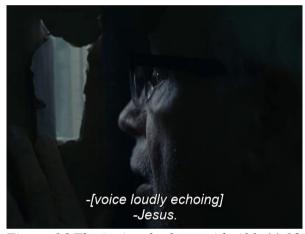


Figure 16 The janitor looks outside (01:44:13)

In fact, showed through characterization through external action when Jake feels that someone is peaking at them, what happens is in figure 15, the janitor (old Jake) is looking outside through a hole in the wall as if he were peeking at Jake and the young woman while kissing.

The conclusion from the findings above is that Jake also experiences a persecutory delusion when Jake's character is being persecuted because he feels someone is watching him and makes him angry. In fact, no one saw Jake and the young woman while kissing but because of the belief in Jake's mind that believed that he was being seen by someone.



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#### **Grandiose delusion** c.

In I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, the type of grandiose delusion also sufferers here, an individual is convinced they have special powers, talents, or abilities. Data that showed grandiose delusion in this film, is as follows:



Figure 17 Jake stands on the podium to give a speech (02:04:14)

The janitor (Old Jake): Thank you. My acceptance speech! I accept. I accept it all. I gratefully accept your acknowledgment, this award. I accept all that it entails. That this award comes near the end of a long, fruitful life in acknowledgment for the work I did decades ago. My quest has taken me through the physical ---- the metaphysical, the delusional - and back. And I have made the most important discovery of my life: It is only in the mysterious equations of love ---- that any logic or reasons can be found. I am only here tonight because of vou. You are the reason I am. You are all my reasons. Thank you.

(I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, 02:04:14)

The figure and dialogue above occurred when The Janitor (Old Jake) gave his speech to everyone on the podium in the auditorium stage. He saw many people that came to his event. There was his mother, his girlfriend, and many people were there. She believed that everyone was happy when he went to the podium because he got a Nobel medallion on his neck. But it was only his delusion. He is only a Janitor in a high school who never finds something new, but he believes that he is an inventor until he gets a Nobel medallion.

From the quotation above, it means the Janitor was suffering a delusion, precisely a grandiose delusion. He believed he had a unique ability and found something new in his world until everyone recognized and appreciated him. In this case, The Janitor (old Jake) always made a big himself. He believed that he has made the most important discovery of his life. He felt that he was a very important person in this world. His hope in life was that he wanted to be an important person in this world, but it could not be real. He hope in his life that he wanted to be an important person in this world, but it could not be real because



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it needs an intelligent person to be a powerful person, when he never got that category in his life, no talent came down from his parents. He was a person who always got perseverance category when he was a child. Therefore, in this event, he was alone, and there were many imaginations around his thinking because he could not fulfill the young woman's needs.



Figure 18 The janitor (old Jake) goes to the auditorium naked (02:03:47)

In reality scene showed the reality that shown by characterization through external action when the janitor (old Jake) walks naked into the hall. He never won a Nobel medal and never created anything in his life. Then, the clothes he wore were different from the delusions Jake had.

In conclusion, Jake also experienced grandiose delusion, convinced that he believes he has a unique ability and found something new in his world until he got the Nobel medallion. The fact, he even never got it all, and this is shown through the internal action in the I'm Thinking of Ending Things film.

(I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, 02:03:47)

#### 2. Cause of delusions

The researcher analyzed the cause of delusions found in the character Jake from the dialogue, action, and scenes in this film, below are the results of the cause of delusions in the character Jake. In the film I'm Thinking of Ending Things there are several things in the film that showed the cause of Jake's character delusions. Thus, the findings are presented, as follows:

#### a. Environmental

In I'm Thinking of Ending Things film there is a reason that makes Jake's character suffer delusions one of them is Environmental. Throughout I'm Thinking of Ending Things, the film contains Jake's memories, unfulfilled wishes, obsessions, and regrets, that's why the environment becomes the cause of the delusion on the character Jake. Data that showed the Environmental cause of delusion in this film, is as follows:



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Figure 21 Jake's mother talks about Jake who never had friends (53:02)

Jake's Father : What'd she want? The Young Woman : Just calling to say hi.

Jake's Mother : Well, that's nice. Friends are important. Jake never really had a lot

of them growing up. Or even after.

(I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, 53:02)

The figure and dialogue above, showed that Jake's character grew up in an isolated place from the environment surrounding where he did not have friends environment that has no friends or few friends, this is shown from the dialogue and reaction of Jake's other character, Jake's mother. In this dialogue, Jake's mother says that friends are important. In this dialogue, Jake presents in his mind that friends are important in his life, but he never had them, this it causes Jake suffers delusions.

