



**BOOK REVIEW ON THE NOVEL *THE FIRM*
WRITTEN BY JOHN GRISHAM**

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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In English Department, Faculty of Humanities

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Submitted by:

Novin Nur Pratiwi

NIM: 13020111120006

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PRONOUNCEMENT

I honestly confirm that I compile this book review project by myself and without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3 and in diploma degree of any university. I ascertain also that I do not quote any material from other publications or someone's paper except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, July 2018

Novin Nur Pratiwi

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Jika Allah menolong kamu, maka tidak akan ada yang mengalahkan kamu”

(TQS.Ali Imran : 160)

This final project is dedicated to people who support me in every single moment, especially my beloved grandmother and my mother.

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GRISHAM*

Written by

Novin Nur Pratiwi

NIM : 13020111120006

is approved by project advisor

on 24 July 2018

Project Advisor

Dra. Christina Resnitriwati, M. Hum
NIP. 195602161983032001

The Head of the English Department

Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A.
NIP. 196408141990011001

VALIDATION

Approved by
Strata 1 Thesis Examination Committee
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University
on August 2018

Chair Person

Retno Wulandari, S.S.,M.A
NIP. 19750525 200501 2 002

First Member

Drs. Jumino, M.Lib.,M.Hum
NIP. 19620703 199001 1 001

Second Member

Rifka Pratama, S.Hum.,M.A
NPPU. H. 7. 199004282018071001

Third Member

Dwi Wulandari, S.S.,M.A
NIP. 19761004 200112 2 001

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6. All of people who have prayed for me.

I realize that this final project is far from perfect. Therefore, I would be glad to receive any constructive criticism and suggestion to make this final project better.

Finally, I hope that this final project will be useful to the readers.

Semarang, July 2018

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Writing

Reading is a part of human activities that gives information, inspiration entertainment and enjoyment. Nowadays, many people enjoy reading novel. Novel itself is a kind of literary works investigating the characters, telling the exciting and unpredictable story within certain period. Story in the novel describes common life with various values which make various conflicts (Eagleton, 2005: 8).

The Firm is a novel telling about Mitch McDeere's effort to reveal black business of the firm where he works at. According to www.jgrisham.com/bio, *The Firm* is the first John Grisham's bestselling novel published in 1991 and has been repeatedly printed. This novel has been translated into several languages including *Bahasa Indonesia*. In addition, this novel describes about a life of white collar worker in United State of America. According to www.smallbusiness.chron.com , white collar workers typically wear white, button down shirts and worked in an office. They have formal education at least a high school diploma then they get pay well. Lawyer, for instance, is one of white-collar occupation.

This novel describes Mitch McDeere's life as a lawyer in a firm of *Bendini* very well. After reading this novel, we can find out that working as a white-collar needs formal high education, and professional attitude. Besides, they have high

payment and they work comfortably in an office. Based on the explanation above, the writer decides to analyze *The Firm* for her final project.

1.2 Purpose of Writing

The writer's purposes of the writing are

1. To explore the strengths in characters and plot of *The Firm*.
2. To explore the weakness in theme of *The Firm*

1.3 Biography of the Author

Based on to www.jgrisham.com/bio, John Grisham is a well-known author from United State of America. He is known as an American great novelist. He also becomes one of the fastest-selling writers in America. He was born on February 8, 1955 in Jonesboro, Arkansas, United State of America. His father was a cotton farmer. Although his parents are lacked from formal education, his mother had encouraged him to prepare his college.

John Grisham graduated from Mississippi University Law School. In 1983, he was elected as one of the Mississippi House of Representatives before he decided to be a writer. His first novel is entitled *A Time to Kill*. He was inspired to write this novel by his experience when observed a trial in 1984. *A Time to Kill* was rejected by 28 publishers before unknown publisher wanted to publish this book in short time. This condition is different from his second book, *The Firm*. *The Firm* was released as a best seller book in New York Times within weeks. His

others works are *The Pelican Brief*, published in 1992; *The Client*, published in 1993; and *The Chamber*, published in 1994.

