



Representation of Poverty in Brian Khrisna's Novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati*: A Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the portrayal of poverty in the novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* by Brian Khrisna based on Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature perspective, which includes the reflection of the age, the sociology of the author, and the relationship between literature and history. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data source of this study was the novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* by Brian Khrisna, published by Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia in 2025, consisting of 216 pages. The research data consisted of excerpts from the novel depicting various forms of poverty, including both economic and social aspects. Data were collected through intensive reading and note-taking techniques, while data analysis involved the stages of identification, classification, interpretation, description based on the research focus, and drawing conclusions. The findings reveal that the novel represents poverty through economic hardship, limited employment opportunities, the inability to meet basic needs, criminal acts resulting from poverty, and the social stigma attached to poor communities. In addition, the novel illustrates how poverty influences social relationships, life choices, and public perceptions of disadvantaged groups. From the perspective of the sociology of the author, Brian Khrisna presents a narrative influenced by his social experiences and the realities of the surrounding community. In terms of the relationship between literature and history, the novel reflects the continuing reality of poverty in contemporary Indonesian society. Therefore, this study concludes that literary works serve not only as a source of entertainment but also as a reflection of social reality and a medium for raising public awareness of various social issues.

Keywords: representation, poverty, novel, sociological study

Representasi Kemiskinan dalam Novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* Karya Brian Khrisna: Kajian Sosiologi Sastra

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan gambaran kemiskinan masyarakat dalam novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* karya Brian Khrisna berdasarkan perspektif sosiologi sastra Alan Swingewood yang meliputi aspek refleksi atau cerminan zaman, produksi kepengarangan, dan hubungannya dengan kesejarahan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini adalah novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* karya Brian Khrisna yang diterbitkan oleh Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia pada tahun 2025 dengan jumlah 216 halaman. Data penelitian berupa kutipan-kutipan dalam novel yang menggambarkan berbagai bentuk kemiskinan masyarakat, baik yang bersifat ekonomi maupun sosial. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui teknik membaca secara intensif dan mencatat data yang relevan, sedangkan analisis data dilakukan melalui tahap identifikasi, klasifikasi, interpretasi, deskripsi sesuai dengan fokus penelitian, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa novel ini merepresentasikan kemiskinan melalui kesulitan ekonomi, keterbatasan akses pekerjaan, ketidakmampuan memenuhi kebutuhan hidup, munculnya tindak kriminalitas sebagai dampak kemiskinan, serta stigma sosial yang melekat pada masyarakat miskin. Selain itu, novel juga memperlihatkan bagaimana kemiskinan memengaruhi hubungan sosial, pilihan hidup, dan cara masyarakat memandang kelompok miskin. Dari aspek produksi kepengarangan, Brian Khrisna menghadirkan cerita yang dipengaruhi oleh pengalaman sosial dan realitas kehidupan masyarakat di sekitarnya. Sementara itu, dari aspek kesejarahan, novel ini mencerminkan kondisi kemiskinan yang masih relevan dengan kehidupan masyarakat Indonesia pada masa kini. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa karya sastra tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai media hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai cerminan realitas sosial serta sarana untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran terhadap berbagai persoalan masyarakat.

Kata kunci: representasi, kemiskinan, novel, sosiologi sastra

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INTRODUCTION

Various social issues that arise in society often inspire authors to create literary works. Through literary works, authors can convey experiences, perspectives, and depictions of life in their surroundings. According to Cahyani et al. (2018:271), as members of society, authors cannot separate literary works from elements of social life, social problems, and experiences that occur in their surroundings. Therefore, authors often use literary works to depict the social conditions of society and the various problems that arise within them.