#### b. Genetics

In I'm Thinking of Ending Things film apart from environmental factors, the cause of Jake's delusions is genetics. Leeser and O'Donohue said that delusional disorder is more common in people who have family members with delusional disorder or schizophrenia suggesting there may be genetics involved. It is believed that, like other mental disorders, the tendency to develop delusional disorders can be passed from parents to their children (692-693). Data that showed the Genetics cause of delusion in this film, as the following description

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Figure 24 Jake's father suffer Dementia (59:09)

Jake's Father : Sorry. This is Jake's childhood bedroom.

The Young Woman : Yes. I saw the sign on the door –

Jake's Father : Oh, that. (Beat) I can explain that. My memory is going. Early

signs of... (He struggles for the word).

The Young Woman : Dementia? Alzheimer's? Lewy Bodies?

Jake's Father: I think that's it. So we have taken to labeling things around the home.

You'll see labels all over the house.

The Young Woman : I haven't noticed. Jake's Father : You will notice.

The Young Woman : Well, I'm certainly very sorry to hear –

Jake's Father : It's ok. The truth is I'm looking forward to when it gets very bad so

I don't have to remember that I can't remember.

(I'm Thinking of Ending Things film, 01:26:33)

The figure and dialogue above showed that when the young woman meets Jake's father in Jake's room as a child. The appearance of Jake's father looks very different from the situation he is getting older and his father has dementia, dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving, and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia. The dialogue above showed that Jake's father has dementia, dementia is related to delusions. Delusions are more common in dementia with Lewy bodies and can affect people with Alzheimer's and vascular dementia, particularly in the later stages because Jake's father has a history of dementia which causes delusions, this becomes a genetic trait for Jake that becomes a cause of delusion on Jake because it is genetically inherited from his father.



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#### E. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research questions, the types of delusions experienced by Jake's character are erotomania, persecutory delusion, and grandiose delusion and the cause of delusions experienced by Jake's character is the environment, where Jake is in an isolated environment that causes Jake to be lonely and the second cause is genetic factors by his father who has a history of dementia.

Delusions in the film have an important role in the plot of the story because this film is about the delusions of the old Jake character who is depicted with Jake when he was young with his girlfriend, the young woman. Jake describes how perfect life is in his mind. The way these delusions and reality are portrayed is through scenes in scenes that are shown with completely different time and place settings through the janitor and Jake, how the researcher distinguishes delusions and reality in the film by characterization of Jake's character. For example, characterization through internal action describes feelings through how the scene in the film was captured, which is by showing locations or objects that are interconnected with the delusions depicted through Jake and the young woman and the reality depicted through the janitor.

Delusions in this film are essential to discuss because if the delusions in this film are not analyzed, the audience will think that this film is just a story of a couple heading to their parent's house for dinner which contains boring conversations, and is difficult to understand the meaning of the conversation. By analyzing the delusions in this film, the audience will understand that everything that happens in this film is a delusion of the janitor who imagines what it would be like to have a perfect life journey with a lover.

This research reveals that Jake's character suffered from three out of nine kinds of delusions. They are erotomania, persecutory delusion, and grandiose delusion. It is similar to Adillah's research which found three kinds of delusions. One of them is a grandiose delusion. This similarity is found because people with grandiose delusion is convinced that they have special powers, talents, or abilities. Sometimes, the individual may believe they are a famous person or character (Leeser and O'Donohue 688). However, Jake's character did not experience other delusions which are found in the previous study such as somatic delusion and delusion of control. The difference between these findings might be caused by the different causes of the main character's delusion. The cause of Jake's delusions is the environment that causes him to feel lonely and the genetic cause of Jake's father who has a history of dementia. Then the causes of delusions suffered by the main character in previous research were a bad relationship with his father and the unacceptable truth about the death of the main character's girlfriend.

In conclusion, delusions can happen to anyone regardless of social background and age. The factors of the occurrence of delusions in a person can also be different, resulting in different delusions and this can be depicted in literary works through characterization. As shown in the movie I'm Thinking of Ending Things where there is a delusion of the character Jake who suffers from 3 types of delusions namely erotomania, persecutory delusion, and grandiose delusion. Then the cause of delusions is caused by two causes namely genetic and environmental. Without delusions in this film, this film will only be a boring movie and if watched repeatedly it will only make the audience confused. Therefore, delusions play an important role in the plot.



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