Grisham's novel genre is always thriller which is full of mystery of a case. However, in 2006, he had released his first nonfiction book titled *The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town*. This book explores a murder case in 1982 which two persons from *Oklahoma* being wrongfully sentenced to death row. Grisham had also released his short story collection, titled *Ford Country* in 2009.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY OF *THE FIRM*

Started with ideal life of associate in the firm named *Bendini*, Mitch McDeere suddenly is surprised by the fact that the firm, where he works at, has been tied to mafia crime. Moreover, he knows that both his house and his car are set bogging tools. He tells it to his wife, Abby, and they become very cautious speaking in the house and in the car. However, they try making their natural conversation. Wayne Terrance, FBI Agent who informs the facts, needs McDeere's help to collect the evidence stating that the firm is involved in mafia crime.

McDeere's relation with the FBI, which is represented by Wayne Terrance, is suspected by the firm. It makes the whole McDeere's activities are closely monitored by the firm through De Vasher. De Vasher is the firm security chief giving his loyalty to the Lazarov. In De Vasher's monitored, De Vasher wants to get McDeere's weakness and then he finds it by paying woman to trap McDeere in affair. McDeere is caught in the affair when he stayed in Cayman Island for his job. Because of Mitch's affair, Mitch feels restless and guilty toward his wife, Abby. He always remembers his sin in every single activity he has done. He tries to confess his affair as his sin to Abby. In the same time, he considers the consequences. Then he decides not to tell his wife. Moreover he remembers that Bendini's priority is a good family for its lawyers, so it makes him uncomfortable.

Besides, Mitch McDeere needs to do his work as usual. He pretends not to know that De Vasher has set spies around him and they are following him wherever he goes. He collects all evidences showing the firm is involved in mafia crime and in murdered case of two lawyers in Cuba. He collects evidences from internal and external of the firm.

Mitch McDeere's acts to collect evidences relating with murder case is supported by Eddie Lomax, his brother's friend. Eddie Lomax is a private detective who can collect evidences for many cases. Unfortunately, he is murdered by the firm's spy after informing and submitting the evidence of the firm's involvement in the murder case. Finding the information regarding Lomax death and finding the evidences, McDeere is quite apprehensive his family. However, he still needs to do his job as if nothing is happened.

After his act and his relationship to FBI uncovered, McDeere is trying to escape from De Vasher and Wayne Terrance. He escapes from Wayne Terrance because other FBI personal has leaked information to De Vasher about his act. He postpones the submission of evidences that have been collected. Then, Wayne Terrance assumes that McDeere makes a fool towards him.

During this chase, McDeere, Abby and Ray, his brother, have to hide in a small motel. Their photos spread throughout the city by mass media as fugitives. Fortunately, they get help from a guard motel to fulfill their needs, so they shall not get caught by both Terrance and De Vasher. Not only guard motel helps them, but also Barry Abanks. He is an owner of scuba diving business whose son is died in assassination of Bendini lawyers. On the way, he can steal, by money

laundering, around eight million dollar from the firm's account in *Grand Cayman Bank* and finds his payment from FBI. He sends some of money to his mother, his mother-in law, and Tammy. Tammy is the one who helps him to copy and to send evidences documents to Terrance. By this evidence documents, Terrance and FBI can reveal and dismantle the mafia business in *Bendini*. They can even catch the head of the mafia, the entire partner and entire the staff. Meanwhile, McDeere with his brother and his wife are enjoying their new life in Caymans.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF *THE FIRM*

After reading this novel, the writer finds some interesting point. This interesting point could be the strengths of this novel. There are characters and plot. Meanwhile, the theme of the novel could be the weakness of the novel.

