

## **Freedom From The Traumatic Effect In *Safe Haven* Movie Script**

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**Abstract** : This study explores the theme of freedom from traumatic effects as depicted in the film "Safe Haven," directed by Lasse Hallström and based on Nicholas Sparks' novel of the same name. The narrative follows the protagonist, Katie, who escapes an abusive marriage to find solace in a small coastal town. The study highlights Katie's psychological struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from her abusive past, emphasizing the impact of isolation, fear, and violence on her mental well-being. Through a qualitative analysis of the film's script, the research delves into Katie's journey towards healing, showcasing her efforts to build new relationships and establish a sense of safety in her life. Data collection includes main sources like the film itself and sources like books, papers, and the internet. The researcher uses a psychological approach to analyze the movie, focusing on the main character's battle for freedom. Ultimately, the film serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of survivors of domestic violence and the importance of love and support in overcoming trauma.

**Keywords:** *Traumatic Effect, Freedom, Domestic Violence, Safe Haven*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Freedom is a lifeline. I can tell you that a survivor's euphoria is palpable when she is finally free. It is hard to imagine a release from prison that is more invigorating. Alex said if she had known she was going to feel "this alive," she would have left sooner. Lily said she hadn't been able to take a deep breath in over two years and spent several hours savoring the sensation of her lungs

expanding fully. Survivors glow, imagining life's infinite possibilities. Every survivor I know has expressed how the outcome of freedom was worth the agony of the escape process (Macaluso, 2024, p. 143).

Freedom is something that everybody needs to do. Particularly for those who are trapped in a position that cannot be free. Since any human being has the freedom to live his or her own life without any constraints on the part of separate parties. Since there are still a lot of people who do not have the freedom to live their life openly. Especially for women and girls who do not have the freedom to be free because of environmental conditions that excessively limit them. For example, toxic ties, domestic violence, and so on are something important that everybody needs to do, especially women based on Lavazza (Lavazza, 2015). Particularly for women who are trapped in a position that cannot be free. Since any human being has the liberty to live his or her own life without any constraints on the part of separate parties. According to Wuntu (2015) since there are still a lot of women who do not have the freedom to live their life openly. Especially for women and girls who do not have to be free because of environmental conditions that excessively limit them and as usual the bad marriage and abusive husbands. For example, abuse, toxic ties, domestic violence, and so on.

Abusers will block you from seeing the people who matter most to you: your friends, family, and anyone watching out for your best interests. And they don't always do it directly, such as telling you that you are forbidden from seeing such and such. No, they start infiltrating your opinions of your friends, pointing out all the negatives in your loved ones, and drawing attention to issues in your relationships with them. Their psychological manipulation leads you to distance yourself from those you care about the most. Alienation also includes not telling people about the coercive control you are experiencing; you feel emotionally alone (Macaluso, 2024, p. 70).

Psychological trauma is damage to a person's mind as a result of one or more events that cause overwhelming amounts of stress that exceed the person's ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences. Trauma is not the same as mental distress or suffering, both of which are universal human experiences. Given that subjective experiences differ between individuals, people will react to similar events differently. In other words, not all people who experience a potentially traumatic event will become psychologically traumatized (although they may all be distressed and experience suffering). However, some people will develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after being exposed to a major traumatic event (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

Safe Haven is the 2013 American romantic suspense television drama starring Julianne Hough, Josh Duhamel, and Cobie Smulders. The film marks the last film appearance of the actor Red West. It was produced in North America on February 14, 2013. According to the novel by Sparks (*Lucid Design Concepts Nicholas Sparks*, n.d.) The film, directed by Lasse Hallström, is an adaptation of Nicholas Sparks' novel of the same name in 2010. The film was initially planned for release on February 8. This story is one of the best-selling American novels, and it has a lot of positive lessons that can be learned. Viewers can sense the main character's struggle as this life is troubled by the Safe Haven film too (*Safe Haven (Film) - Wikipedia*, n.d.).

