

Clergy Child Sexual Abuse and Non-offending Family Member Trauma Mini-courses Curriculums for Graduate Level Instructors

[Semester]2018

[Class Location]

[Class Meeting Time]

[Instructor]: [Name] [Office, E-Mail, Phone]

[Office Hours]: [Scheduled/By Appointment/Virtual]

[Grading]: [Options: SU/Letter/Credit Hours]

I. Rationale:

In the U.S. alone, more than one out of four girls and at least one out of six boys are sexually molested by the time they are 18 years old. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) has adverse affects on mental and physical health outcomes and life expectancy.

Structured lessons are needed in graduate programs for social work, theology, public health, and psychology to understand the effects of child sexual abuse on children and families. CSA is linked to adverse health outcomes and has been recognized by the World Health Organization's (WHO) as a major global public health problem, a violation of human rights, and has many health consequences in the short and long term." In addition, WHO has just published the Responding to Children and Adolescents Who Have Been Sexually Abused Clinical Guidelines 2017.

Howard Be Thy Name is a unique and timely literary publication that allows an entry point for difficult discussions about child sexual abuse. *Howard be They Name* is a novel written by a female child survivor of clergy CSA, one of only a few from this perspective. The novel is based on real events in Albany NY, it traces the impact of this abuse on the narrator, but also maps the complicated web of family, class, region and religion that enables and perpetuates CSA. Though based on a true story, the novel allows students and educators to discuss "characters" allowing for a necessary distance to analyze relationships and patterns. The intention of these 2 week lessons is that they can be embedded in semester long courses. The two week lessons are structured to include a study guide for the book, questions, suggested paper topics, and secondary reading and view sources.

II. Course Aims and Outcomes:

- Provide a fundamental education about clergy child sexual abuse and its effect on a child's health.

- Enhance the quality of care for clergy CSA victims and non-offending caregivers.
- Foster sensitivity and respect for clergy CSA victims.
- Provide sensitive approaches for caring for clergy CSA victims and non-offending caregivers.
- Identify common causes of non-disclosure by clergy child victims of sexual abuse.
- Provide an introduction to the link between teen marriages and child sexual abuse.
- Provide an introduction to the World Health Organization’s 2017 Responding to Children and Adolescents Who Have Been Sexually Abused Clinical Guidelines.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this two week lesson, students will:

- Participants will be able to define clergy child sexual abuse and how it is related to adverse health outcomes for children.
- Participants will be able to explain why children, and sometimes their families, stay silent about clergy child sexual abuse.
- Participants will understand the link between teen marriages and child sexual abuse.
- Participants will be able to describe how a child and their non-offending caregiver may feel after a child discloses clergy sexual abuse.
- Participants will be able to select appropriate strategies and resources for helping a child who discloses clergy sexual abuse.

III. Format and Procedures:

The two week lessons are structured to encourage dialog and intentional learning about a challenging subject that is complex and that is still considered widely taboo. The current #metoo cultural phenomenon in the US and abroad may help ease some of the discomfort, however, instructors should be prepared for helping students when topics in the curriculum may potentially “trigger” memories or a need to disclose experiences of CSA.

The two week lessons are structured to include a study guide for the book, questions, suggested paper topics, and secondary reading and view sources.

IV. Course Requirements:

1. **Class attendance and participation policy:** [add here]

2. **Course readings:**

A. Required text and videos:

i. *Adverse Childhood Experiences*, (ACEs) research and identification by Felitti and Anda **ACES**

ii. Katherine McGuire and Kamala London, **Common Beliefs About Child Sexual Abuse Disclosure: A College Sample, Journal of Child Sexual Abuse** 2017, Vol 26., No 2, 175-194.

iii. JoAnn Stevelos, MS, MPH, **Howard Be Thy Name**, 2017.

iv. Watch: **The Keepers**

v. **Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church: Why Is It Still a Story?**

vi. **Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church by the Investigative Staff of the Boston Globe**, Little Brown and Company, 2002 Forward pg. vii-xi and Introduction pg. 1-9

vii. Mark W. Roosa; Jenn-Yun Tein; Cindy Reinholtz; Patricia J o Angelini. **The Relationship of Childhood Sexual Abuse to Teenage Pregnancy.** Journal of Marriage and the Family, Volume 59, Issue 1 (Feb., 1997), 119-130.