3.1. The Strengths

The strengths of this book come from character and plot aspects. The way John Grisham describes each character is very strong. He can create strong characters in life. They do not easily give up, and able to be rational in every condition even in critical condition. Because of it, the plot depends on the way each character attacks and survives from each other. It makes the plot flows dynamic and full of surprises.

3.1.1. Character

Forster states that “Character is an author attempts to describe people’s life. A novelist gives them name and sex. He assigns them plausible gestures and causes them to speak using inverted commas, and perhaps to behave consistently” (2002: 33-34). Forster states that characters are divided into flat and round characters. “Flat character is constructed a single idea or quality” (Forster, 2002: 48). Flat character tends to be consistent in the role and it takes without any significant change in his life. Meanwhile, round character is “a figure who can give surprise in a convincing way. A novelist uses it to achieve his task of acclimatization and

harmonize the human race with the other aspects” (Forster, 2002: 55). Generally, round character is main character because the storyline commonly follows his change and it always surprises.

Meanwhile, characterization is “introduction of major persons by a paragraph describing in detail the physical appearance and another analyzing the moral and psychological nature” (Wellek & Warren, 1948: 219).

3.1.1.1 Mitchel Y. McDeere

Mitch McDeere is about twenty three years old man. He has bright white skin and a neat haircut. He has tall and proportionate body. He is handsome with his sturdy shoulder. This is seen in the statement “He had the brains, the ambition, the good looks.” (Grisham, 1991:1), and “He was white, and the firm had never hired a black.” (Grisham, 1991: 1). He is pretty tight with his food, because he is an athlete football. Secretaries and staff call him like a Joe Namath, a famous football player in America. “A few appeared to be in awe, as if staring at Joe Namath.” (Grisham, 1991:17)

McDeere is round character because he affects the manner of other characters. Firstly, people admire him because of his intelligence, achievement and high morale attitude. Then, Mitch McDeere becomes money launderer to save his family and his life. Commonly a character who reveals the crime never commits the same crime. It does not occur in Mitch McDeere’s character.

Precisely, this is the interesting point. Because we can see that a person can change in his life according to what he passes through his life.

Mitch McDeere is a bright man. He is clever. He can be a lot smarter than De Vasher and Terrance. McDeere is smarter than De Vasher showing in the matter of evidences related in Hodge and Konzisky's death. De Vasher convinces that he has taken care of this business of death very neatly. He even says no one shall know.

“He never knew Hodge and Kozinski, Oliver,” said Locke. Why would he be so interested in their deaths?

“Keep in minds,” said De Vasher, “that Terrance told him at their first meeting that the deaths were not accidental. So now he's Sherlock Holmes looking for clues.”

“He won't find any, will he, De Vasher?”

“Hell no. it was a perfect job. Oh sure, there are a few unanswered questions, but the Caymanian police damned sure can't answer them. Neither can our boy, McDeere.” (Grisham, 1991: 277)

Although De Vasher convinces of it, Mitch McDeere is able to discover the reality through Abanks's statement, the father of the murdered child, as well as the testimony of divers. All the evidence is included in the documents submitted to Terrance.

“You can have the documents now. Room 39, Sea Gull's Res Motel, Highway 98, Panama City Beach. The desk clerk is a guy named Andy, and he'll let you in the room. Be careful with them. Our friend has them all marked real nice and precise, and he's got sixteen hours of videotape.” (Grisham, 1991: 415)

In addition, Mitch McDeere is able to commit money laundering unnoticed by Bendini, even the *Royal Bank of Monteral*. Workers in the *Royal Bank of Monteral* cannot prove it, even though they have suspicions.

“She had circled an unusual transfer of ten million. Unusual because the money in this account did not normally return to the

United States and unusual because it went to a bank they had never dealt with” (Grisham, 1991: 373)

Mitch McDeere is smarter than Wayne Terrance showing in lobbying. Wayne Terrance is a person who is considered capable of negotiating by Voyales, director of FBI. “He can negotiate” (Grisham, 1991: 205). However, he is not smart enough to make an offer to Mitch. Terrance follows Mitch's wishes.