It's a story about a woman who has a painful relationship with her abusive husband. She manages to flee to a safe place and find peace in that place. The woman needs to start a new life, even if the shadow of the past does still haunt her. The author and the producer establish the lead character as a confident individual. It's a positive idea to make a good influence on the viewers. The film gives the viewer power and inspiration in their lives to help them be more free because the same dilemma as the main characters will happen in real life.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher chose to examine this study from the film "Safe Haven" by Nicholas Spark Director by Lasse Hallström with the cast Julianne Hough, Josh Duhamel, David Lyons, and Cobie Smulders and with 115 minutes duration based by using research in the form of library research/qualitative research. It is analyse based on its movie script since movie script is a literary works according to Britanica (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

### **1. Data Collection**

In preparing this research, the author utilized two types of data collection: Main Sources, the source of knowledge for the film itself, "Safe Haven" by Nicholas Spark, the director of Lasse Hallström. Secondly, data collection sources enable the researcher to complete the study through books, papers, Internet and so on.

### **2. Data Analysis**

There are some approaches that can be use to analyzing the movie. Also, the researcher uses psychological approach to collecting the data. By movie analysis is related to watching movies live and analyzing them immediately. As well as collecting and filtering data via the internet, book, and articles. This technique is the relationship between the author's view on the world, the social environment, and the natural environment. It should be said that the type of work of literature that has been created is a critique of the author. Otherwise, the life experience of the poet, as illustrated in the literary piece, is a real thing that truly occurred at that moment. And there is a step in collecting the data analysis:

1. Analyzing the main character's battle to gain and keep her freedom.

2. Analyzing the freedom from traumatic effect in Safe Haven Movie script.
3. Analyze what is Traumatic Effect.
4. Making conclusions.

### **3. Data Collecting**

In this investigation, the following components were employed to analyze the data:

1. Seeing the film in order to understand the plot.
2. Reading and studying the dialogue from the movie screenplay to see how the traumatic effect occurs in this film
3. Writing about emancipation from traumatic effects reveals from the film.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The majority of this chapter's material presents conclusions drawn from the first chapter's research questions. The author employs dialogue and narration that capture Katie's thoughts and reactions as she encounters problems with other characters. Also to analyze the cause of the traumatic effect and have it freed from the trauma used by the main character in this movie. Also the writer uses the movie script to help find the part of analysis.

### **Traumatic effect experienced by Katie**

#### **1. Isolation**

To cope with her trauma, Katie initially isolates herself from others. She avoids forming deep connections, fearing that her past will catch up with her. This isolation reflects a common response to trauma, where individuals may withdraw to protect themselves from further emotional pain. As the story progresses, Katie's journey involves overcoming her isolation. Her relationship with Alex and his children becomes a crucial part of her healing process. However, the initial reluctance to open up to them highlights the struggle many trauma survivors face in forming new relationships (Dana Stevens, 2013).

- You know what? I just...I don't appreciate you coming in the middle of the night to my house. And I know this is a nice gesture, but I just... I can't accept it.
- So, um... I don't understand. It's not a big deal. It's just a bike.
- I know.
- I see you walking back and forth...
- I didn't ask for it and I don't want it. So... (STAMMERS)
- Wait, I'm sorry. You know, normally when somebody does something nice for you, you just say thank you.

## 2. Loneliness

Loneliness that suffered by Katie from isolates herself from others. She avoids forming deep connections, fearing that her past will catch up with her. While she rents a cabin to live, located in the middle of the woods in Southport. This isolation reflects a common response to trauma, so that's why she feels the loneliness in her life where individuals may withdraw to protect themselves from further emotional pain. Struggle for Connection as the story progresses, Katie's journey involves overcoming her loneliness. Her relationship with Alex and his children becomes a crucial part of her healing process. However, the initial reluctance to open up to them highlights the struggle many trauma survivors face in forming new relationships (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 4).

- It's got hardwood floors,
- some wainscoting.
- It's a great location to town.
- A little bit of a fixer-upper,
- but it's got a lot of potential.
- What do you think?
- I'll take it.

An important motif in Katie's story is her self-created isolation, as she rents a cottage in the woods to get away from her past. This decision highlights

the loneliness that frequently follows tragedy while also expressing her need for safety. Her unwillingness to associate with others is depicted in the script, supporting the notion that trauma can cause people to distance themselves from others. The story examines the difficulties of restoring connection and trust following severe emotional trauma as Katie starts to develop a relationship with Alex and his family. According to Lavazza (2011), Katie's path to overcoming her loneliness is evidence of trauma survivors' resolve, as they frequently find strength in new relationships in spite of their anxieties.

### 3. Fear of Retaliation

**Constant Threat:** After escaping, Katie lives in fear of being found by Kevin. This ongoing threat of violence keeps her in a state of hyper-vigilance and anxiety, which is a common response for survivors of abuse.