3. Assignments:

Week One

1) Take the ACEs **quiz**:

2) **Read and Watch:**

Katherine McGuire and Kamala London, **Common Beliefs About Child Sexual Abuse Disclosure: A College Sample, Journal of Child Sexual Abuse** 2017, Vol 26., No 2, 175-194.

JoAnn Stevelos, MS, MPH, **Howard Be Thy Name**, 2017.

Listen to the podcast: **Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church: Why Is It Still a Story?**

3) **Reflecting, writing, and discussion questions:**

Reflect on your ACE score privately or with a trusted family member or friend. Think about the how your ACE score may have affected your health. **Write a short paragraph** about your understanding of ACEs and how it will inform your approach to your work. Is the ACE tool useful? If so, why? If not, why? What is the link between a person's ACE score and their mortality?

Do you think the age of the characters when they entered marriage had an impact on the events in the novel?

Reflect on the common beliefs you have held about child sexual abuse, what have you learned from the readings that has challenged or secured your beliefs about CSA? Be prepared to **contribute to the class discussion** on this topic.

Write a 3-5 page paper describing the challenges of clergy child sexual abuse disclosure for non-offending parents. In *Howard Be thy Name*, what challenges did the non-offending caregivers have? How did the non-offending caregivers reactions potentially help or hinder JoBeth's healing and recovery and possibly her health?

Week Two

1) Read and Watch:

Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church by the Investigative Staff of the Boston Globe, Little Brown and Company, 2002 Forward pg. vii-xi
Introduction pg. 1-9

Watch: **The Keepers**

Visit The Keepers Official Face Book page. Read the latest posts and discussions.

3) **Reflecting, writing, and discussion questions:**

Write a 3-5 page paper about what similarities do you see in the stories of Spotlight, Keepers, and Howard be Thy Name? What patterns emerge, and what makes each case unique? Be prepared to **present a short summary of your paper** to the class.

After listening to Laurie Goldstein's podcast, do you think clergy CSA will remain a topic of interest in the future?

4) Extra Points: Watch **Spotlight** Write a 1-2 page paper on how did Spotlight reporters treated the privacy of the victims?

Study Guide, Chapter Summaries, and Excerpts for Howard Be Thy Name

Study Guide Questions for Howard Be Thy Name

- 1) Describe how the Edwards and the Korlis lives were different in Wales and Albania than in the US. What aspects of their lives made them vulnerable to clergy sexual abuse?
- 2) Why do Evie's family tolerate the decisions she makes for herself and her children?
- 3) What could have made JoBeth's disclosure of sexual abuse a healing experience for her and her family?
- 4) What do you think Howard stayed in the priesthood after his terrible experiences at seminary school?
- 5) How many children have been sexually abused in religious institutions and how do you think that differs is the same as other kinds of sexual abuse?
- 6) What does our country do with children who have been sexually abused versus other countries? Which way is better?
- 7) How did the book affect you? Where were the emotional scenes?
- 8) If JoBeth were a real character alive today how would her past affect who she is as a friend, sister, mother, partner, employee?
- 9) What did you learn about clergy sexual abuse from reading this novel?
- 10) What was the style used to write this book? Which point-of-view character was the book written in and what tense? Would you have liked to read the book entirely from JoBeth's POV? Why or why not? What genre was this book?
- 11) Were the scenes at Dell's Restaurant believable?
- 12) What challenges did the non-offending caregivers have?
- 13) How did the non-offending caregivers reactions potentially help or hinder JoBeth's healing and recovery and possibly her health?
- 14) Reflect on the role of the Evie following disclosure of CSA, what are your thoughts about her reaction to JoBeth and to Susan?
- 15) Reflect on the ages many of the characters were married, how do you think it impacted the events in the story?