“Look, Terrance, we’ll do it my way, okay? It’s my neck on the line, not yours.”
 “Yeah, yeah” (Grisham, 1991: 335)

In addition, Wayne Terrance cannot find Mitch's even though he has made Mitch is as a fugitive man. “Where is he?” (Grisham, 1991:415). This is a question that he is always asked to Tammy. The question shows that he does not know where Mitch is. Although he has spread out the information stating that Mitch is as a fugitive man, he still cannot find Mitch.

Mitch’s character shows us that no one is really perfect. People are always changing by the situation they face. The other things impressed readers from Mitch McDeere are his persistence and his calmness in solving various problems even he is under a lot of pressure. His persistence and his calmness have been able to make him succeed in exposing *Bendini's* crime. Not only that, but also he is able to escape safely by bringing 8 million dollars. Certainly, this is not something many people can do. Those are the things making Mitch character as a strengthening point of this novel.

3.1.1.2 De Vasher

De Vasher is the head of security in *Bendini*. He is more than fifty years old. He has a sturdy body with slim stomach. His chest and shoulders are thick. His head is perfectly round. He has large neck and sagged. We can find it in the sentence

“The lone certificate on his bare walls recognized him for thirty years of dedicated service as a detective with the New Orleans Police Department. He was of medium build with a slight belly, thick shoulders and chest and a huge, perfectly round head that smiled with great reluctance.” (Grisham, 1991: 32)

De Vasher is categorized as flat character because he only plays one role. He plays as an accomplice of the firm. Everything he has done is for the sake of *Bendini* and Morolto’s family. Based on that, we can say that De Vasher details in doing various jobs. He is setting bugging tools, monitoring activities of lawyers, listening to conversations of lawyers and spying some lawyers. He needs to do that to ensure that *Bendini* is saved. Setting bugging tools, monitoring activities of a person, and then listening to every single word McDeere’s said are tiresome jobs. However, he has done it. He does the activities because of his loyalty. His loyalty to *Bendini* and Morolto’s family is bigger than feeling tiresome of the jobs.

The strength of De Vasher is his loyalty and it is showed in “*But if he tells me to take out Terrance, we’ll take out Terrance*” (Grisham, 1991: 97). This sentence shows us that he will do anything even killing people if he is asked by Morolto. If someone is willing to kill other person when he is asked, then this shows how much loyalty he has. De Vasher's loyalty is rarely owned by people today. At this time we can find people with a large salary, but they can betray to

his company. It is different from De Vasher. He is willing to do anything to ensure *Bendini* is safe.

If someone is already loyal, then usually he has a strong instinct against the threat. While De Vasher begins to suspect Mitch Mcdeere's behavior, senior partners do not believe it. Then he tightened his oversight to Mitch. Finally, he finds valid evidence from other FBI members showing his instinct is right. It was true Mitch McDeere is working to Terrance.

Unfortunately, before De Vasher catches Mitch, Mitch has escaped. At the same time, FBI makes Mitch as the wanted man. This condition makes De Vasher harder to catch Mitch, so he sets the strategy. He pays some people to report that they see Mitch's whereabouts. He also pays someone that similar to Mitch to impersonate as Mitch. Terrance and all policies are fooled by this strategy.

From here, it can be said that De Vasher is a tactical person full of strategies. He is smart to take chances. He has strong instinct and he collects evidences justifying his instinct. Strong instinct is also De Vasher's strength. He proves his instinct by showing evidences is the best part. The way De Vasher making *Bendini* is safe makes the story quite exciting to read and the readers curious about the rest of the story.

3.1.1.3 Wayne Terrance

Wayne Terrance is a man about forty years old. He has a neat appearance though not luxurious. His haircut looked like a military haircut with a wisp of gray hair hanging almost to his eyebrows. We can know this by reading how Mitch described Terrance.