Literature can also be understood as a depiction of everyday life related to the social realities of society. According to Hasbullah (2018:1), literary works essentially express human and humanitarian issues, such as the meaning of life, suffering, struggle, compassion, hatred, and various experiences experienced by humans. This demonstrates that literature is closely related to human life. Similarly, Wafiq (2024:660) states that literary works are a social mirror that relates to various issues in society. One social issue frequently addressed in novels is poverty. According to Wafiq (2024:661), poverty is a social condition often depicted by authors in novels as a form of perspective and expression of life around them. In reality, poverty remains an unresolved social issue in Indonesia. In line with this, Ratnaningsih (2017:55) states that poverty is a classic problem that remains evident in Indonesia, despite the country's abundant natural resources. This situation encourages writers to respond to social realities through literary works. According to Monica et al. (2024:214), poverty is characterized by underdevelopment and unemployment, which can trigger income inequality and social disparities in society.

According to Chambers (in Monica et al., 2024:215), poverty is divided into five perspectives: material poverty, powerlessness, vulnerability to emergencies, dependency, and isolation. Poverty is understood as a condition where an individual or group is unable to meet basic living

needs due to insufficient income. Powerlessness indicates the weak position of the poor in social life, resulting in frequent discrimination and difficulty in obtaining a decent standard of living. Vulnerability in emergency situations describes the condition of the poor who are economically unprepared to face sudden problems, such as illness, accidents, or disasters. Dependence occurs because limited abilities and income make the poor need assistance from others to meet their needs. Meanwhile, isolation describes the condition of the poor who live in remote areas with limited access to education, health care, transportation, and economic centers, making it difficult for their well-being to improve.

The study of the relationship between literature and society can be understood through a sociological approach to literature. According to Durkheim (1958:24), sociology is the scientific study of humans and society, encompassing various social processes within them. Sociology studies patterns of social life, culture, economics, language, and literature to understand human behavior within their social environment. In this regard, Swingewood (1972:12) states that literary works are an attempt to recreate human relationships with social, political, religious, and societal life. According to Wahyudi (2013:57), Alan Swingewood's sociological study of literature encompasses several aspects. First, literature as a reflection of the times. Second, literature seen from the production process of its authorship. Third, literature in its relationship to history.

Therefore, Damono (1979:68) suggests that the novel is a literary genre that can address various social issues that occur in society. One novel that addresses social issues, particularly poverty, is Brian Khrisna's novel **Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati**. This novel tells the story of Ale, a 37-year-old man who lives in loneliness and pressure to the point of contemplating suicide. During his journey, Ale encounters several characters who give him a new perspective on life. Through these encounters, the novel depicts various social realities, including the issue of poverty. The novel also



shows how humans deal with the pressures of life and social conditions that are not always in their favor. Furthermore, Sokmawati and Rohmah (2021:26) explain that the social conditions depicted by the author in the novel reflect an ingestion of the life around them. Thus, the novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" is interesting to study because it contains a representation of social life that closely reflects the reality of today's life, particularly regarding the issue of poverty. According to Swingewood's perspective, literary works are seen as reflections of social life, allowing various social issues, including poverty, to be depicted through the story, characters, and settings presented by the author.

Based on this, this study will examine the reality of poverty depicted in Brian Khrisna's novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* using Alan Swingewood's sociological theory of literature. The problems examined in this study are: (1) the depiction of poverty as a reflection of the times, (2) the depiction of poverty as a reflection of the author's production, and (3) the depiction of poverty as related to history.

METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. According to Pratiwi et al. (2024:14), Razak (2017:176), qualitative research focuses on an in-depth understanding and interpretation of a social phenomenon. This method aims to describe and understand a phenomenon or context in detail and depth. Therefore, a qualitative descriptive method was chosen to describe the representation of poverty in Brian Khrisna's novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati*, based on Alan Swingewood's sociological perspective.

The data source for this study is Brian Khrisna's novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" published by Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia in 2025, with 216 pages. The research data consists of quotations related to the representation of poverty in the novel, including dialogue between characters, character actions, and the author's narrative depicting the social lives of the characters.