Chapter Summaries and Excerpts

This literary family drama follows traditional storytelling that stays close to the moment with the objective of discovery. Themes of survival, love, religion, secrecy, and betrayal are used to foreshadow the powerful end of this book. Through lyrical, mature prose, and strongly plotted scenes, my hope is to evoke the wisdom of adulthood while staying true to the experience of youth. It's a tale rooted in finding reasons for the complicated ways we fail our children in spite of best intentions. And how we stay loyal to family even though that loyalty can feel like suffocation. It's the story of how immigrant families- everyday working class families became entangled in the clergy abuse scandal. It's a story of poverty, violence, resilience, redemption, immigration, and love. Foremost, it's the description of what it means to be raised female, by morally corrupt adults. The characters are Evie Edwards-Korli, soon-to-be-divorced mother of Vinnie (11 yrs), Susan (9 yrs) JoBeth (4 yrs) Michael (almost 1 yr). Howard Russo is a newly ordained priest who has just been assigned to Evie's parish. Doris and Will, are Evie's parents and Welsh immigrants. Evie works at Dell's Steak House where she interacts with Stan the owner, Max the cook, Arlene the restaurant and Leo the bartender. Alex Korli is Evie's husband and son of Anastasia and George, and Albanian immigrants. Alek's brother, Zef, and neighbor Sophie share everyday life in the Korli home. Annie is Evie's babysitter, Rosemary and Nino are cousins to Evie. Father Murphy is the head priest of St. Anthony's and Mrs. Fletcher is the housekeeper at the rectory. Other characters are Bishop McKenna, and people from Howard's life at the seminary: Father Bohr, a sexton, and two old frail priests, and Paul a seminary friend.

Chapter One

This is a short chapter-just four lines that breaks the fourth wall, by inserting the author into the story as the narrator. She is remembering a scene that unravels in the chapters to follow.

Excerpt:

2017

They were there at the red light for what seemed a long time. A time longer than any other time JoBeth could remember: longer than waiting for a kettle to whistle, or than getting her teeth cleaned, or waiting for flights in security lines. Longer than childbirth, or watching her grandmother die.

Chapter Two [influence of non-offending caregivers in maintaining silence]

This chapter begins in 1972 with Evie confronting a heartbreaking revelation that forces her to choose between her children and Howard. She challenges her daughter JoBeth to dare say what has been going on between her and Howard. JoBeth tries to tell the truth but Evie refuses to hear it and chooses to remove JoBeth from the home. Evie brings JoBeth to her cousin Rosemary's house. Here JoBeth succumbs to a nervous breakdown and becomes mute.

We learn about a time when JoBeth was just 6yrs old and learned to make martinis with Howard. By the time JoBeth was eight years old she was sneaking vodka and cigarettes to school. We learn about a time JoBeth was pulled out of a school line by a nun who smelled alcohol on her. As she was pulled out of line a bandaid fell from JoBeth's neck revealing a mark that was not quite a red mark that is not quite a bruise. Evie is called to school and is admonished by the nun. Evie brings JoBeth home and puts her to bed, as if she was sick.

Excerpt: JoBeth sat in the back seat of the rose-colored Cadillac. A small cloth pocketbook packed with a tooth brush, a comb, a purple headband, extra socks, and a dog-eared copy of Harriet the Spy was wedged between her knees. Her older sister, Susan, was in front with Evie, their mother. None of them spoke. Evie gripped the white leather steering wheel, and chewed on the tip of a Virginia Slim as the smoke billowed around her lips.

They waited at a red light.

JoBeth focused on a long line of customers at the corner ice cream shack that moved slowly. She watched a father as he lifted a boy smaller than JoBeth to the counter; both the father's arms were wrapped tightly around the black-haired boy. Small woven sandals dangled from the boy's feet, swinging impatiently against his father's thigh. The father handed the boy a strawberry swirl with sprinkles. JoBeth always preferred vanilla.

JoBeth cracked the window to catch her breath as the smoke from Evie's lungs lifted around her and seeped out the tiny opening. Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree played loudly in the car behind them. Susan stared straight ahead from her post in the front seat, pulled her knee socks up, a nervous habit, and pulled her pink floral shirt away from her sweaty belly. Evie glanced at JoBeth in the rearview mirror, her lips now slack around the cigarette. The glance was more of a slap than a look of concern, and JoBeth felt it sting as such. JoBeth had seen that look of Evie's many times, more so than the other children. Her eyes taunted you, dared you to say what was true rather than stay silent, complicit in her lie or tangled narrative. JoBeth felt her

shorts creep up her backside and wiggled to adjust them. She wished she had remembered to pack her blue denim bell bottoms, they fit her better, and she liked how the bells swished across the ground when she jumped rope.