“He was about forty, with a short military haircut on the sides and a wisp of gray hair hanging almost to his eyebrows. The suit was a three-piece, navy in color, made of at least ninety percent polyester. The tie was cheap imitation silk. He wasn’t much of dresser, but there was certain neatness about him. And an air of cockiness.” (Grisham, 1991:103)

Wayne Terrance is categorized as flat character. His role is as a representative of FBI who wants to reveal the crime of *Bendini* and Morolto’s family. He is an obedient person who becomes a bridge between FBI and Mitchel McDeere. A sentence of Voyales, one of the FBI’s official called as director, showing he is an obedient person is “He has full authority to act on my behalf”. (Grisham, 1991:205)

The sentence above shows us that Voyales gives his trust to Terrance. In the world of police, orders from superiors must be obeyed. If a superior gives an authority over his subordinates, then generally, the subordinates is a person who is trusted and has high obedience. Another sentence showing he is an obedient person is “I doubt it. I’ll have to talk to Director.” (Grisham, 2011: 215). This statement shows us that Wayne Terrance could not do anything without any permission from the Director.

To be an obedient person is not easy thing to do by people nowadays because they have their own interests and desires. Nevertheless, it shows in Terrance and it becomes his strength to make the storyline more interesting.

Wayne Terrance is also a tactical person despite having to follow various procedures. While he is aware of information leak from FBI inside, he immediately finds out the person was leaking. Finding someone who leaks the information in a short time is not easy to do. However, Terrance can do it with Voyales's helped. Then, he immediately contacts *Bendini* office. He disguises as Judge Henry Hugo. "Listen, young lady, this is Judge Henry Hugo, and he was supposed to be in my courtroom fifteen minutes ago. We're waiting for him. It's an emergency."(Grisham, 1991: 354). He calls *Bendini* directly from FBI office because he knows that at the time, Mitch is in an office. There is no other way to contact Mitch except by calling *Bendini* office.

Unfortunately, Mitch immediately escapes and assumes that the FBI reneges on the promise. At the time, the FBI has not gotten all evidences needed. Then, he needs to find Mitch by making the excuse showing Mitch as a fugitive person.

According to the act of Terrance we can find that Terrance is tactical and fast response. Having a tactical and responsive attitude is certainly a lesson to us that to solve various problems we need to have that attitude.

3.1.2. Plot

According to Forster, plot is “a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence” (2002: 22). Plot of *The Firm* is the second strengths because it has surprising story to the end of the novel. It is surprising because the readers cannot imagine that the FBI had to decide Mitch McDeere as a fugitive man. Even though FBI needs his help and all the evidence the FBI needed is gathered by Mitch McDeere. It is not imaginable that Mitch McDeere will do money laundering when he was the one who tried to reveal the criminal case of the firm.

In addition, *The Firm* has progressive plot. The novel begins with the description of Mitch McDeere’s life as a young lawyer who has ambitions and dream to become a partner at a young age. Mitch is also described as a maniac worker that makes his wife worried. His hard work makes clients satisfied and earns much money to *Bendini*. Mitch's achievements were also explained in the beginning, and it makes the people around him amazed at his intelligence and achievements.

After that, Terrance is raised as a sign of problem. The raised of Terrance makes Mitch worried about his life in *Bendini*. He collects the information to find out who is the right. Eventually, he decided to help Terrance to collect evidences. Then the story begins to rise towards the climax. That is, when Mitch's relationship with Terrance is known by De Vasher certainty. This condition makes Mitch run away and he is stated as fugitive man by FBI through Terrance. Effort of FBI and De Vasher to find Mitch and Mitch's effort to save his family and himself becomes climax.

Then, the story shows the readers how Mitch collects the evidences and hands over it to Terrance, his own way to keep his family and his life save, and he find out new places to live. Progressive plot make a story easy to be understood. However, we know that every detail story of *The Firm* can be complicated. Moreover coherence in writing makes the story easy to be understood even for common person who has lack information about law. These are things that make readers willing to read this novel until the end.