This aligns with Nasution's (2023:91) opinion, which states that qualitative data consist of words or descriptions that describe the characteristics of a phenomenon, not numbers.

Data collection techniques were carried out through reading and note-taking. The researcher read the entire novel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the story's content, then identified and recorded quotations relevant to the research focus as research data. Data analysis techniques were carried out in several stages. First, reading the novel carefully and thoroughly. Second, identifying and classifying quotations that represent poverty. Third, analyzing the data based on Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature perspective, which includes reflections of the times, authorial production, and its relationship to history. Fourth, describe the analysis results systematically according to the research focus. The final stage is drawing conclusions based on the analysis results to answer the research problem formulation.

RESULT

The research results show that Brian Khrisna's novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" contains various representations of poverty related to the social life of the community. The analysis was conducted using Alan Swingewood's sociological theory of literature, which emphasizes three main areas of study: literary works as a reflection of the times, literary works in relation to authorial production, and literary works in relation to history. Based on this analysis, several data were found that illustrate the condition of poverty in the community in these three aspects. The research results are presented as follows.

1. Portrayal of Community Poverty as a Reflection of the Times in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati".

Data 1

In the midst of his loneliness, Murad told me about his past. His first crime was stealing a mosque's charity box due to hunger. Seeing his son stealing mosque property, Murad's fa-

ther tried to return the charity box. Tragically, residents caught him and accused his father of stealing the charity box. Mr. Murad was burned to death by the villagers. (Khrisna, 2025:63)

The quote above illustrates how poverty can lead someone to starvation and even resort to deviant behavior to survive. This situation demonstrates that poverty not only causes economic hardship but can also trigger social problems. Furthermore, the death of Murad's father due to public accusations demonstrates that the poor are often vulnerable and victims of social injustice.

Data 2

"In the end, no matter how much I love my child, love can't make me feel full. You have to work hard so that the person you love can eat. Hopefully, one day my child will forgive me and myself for being raised on the proceeds of a sex slave." (Khrisna, 2025:101)

The quote above demonstrates that poverty can force someone to work in jobs viewed negatively by society in order to meet the family's needs. The character in the quote realizes that love alone is not enough to guarantee survival, making economic needs the top priority. This situation illustrates the limited employment options available to the poor, often forcing them to sacrifice their self-respect and moral values in order to survive.

Data 3

"Mas Ale's birthday was the same as my son's. That day, I really wanted to give my son a birthday cake. At least once in his life, he should feel celebrated. Even though we live a hard life, my son should experience at least one moment of happiness in his life. But I didn't have enough money to buy a cake. Initially, I planned to borrow money from my other cleaning friends after work, but that day, at the pantry, Mas Ale came and gave me a whole tray of birthday cake." (Khrisna, 2025:127)

The quote above illustrates the economic limitations faced by a poor family, making it impossible to meet even simple needs like buying a birthday cake. The character desires to make his child happy, but limited financial resources hinder him. This situation demonstrates that poverty is not only related to material deprivation, but also limits a family's opportunity to enjoy the simple joys common to others.

Data 4

"What's wrong with you?" asked the prisoner who had previously been urinated on by Murad.

The old man explained, haltingly, that he was forced to become a methamphetamine courier to help pay for his daughter-in-law's delivery. His son was useless as a husband. And this dirty way he took was the pursuit of quick cash. (Khrisna, 2025:60)

The quote above demonstrates that economic pressures can drive someone to commit illegal acts to earn money. The urgent need for delivery costs led the character to choose becoming a drug courier as a quick way to earn money. This situation demonstrates how poverty can place someone in a difficult situation, forcing them to make risky decisions to meet their family's needs.

Data 5

"Just one step inside, I could almost see Ipul's entire life in that house. His wife and son were asleep in the front room, on a thin rubber carpet with the edges worn down by rats. His son slept in an undershirt and shorts. His wife wore a house dress that had faded from frequent washing." (Khrisna: 2025:121)

The quote above illustrates the limited living conditions of the poor. The simple bedding, the inadequate housing, and the worn-out clothing indicate the family's low level of well-being. This situation demonstrates that poverty can be seen in the limited ability to meet basic needs, such as adequate housing and daily necessities.