**Nightmares and Flashbacks:** The fear of Kevin's potential return manifests in nightmares and flashbacks, illustrating how deeply her trauma affects her daily life. These experiences serve as reminders of her past and hinder her ability to move forward.

Katie's escape from Kevin does not free her from the psychological grip of her past. The constant threat of retaliation looms over her, manifesting in anxiety and hyper-vigilance. The script effectively conveys her internal struggle through vivid imagery of her nightmares and flashbacks, which serve as haunting reminders of her trauma. This ongoing fear is a common experience for survivors of abuse, illustrating how the psychological scars can persist long after physical escape.

## **The cause of traumatic effects of Katie**

### 1. Violence

Katie is a strange twenty-seven-year-old woman. Erin is her true name. When she flees and relocates, she will be renaming herself. Her spouse, Kevin, is employed as a police investigator and there is no gender equality (Rorintulus, 2018). They tie the knot when still quite young. Katie is a stunning woman who

embodies the ideal American woman. She has two blue eyes and long, dark brown hair.

They love, argue, laugh, and cry just as most other couples do in their marriage. Until one day, when they eat their meal together. Their supper goes well at first, and they have a nice conversation. Unexpectedly, Kevin also presents Katie with a necklace. Katie informs Kevin that she crafts a new recipe with the food she cooks since she enjoys the necklace. Kevin complimented her and said it's excellent. Furthermore, Kevin was not pleased with Katie's actions when she finished her supper, cleared the table, and absentmindedly took a half-empty bottle of wine. (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 37,38)

(Katie and Kevin conversation)

- What do you want from me, baby? I give you everything! Everything!

(YELLING)

Stop, please. Kevin, stop, please!

- What do you want from me, huh?(SOBS)

- Please. Please, please...

No! (GASPS) (KNIFE CLATTERS ON FLOOR)

Stop! Please.

No!

- Stop fighting, stop fighting. Kevin!

- I love you so much, and you want to walk away from me?

She experienced domestic abuse, which caused her to experience mental health issues. The first is the nightmares. She fights and nearly kills her husband that night, and she dreams about it every night. She dislikes hearing sounds that make her feel uneasy in her house. She locks the door and closes the window each time she hears a terrifying sound or has a nightmare because she finds it impossible to sleep (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 15).

(Katie and Alex conversation)

- Did you leave this outside my house last night?

Maybe.

- I can't take it. (STAMMERS)
- It's OK, I don't have any use for it.
- You know what? I just...I don't appreciate you coming in the middle of the night to my house. And I know this is a nice gesture,
- but I just... I can't accept it.

Katie's traumatic experiences are rooted in her abusive marriage to Kevin, which is characterized by both physical and emotional violence. The script reveals the dynamics of their relationship, showcasing moments of affection that quickly devolve into conflict. This duality highlights the complexity of abusive relationships, where love and fear coexist. The psychological impact of Kevin's abuse is profound, leading to Katie's mental health struggles, including nightmares and hyper-vigilance. The depiction of her internal battles emphasizes the lasting effects of domestic violence, illustrating how trauma can disrupt one's sense of safety and self-worth.

## 2. Domestic Abuse

The film portrays her struggle with the aftermath of domestic violence and her quest for healing. The film opens with Katie fleeing from her abusive husband, Kevin. This relationship has left her physically and emotionally scarred. The trauma she experiences manifests in her constant fear and anxiety, which are depicted through her cautious behavior and reluctance to form close relationships (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 50).

- Open the door! Open the door!
- Oh, my gosh, what is the matter?
- I don't know what happened.
- Are you OK? Erin...

In "Safe Haven," Katie's journey is profoundly shaped by her experiences with domestic violence, which serve as the catalyst for her quest for freedom and healing. The film opens with her fleeing from her abusive husband, Kevin,

illustrating the immediate danger she faces. The script captures her emotional turmoil through vivid descriptions of her fear and anxiety, which manifest in her cautious behavior and reluctance to form new relationships. This portrayal highlights the psychological scars left by abuse, emphasizing how trauma can lead to isolation as a protective mechanism. Katie's initial withdrawal from others reflects a common response among trauma survivors, who often feel the need to shield themselves from potential harm. As the narrative unfolds, her relationship with Alex and his children becomes a pivotal aspect of her healing, showcasing the struggle many survivors face in overcoming their past while seeking connection and support.