3.2. The Weakness

3.2.1. Theme

According to *A Handbook of critical approach to Literature*, theme is “The often miscellaneous main idea” (Guerin, 2005:13). The miscellaneous main idea of *The Firm* is revealing the criminal case of illegal business. Mitch McDeere as the central character works hard to reveal the case by collecting the evidence and hand over it to Wayne Terrance as the representative of FBI.

Commonly, readers have the view that someone who reveals a criminal case must be a clean person from the crime. We need that, at least to reduce a small number of criminal cases. If a person who wants to reveal criminal case is also involved in the same crime, then the criminal case will never decrease in number. We can analogous this condition with corruption cases. We certainly need officers who are clean from corruption to reduce corruption. Hence the corruption will not be reduced if the officers are involved in corruption cases.

However, *The Firm* gives different story. A person who wants to reveal the criminal case and collects the evidence instead he commits the same crime as a money launderer. Moreover, money laundering has done by Mitch is not process as a criminal case by FBI. In fact, Mitch brings in his hand millions dollar. Then we can say that this novel indirectly tells the readers that we do not need clean person to clean criminal case. This novel also gives information that there is no justice nowadays. Hence a rich person can be free from tax obligations as long as he can pay a lawyer. This is seen in the novel that many rich people can circumvent taxes. Even though we know that taxes are something that needs to be paid today.

Maybe, paradox revealed in *The Firm* can be strength point in storyline view. Unfortunately, when we talk about the justice, this novel indirectly can inspire people to do the same injustice act in law. Besides, law is made to give justice for all people. In this point, we can say that theme becomes the weakness point of *The Firm*.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The Firm, generally, tells readers about Mitch McDeere's effort to collect evidences and to reveal mafia and criminal cases of *Bendini*. In the beginning, Mitch is an ambitious young lawyer with big dreams. After meeting Wayne Terrance, FBI agent, he begins to doubt the goodness given by *Bendini*. Eventually, he decides to help FBI to find the evidences but FBI leaks in keeping the plan then it is dangerous for Mitch and his family's life. Then, Mitch needs to escape from FBI and *Bendini*. Finally, he can collect the evidences and hand over it to FBI. Moreover, he has done money laundering and gets his paid from FBI to live his new life.

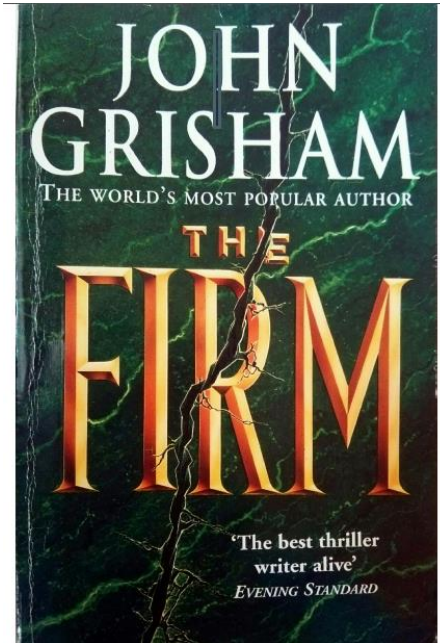
As a novel, *The Firm* has strengths and weakness point. According to reviews above, people will find that the strengths points are in the character and plot. The author can describe each character with a strong personality. In addition, every detail story of the novel can be complicated but the coherence in writing and progressive plot of *The Firm* make the story easy understood even for common person who has lack information about law. It makes the readers want to know each event and read this novel page by pages without skipping. Unfortunately, this novel transfers the readers how to do money laundering. In addition, facts about the paradox of law nowadays revealed in the novel can be the weakness point from law prespective. Overall, this novel can be recommended for readers who want to know another side of lawyer's life.

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APPENDIX

1. Front cover of The Firm English version



2. Front cover of The Firm Bahasa Indonesia versio