2. A Portion of Community Poverty as Seen from the Author's Produce in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati"

Data 1

At the end of the month, half of my salary is spent on my parents who hate their own child. The other half is used to pay for apartment rent and daily meals. If there's any money left over, I'll save it for a future that may or may not come. (Khrisna, 2025:12)

The quote above illustrates the heavy economic burden the character must bear in meeting his living expenses. Most of his income is spent on supporting his family, paying for housing, and meeting daily needs, leaving little or no money left for the future. Through this quote, the author shows the reality of life in a society that lives under economic pressure and must struggle to manage limited income for various needs.

Data 2

From that day on, gossip about me spiraled out of control. People were talking about what happened in that fight. About me fearlessly advancing against ten men armed with machetes, gobangs, sickles, and daggers. People became more convinced that I had special teachings. It was truly an ignorant and uneducated environment. It was easy to fall for baseless gossip. (Khrisna, 2025:81)

The quote above demonstrates the relationship between poverty and low levels of education. The environment described in the quote readily believes unsubstantiated information without further investigation. Through this quote, the author demonstrates that limited education can influence people's thinking, making them more susceptible to unsubstantiated rumors or gossip.

Data 3

"I tried to find other work, but society doesn't always accept outcasts like us. We're isolated, looked down upon, insulted, and even if we die, no one might care." (Khrisna, 2025:100)
The quote above demonstrates social discrimination

against groups in low socioeconomic status. The character experiences difficulty finding employment due to the stigma attached to him. Through this quote, the author demonstrates that poverty is not only related to economic limitations but also accompanied by social rejection, which makes it increasingly difficult for someone to improve their living conditions.

Data 4

"Me? Ten years, I think." He downed half his vodka. "If it weren't for my child, I wouldn't want to do this kind of work either."

"Eh?" I was surprised and immediately looked over. Juleha remained silent for a moment, smoking a few puffs. "My son's name is Ujang. He's only eight years old. Yesterday, I accidentally read in my elementary school son's homework. He was assigned to write an Indonesian essay explaining his parents' jobs. He only wrote one sentence about me. My mother works as a prostitute, and Ujang loves her." (Khrisna, 2025:100)

The quote above shows how poverty can force someone to stay in a job they don't really want. Juleha persists in her job to provide for her child. Through this quote, the author demonstrates that economic pressures often lead someone to ignore their personal desires and choose a job that they believe will provide income, even if that job carries social stigma for themselves and their family.

3. A Portion of Community Poverty as Related to History in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati"

Data 1

While walking along the alley next to the tracks, I could see a different life that had always escaped my attention. The lives of people living from day to day without any guarantee of a future. In that densely populated village, everyone struggled to survive and depended on one another. I saw several mothers gathered on a worn-out sofa placed near the railway tracks. Children played kites in the middle of the tracks. Young mothers car-

ing for toddlers running around on the tracks was also a common sight here. (Khrisna, 2025:72)

The quote above illustrates the living conditions of the urban poor who live in densely populated areas around the railway tracks. The simple living environment and minimal facilities reflect the social realities often found in urban communities. This situation shows how people from low economic backgrounds navigate daily life with various limitations and uncertain futures.

Data 2

The debt had been unpaid for over ten years, and now Murad was demanding it. The kite seller begged Murad repeatedly for leniency. Sales were slow, and any money he had would be used to pay for his daughter's school fees. Murad didn't care. He continued to insist and even landed a punch that sent the kite seller crashing into a pile of glass.