Outside of the window, JoBeth watched the nice seeming father as he paid for the ice cream his son devoured. She tucked Howard's white crystal rosary into her summer jacket's front pocket. Earlier JoBeth had packed her suitcase with her clothes, carried it to the garage, and loaded it into the trunk. JoBeth reached down and slipped her right shoe back on. It had fallen from her foot in the rush to climb into the car; just after she had stood by the door dumbfounded as she witnessed her mother and sister ransack their home of jewelry, furs, silver, and cash from Howard's secret room in the basement.

Evie's shameless indifference to the gravity of the situation crushed what was left of JoBeth's dignity when she turned and screamed at JoBeth, "Tell me he didn't!" then whispered, "Did he?"

The words, from Evie's hungover mouth, were fierce with condemnation, and hung in the air like a noose. The light was still red as JoBeth nodded yes. Yes — JoBeth thought as she closed her eyes, knowing that Evie already knew the answer, and had known the answer to her question for a very long time. Evie had known the answer when between evening and morning she heard Howard's footsteps leaving JoBeth's room. She had known the answer was yes when she placed a Band-Aid on JoBeth's bruised neck after too much 'horseplay' with Howard. Evie knew, and had forsaken her — and now she demanded JoBeth pretend she didn't know — which hurt JoBeth more than anything Howard had ever done to her.

Chapter Three [immigrant vulnerability to clergy sexual abuse]

This chapter begins in 1956 with Anastasia and George learning that Alek is dating Evie and that Evie is pregnant. We learn how Anastasia and George came to live in America and we learn about what they left behind in Albania and their hopes for their new life in the USA.

Excerpt: George climbed the steep steps to the attic, while Anastasia and Zef huddled at the bottom step to listen in. George shooed them away and they reluctantly took two steps backward. George found Alek with his face buried in his pillow, his fist punched at the mattress with such force that feathers flew in every direction.

“Alek? Alek!” George called from the top step, his breath shortened by the climb. Alek turned toward the wall and covered his face. George had never seen his boy cry, nor would he encourage it.

“Alek, come down for dinner,” George demanded. He waited by the door for Alek to obey.

“Baba, I have to tell you something,” Alek said. He smoothed the pillow and stood to face his father. George stolidly crossed his arms at his chest and nodded for Alek to continue.

“I need to get married.”

“Why do you need to marry?”

“I will have my own family soon.”

“Is it that American girl you have been hiding from us?” George asked, but already knew his son would nod his head yes.

“Evie. Her name is Evie.”

“How old is this Evie?”

“Seventeen. Older than when you and Nene married.”

“She may be older in age, but not heart. This is not the same. What will her parents expect from us?”

“I think just to marry her, it’s not like the old country Baba.”

“Things are never that simple, Alek,” George said. He narrowed his eyes to meet Alek’s, “Do you think she will make a good wife?”

Alek looked in his father’s eyes for a long moment.

“Yes, I do love her,” Alek said and ignited a fear in George when he saw a faint relief that warmed the cool green pools of Alek’s eyes. How had his oldest son become a lost romantic? Who was this American girl who weakened his son’s sense of honor and duty to his family?

“I should tell your mother. It should be me, not you,” George said. He descended the stairs to eat his cold supper.

When George broke the news to Anastasia she wept as if Alek had died. What had she done wrong she asked George repeatedly as she rocked and sobbed at the

kitchen table. Her plate untouched, her bare feet slid back and forth across the tile floor. Who was this devil girl who had trapped her son? What did Alek know about love? How would he finish school? Did he even know where she went to church? Would the child be raised Orthodox? Would they be allowed to name the child? Anastasia's questions finally subsided late in the evening when there was not another tear to fall or doubt to be reassured. She fell asleep, her head resting in the crook of her arm on the kitchen table, her feet twisted into her long skirt for warmth. George retrieved an afghan from the couch and covered her shoulders, unpinned her long black braid from her head, and loosened it at the nape of her neck, just as Anastasia had done herself each night of their marriage before she lay her head on his chest.