The traumatic effects experienced by the main character, Katie, are primarily caused by her abusive relationship with her husband, Kevin. Here are the key factors contributing to the trauma depicted in the film:

- Physical and Emotional Violence: Katie's husband, Kevin, is physically abusive and emotionally manipulative. The violence she endures creates deep psychological scars, leading to feelings of fear, helplessness, and low self-worth.
- Control and Isolation: Kevin's controlling behavior isolates Katie from friends and family, exacerbating her trauma. This isolation prevents her from seeking help or support, making her feel trapped in her situation (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 38).
- Every moment of every day you want me to apologize. You make me...
- No, it's fine, I promise. It's fine.
- I'm just gonna go put on some coffee.
- You think you can walk away from me?
- No.

The complex nature of Katie's trauma, which mostly resulted from her connection with Kevin, is movingly depicted in the movie. Her sense of isolation becomes worse by his dominance, which not only causes physical pain but also separates her from

support networks. The dialogue in the script exposes the emotional manipulation Katie experiences, which fuels her dread and low self-esteem. This representation helps to highlight the pernicious nature of domestic violence, in which the words and acts of the abuser frequently change the victim's perception of reality.

### 3. Katie's efforts to find freedom

Being free from her trauma is not easy for Katie; she's been suffering for a long time. Before free from the traumatic effect she tried everything she could to get away from her husband Kevin. Katie's worst anxiety is her spouse. She has a mental disorder where she fights herself against her anxieties. She can't triumph over her fear unless she confronts it. Katie is not alone on her quest to face her anxieties; she is joined by individuals who feel Katie deserves to be happy, just as she does in her heart.

### 4. Escaping an Abusive Relationship

Katie's primary motivation for seeking freedom is her escape from an abusive husband, Kevin. After enduring years of emotional and physical abuse, she decides to leave him, which is a significant and dangerous step. Her journey begins with her fleeing to a small town in North Carolina, where she hopes to start a new life like we can see in *Rosen, Marvin* (Rosen & Marvin, n.d.)

(Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 2).

- Excuse me, I'm sorry.
- Have you seen this woman?
- Stop the bus! Boston PD.
- Excuse me.

An important turning point in Katie's path to independence is her choice to leave Kevin. The risks she takes to regain her life are highlighted in the writing, which also conveys the urgency and peril of her escape. This brave move is unique because it signifies a psychological transition toward empowerment in addition to a physical exit from a cruel setting. Her move to a tiny town highlights

the topic of courage in the face of hardship and represents her desire for a new beginning.

#### 5. Building Relationships

As we can see on the film when Katie starts to believe Alex and have a new relationship with him, she shows that slowly by the time she's healed from the trauma. and accept the help from Alex with some advice from Jo, her (imaginary) friend.

(Dana Stevens, 2013, pp. 15–16)

- What's up?
- Can you go to the beach with us?
- Lexie. She's not...
- I don't know.
- We're going to the beach.
- Lexie, she's not coming with us.
- I want her to come!
- Actually, that sounds really nice.
- Really?
- Yeah.
- What do you say?
- Yes!

Also goes deep through the relationship between Alex and his children. they go to do some things together like go on a beach trip

(Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 20,22).

KATIE:

- Are you cool with this?
- With what?
- Katie coming to the beach with us.

Uh...

Yeah. Yeah, I guess so.

How about you?

- It's a little awkward.

(LAUGHING)

- Caught one. He caught one!

- Oh, my gosh!

- One, two, three!

- Now let's all do Josh's face.

- Thanks for coming.

- I had a great time.

- It was fun.

- Thank you.

Katie surely did move on from her past relationship with her husband. sharing a story with Alex and building happiness with Alex's family and they lived together. But there's some moment that triggered Katie to feel the trauma again. and that is the effect that caused her to feel anxious and scared but she can face it with courage and braveness (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 29,30).

Hello?

(SLOW-TEMPO SONG PLAYING)

- Hello?

This song is nice.

(VOLUME INCREASES)

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(CHUCKLING)

(LAUGHING)

Let's go this way.

What's this?

- Well, thank you.

- Oh, you're welcome.

- How's my hat?

- Very pretty.

Thank you.

Katie's recovery increases as she starts to have faith in Alex and his kids. The script shows how their relationship developed gradually, focusing happy and meaningful moments that stand in stark contrast to her previous experiences. According to Pongoh et al. (n.d.) Her healing is greatly supported by this new support network, highlighting the value of positive relationships in recovering trauma. But the script also recognizes that she finds it difficult to open out completely, illustrating the difficulties of getting back to confidence following abuse and betrayal.