"Okay, I'll consider your debt paid as long as I can take your daughter for one night." The kite seller was shocked. (Khrisna, 2025:89)

The quote above illustrates the economic hardship experienced by a kite seller, rendering him unable to repay his debts. His limited income must be used to meet family needs and pay for his children's education. This situation demonstrates that poor people are often vulnerable to pressure and exploitation from others due to their economic limitations.

Data 3

At two o'clock in the morning, Jakarta began to quiet down. All I saw on the streets were the remains of the night people who survive every day. Starling coffee sellers pedaling their bicycles, scavengers carrying their sacks, and even online motorcycle taxi drivers sleeping on empty benches along the sidewalks. (Khrisna, 2025:120)

The quote above illustrates the struggle of lower-class people working in the informal sector to survive. Mobile coffee sellers, scavengers, and

online motorcycle taxi drivers continue to work late into the night to earn a living. This situation illustrates the reality of urban life, where people must work hard every day due to economic constraints and the lack of guaranteed welfare.

DISCUSSION

Portrait of Community Poverty as a Reflection or Mirror of the Times in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati"

According to Swingewood (in Wahyudi, 2013:57), literary works can be understood as reflections or mirrors of the times because they are able to depict various social phenomena occurring in society. Through literary works, readers can observe the social conditions that exist and develop at a given time, including the issue of poverty. Brian Khrisna's novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" presents various depictions of poverty experienced by its characters, such as hunger, economic constraints, difficulties in meeting basic needs, and the actions taken to maintain life. These depictions demonstrate that literary works function not only as entertainment but also as a medium that represents social realities occurring in society. The first data shows that poverty drives Murad to steal a mosque's charity box due to hunger. This incident culminates in the death of Murad's father due to public accusations, thus demonstrating the suffering experienced by the poor. According to Hasbullah (2018:1), literary works address various human and humanitarian issues, such as suffering, life's struggles, and human experiences in facing various life challenges. This opinion aligns with Murad's life experience, which involves facing hardships caused by poverty. The second data depicts the struggle of a mother who is willing to work in a job viewed negatively in order to provide for her child. According to Sultoni (2020:107), literary works are reflections of real life, depicting various social issues that occur in society. The economic problems that force someone to sacrifice self-respect for the sake of family in the quote are one of the social realities often found in society. The third data shows Ipul's in-



ability to buy a birthday cake for his child due to economic constraints. In line with this, Amalia and Darni (2022:39) state that poverty is a social problem that frequently arises in society and is reflected in literary works. The simple desire to make children happy, which cannot be realized due to economic constraints, demonstrates the impact of poverty on family life.

The fourth data point depicts an elderly man who becomes a methamphetamine courier to help pay for his daughter-in-law's delivery due to financial constraints. This situation demonstrates how economic pressures can drive someone to commit unlawful acts to meet their daily needs. According to Sulistiyana (2014:2), the novel is capable of representing social realities, including issues of poverty and social injustice. This opinion aligns with the depiction of a character forced to choose a risky job due to a lack of adequate economic options. The fifth data point to Ipul's family's simple living conditions, depicted through their residence and clothing, which demonstrate their economic limitations. According to Dewi & Balawa (2017:3), literary works often contain social criticism through depictions of the realities of community life. The depiction of Ipul's home and family life serves as a social critique of the continued existence of people living under economic constraints. Overall, this data demonstrates that the novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" (Chicken Noodles Before Dying) reflects various forms of poverty that persist in society, including hunger, difficulty meeting basic needs, risky work, and low levels of well-being. Therefore, the novel serves as a reflection of the social realities of its time.