George shuffled towards bed and turned down the lights as he went. He didn't bother to light the bedside lamp as he put on his sleeping pants. The streetlight lit the window enough for him to hang his shirt, fold his trousers, and place his watch on the bureau. He left the door ajar for Anastasia. George lay alone in their bed. The house seemed bigger than it really was, the news of a baby, his grandchild, filled the empty space where Anastasia would have slept. When a new sun peeked up from the horizon, George made the sign of the cross, but could not pray. His wish for peace was interrupted by the sounds of stifled weeping coming from the attic floor which made George feel blood-sick, the kind of sickness that was transferred between kin, specifically between males. Sometimes it was an old feud that rumbled through a man's veins. Other men suffered from the flow of new dishonors and became stewards of their family's failures. George prayed that it was just a passing feeling, he knew many poor men who never recovered. The legacy of their blood sickness and buried anguish provoked constant nausea and unease. George sat up suddenly, aware of the squeaking door, the creaking steps, the sound of Alek's footsteps as he crept down the hall like a thief, and snuck out of the house to avoid his mother.

Chapter Four [teen marriage and child sexual abuse]

We meet Sophie, Anastasia and George's neighbor and friend. Anastasia has invited Will, Doris, and Evie over for supper. We learn about Will's life in Wales and how he came to America. The two men, George and Will, get to know one another and give their blessing for the union of Evie and Alek.

Excerpt: At sixteen, Doris had met Will, a tall, thin Welshman. She thought he was handsome, and often commented that, "we wore the carpet out between our bedrooms." Will had come to the States at fourteen under the charge of his brother Thomas who was eighteen. They left St. David's, a small town on the River Alun, on a dreary spring day after their parents, Meneva and Edwin, had died in a house fire.

Two days before Christmas, Thomas and Will returned from the forest to find the house ablaze. They had been dragging a large pine from the forest, intended to hold the ginger cookies and felt stockings their mother had made, when they discovered their father's body. Edwin had crawled outside, most likely to try to save the bee yard. He was alive momentarily until he relented and took his last breath from his burnt lungs. They found their mother, near the stove with an empty bucket in her hand. The confused bees buzzed around the brothers as they held one another and watched the fire burn until their beloved home was buried under a dense bed of cinder and ashes.

Chapter Five [gender roles, manipulation, grooming behaviors of pedophiles]

It's 1972 and we learn how Evie met Howard. Vinnie had gotten into a fight at school and Evie was called from her job as a waitress to go pick him up. Evie meets Howard when she retrieves Vinnie. Howard offers to counsel Vinnie and thus the entry way into establishing a relationship with Evie begins. We also learn about Evie's marriage to Alek and their break up. Evie lies her way in to her first job outside the home. We meet some of Evie's co-workers and get a sense of who she is when she is not a mother or a wife. JoBeth, Vinnie, Susan, and Michael begin to appear and we see Evie's mothering style.

A surprise visit to Dell's by Howard ends with him leaving Evie a two hundred dollar tip. A significant gesture that begins the secret between Howard and Evie.

Excerpt: Evie thought of Vinnie and all that he had been through in his eleven years. His inescapable destiny was sorrowfully bound in his birth to a naive mother, and a reluctant father. Everyday life was a struggle as it pertained to how to run a household and raise a child. She knew that what lay at the heart of her relationship with Vinnie's father was simply that she didn't like the Albanian boy she fell in love with after he had become a man, and then a father. She thought of the unspoken hate Alek had harbored against her for changing his life forever, and without warning, when she uttered the words, "I'm pregnant." Evie couldn't blame him or herself, but that did not change the underlying resentment they each had for one another. The cruelest irony was their cycle of resentment, confession, remorse, and passion which produced three more children. It felt downright shameful. When she lay in Alek's arms she despised herself for lying with him again.

Alek's strong smell of cigarettes, sweat, and salted meats from working at the deli counter all day humbled Evie's sense of beauty and her own worth. She had married the deli boy and that was all he was ever going to be. And she was to be the deli boy's wife and that was all she would ever be. And it was coming to this understanding after their fourth child, Michael, was born, that she knew she would collapse, simply not exist, if she had to spend another minute thinking about the deli boy's supper, his insistence that he only needed to bathe once a week, or his unmerciful temper that flared whenever there was the slightest hint of disorder or disrespect.