#### 5. Confronting Her Past

Additionally, after locating Katie through a neighbor's answering service system mail, Kevin, Katie's husband who never quits searching for her, discovers her in North Carolina for Fourth of July festivities. He was drunk when he arrived and almost hit someone when he screeched to a halt at the barricades along the parade route. When Kevin found Katie dancing and kissing Alex, he became upset.

I found you.

I found you. I missed you, baby.

What are you doing here?

I just want to talk, you know?

I just...

You hurt me.

- I know.

- You kept hurting me.

- I know.

- You need to go right now.

Now.

You're making a mistake.

No, I'm not.

(EXHALING) (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 46).

At the end of the film, Kevin finds Katie at Alex's workplace and begs her to come home with him. In order to keep him away from Lexie, Katie takes him outside and offers to talk. Kevin wants to go back home, but Katie says he keeps abusing her and sends him out. Overcoming Katie's biggest anxieties helps her feel less anxious. Kevin, Katie's husband, is her darkest fear. After fighting Kevin and ultimately grabbing his gun and shooting him, Katie's fear was calmed when Kevin was shot and murdered (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 46).

I want to talk like we used to talk.

We used to talk about everything,  
you know? (SNIFFLING)

Or nothing, it didn't matter.

We just... we just talked.

- I miss you so much, baby.

- OK, let's talk.

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I saw you today.

- He doesn't know you like I know you.

- He doesn't love you like I love you.

- You hurt me.

- I know.

- You kept hurting me.

- I know.

(GRUNTING)

- I gave you everything!

(SOBBING)

(KATIE SCREAMING)

Katie!

(GUNSHOT)

No. No! No!

(GASPING)

(LEXIE CRYING)

Katie's journey reaches its conclusion when Kevin approaches her during a Fourth of July celebration, forcing her to face her past head-on. According to Jona Sumampouw (n.d.) The intensity of this scene can be seen in the script, which also shows Katie's emotional struggle as she tries to balance her anxiety and her desire to keep her new life safe. This encounter is a turning point in her recovery because she finally confronts Kevin, signifying her recovery of freedom and control. The result of this conflict.

#### 6. Choosing Love and Safety

Katie finally decides to put her happiness and safety first as a result of her efforts. She makes the decision to remain in Southport with Alex and his kids, signifying her dedication to a safe and loving life free from the fear that once controlled her life (Dana Stevens, 2013, p. 46).

(page 50, Safe Haven movie script)

- God... will you look at that sunlight.
- (SIGHS) It's incandescent today.
- Oh, God, it'd make a great photo.
- Promise me something, Katie.
- Yeah
- That you'll take a lot of pictures.
- You'll only regret the ones that you didn't take.
- Thank you. For being such a good friend.
- You deserve this, Katie. You belong here.

Katie's life is characterized by mental health issues brought on by domestic abuse. She walks away and hides inside because she has nightmares and worries about her house. According to Gordon Edlin, Eric Golanty - Health &

Wellness-Jones & Bartlett Learning (2023) (n.d.) She makes an effort to adapt to her new life in Southport, but she avoids people, especially those who try to build a relationship with her. Because she feels that her husband, Alex, is different from her, she is likewise hesitate to accept a bike that he offers her. The ego uses anxiety as a motivating element to cope with it.

According to Sigmund Freud (1901), anxiety is an unpleasant internal state that many people wish to avoid, and the ego develops self-defense mechanisms to lessen these emotions. Katie uses both isolated living and confronting her husband as ways of dealing for her mental health problems. Changing her emotional state in reaction to upsetting memories of domestic abuse is known as isolation. In the end, Alex wins Katie's heart in the movie and gives her joy and a new perspective on life. By using these protective techniques, Katie is able to get past her worries and anxieties, which ultimately ends in a renewed bond with Alex.

### ***CONCLUSION***

Despite Alex's early interest in Katie, she maintains a distance from him, afraid to open her heart to someone else. Katie's anxiousness increases when she encounters a new surroundings and her love life. She utilizes protective strategies to cure herself, avoiding confronting her fears. The writer picked this psychological approach since psychology is significant and correlates with humans. and this method is by Freud. The writer chose this psychological method because it is significant and relevant to human life. Understanding someone's personality can help us better comprehend them, because psychology can bring conclusions and solutions.

In conclusion, Safe Haven is a psychologically-driven film that tackles Katie's struggle with dread and anxiety, in addition to her efforts to integrate with her fresh surroundings as well as romantic life.

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