A Portion of Community Poverty as Seen from the Author's Produced Work in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati"

According to Wellek and Warren (2016:109), literary works emerge from social life because authors acquire ideas, experiences, and understanding through the social environ-

ment in which they live. Therefore, various social issues that occur in society often appear in literary works as a result of the author's observations and sensitivity to the realities of life. Brian Khrisna's novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati" depicts various depictions of poverty that emerge through the life experiences of its characters, such as economic limitations, low education, social stigma, and the difficulty of finding decent employment. The first data point to Ale's economic limitations, as his income is only sufficient to meet basic needs and help his parents. This situation demonstrates that someone with a stable job can still experience economic hardship due to the high cost of living. According to Cahyani et al. (2018:271–281), the author depicts social life and the various problems that arise within it through literary works. The second data shows that people easily believe gossip and unverified information due to their lack of knowledge and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Setyami (2021:86) explains that authors with social sensitivity are able to present sociocultural realities in their literary works. Both data demonstrate that authors present the realities of community life, both related to economic limitations and low levels of social literacy, in their stories as a representation of conditions occurring within the community.

The third data point to the social stigma surrounding Juleha, who wants to find other work but finds it difficult to be accepted by society due to her background as a prostitute. As explained by Rihadah (2025:284), poverty is linked to social inequality, which can limit a person's acceptance in society. The fourth data point shows Juleha continuing to work as a prostitute to provide for her child. This situation demonstrates that poverty and limited job opportunities can force someone into unwanted work. This aligns with the opinion of Indriani and Sumartini (2021:28), who state that poverty is a social problem influenced by various factors, one of which is limited employment opportunities. These two data points demonstrate how the author depicts social realities in the form of societal stigma, social inequality, and the difficulty of obtaining decent employment. Based on the overall data, it can be

seen that Brian Khrisna presents various issues of poverty stemming from the realities of community life in his novel, thus enabling literary works to serve as a means of representing and understanding social conditions within the community.

Discussion of the Portion of Community Poverty in its Relationship to History in Brian Khrisna's Novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati"

According to Swingewood (in Wahyudi, 2013:60), literary works can be understood through their relationship to societal conditions at a particular time because they record various events and social realities that occur in society. The relationship between literary works and history shows that a work is not born in a vacuum, but rather is related to social conditions that continue to evolve over time. This aligns with Nurjanna's (2018:2) opinion, which states that poverty is a social problem that continues to emerge throughout a country's history. This depiction is evident in Brian Khrisna's novel "Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati," which depicts various forms of poverty that can still be found in society today. The first data depicts the lives of poor people living in densely populated areas around railway lines and living without clear future security. This aligns with Sugiarto and Edriaty's (2024:99) argument that literary works not only depict the reality of poverty but can also serve as social critiques of issues occurring in society. The second data point to a kite seller who is in debt and experiences pressure and oppression due to economic limitations. This situation demonstrates that poverty is not only related to material deprivation but also impacts social life and education. According to Siti (2025:1), poverty impacts various aspects of life, including social, psychological, and educational aspects. Meanwhile, the third data depicts the lives of lower-class urbanites who must work late into the night to make ends meet. The depictions of traveling coffee vendors, scavengers, and online motorcycle taxi drivers demonstrate that the economic struggles of the poor remain a continuing reality today. This aligns

with Swingewood's (in Wahyudi, 2013:60) argument that literary works are closely related to the conditions of society at a given time. Based on this overall data, it can be seen that the novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* depicts poverty not only as an individual issue but also as a social reality that has existed in society over time. Thus, the literary work serves as a representation of historical conditions that remain relevant today.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Brian Khrisna's novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati*, it can be concluded that the novel depicts various forms of poverty as reflected in the lives of its characters. This depiction of poverty is not only related to economic limitations but also encompasses social issues, education, employment, crime, and social stigma within society. Through the perspective of Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature, this novel shows that literary works can be a reflection or mirror of social life, the result of the author's social experiences, and have a relationship with social reality and the history of community life. Various events in the novel show that poverty can influence a person's lifestyle, way of thinking, and actions in maintaining their lives. In addition, this novel also depicts social inequality and the harshness of the lives of the lower classes which are still relevant to current societal conditions. This research is expected to be a reference material for further research in examining literary works, especially those related to social issues in society. Further research can use different theories and approaches to look at other aspects contained in the novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* by Jaquenza Eden.

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