Vinnie had taken the brunt of his father's moods. Alek always directed his anger at Vinnie when he disapproved of Evie's lackadaisical parenting style. When Vinnie was young he bore his father's temper defiantly. He never flinched. Vinnie's eyes locked onto his father's as he received each blow meant for his mother. As he got older, he withdrew, became silent, and accepted the widening distance between his mother, his father, and himself. His attempt at maintaining his dignity spurned even more

contempt and violence in his father and bound them together forever in a feeling of distrust, anguish, and eventually, hate.

Chapter Six [clergy sexual abuse, signs of CSA, impact of divorce on children]

In this chapter the family goes to church the next Sunday after the “tipping.” Evie is anxious and excited about seeing Howard. Howard shows no outward sign of a special feeling for Evie. This causes Evie to doubt her instinct that there was something special happening between her and Howard.

This chapter also seeks to demonstrate the quiet family life that so many immigrants lived. A trusting, predictable environment that offered eating, sleeping, working, praying, and a rest on Sundays. There is a strong scene in this chapter when Will feels something is amiss about Howard. The first inkling to the reader that Howard has a deeper darkness that is visible to some people.

Excerpt: JoBeth looked the happiest Evie had seen her in months, her little hands reached out to each person in line, her smile big and bright, the little gap between her teeth, no longer a shadow but lit and gleaming in the violet light reflecting off the tempered glass. Evie felt tender towards her innocence, of JoBeth’s apparent need to receive special attention and care from a man, from a father. JoBeth looked quite flattered and Evie, for a moment thought, rather vainly for sure, I have produced such beautiful children, and for just an instant that seemed to be what perhaps her purpose was after all. Alek and she had produced, beautiful, lovely, well-mannered children for all the world to admire. If nothing else came of their marriage, of the futility of their love, this was enough.

“Where’s JoBeth off to?” Doris and Will asked as they fussed over Michael. Susan pointed towards the church door.

“I’ll go retrieve the little helper, I’m sure Father Russo has to get on with his day,” Will said as he noticed the last parishioner had been bid farewell, and JoBeth was whispering something in the priest’s ear. Father Russo nodded and smiled as he listened then whispered something into JoBeth’s ear. JoBeth giggled and held on tighter as her grandfather held his arms out to her. Father Russo handed her over, her ponytail swung from side to side as she looked up into his eyes, “Bless you my sweet child.” JoBeth reached back towards Howard and kissed him on the cheek.

“Come now JoBeth, it’s time to go. Father has a lot to do on Sundays,” Will scooped her up higher on his hip and drew her in closer.

“Nothing more important than this,” Howard replied extending his hands out in front of him in a rather foolish grand gesture.

“Well, no more dawdling for us. Good bye ’til next Sunday,” Will turned, he felt the moment awkward, and uncertain. It would be difficult to say just what he felt, but the feeling dissolved momentarily as JoBeth tipped up his hat so she could see his face.

“H-A-T. Hat,” JoBeth said. She liked to spell things for her grandfather. He prompted her often enough that now she just spelled things she knew for him without encouragement.

“Y-E-S,” Will replied tenderly. A peculiar feeling came upon him once again, with such force that he could not ignore it. He turned abruptly and saw Father Russo, who was on the verge of closing the church doors, startled to be caught watching him and JoBeth. A glimmer of surprise appeared in each of the men’s eyes as if something had been disturbed, then each assumed a formal look that stifled any acknowledgement that each had been caught doing something they shouldn’t have been. Will turned back towards his family just as abruptly. He walked with them to the sidewalk. A shudder ran from the heel of his foot to the top of his spine. He wanted to ask JoBeth what she and Father Russo had whispered to one another. What could a priest possibly have to say to a four year old girl? This feeling of indiscretion lingered in his heart as his hand moved instinctively to his top pocket and offered JoBeth a butterscotch.

Chapter Seven [family life, gender roles]

Howard returns to Dells's and leaves even a bigger tip. We learn about the day Evie left Alek. Leo the bartender is suspicious of Howard's motives for coming to Dells and insinuates to Evie that he knows about the big tips.

We also learn about Doris and Evie's relationship and how Doris feels about Evie's poor choices.

Excerpt: The next morning she left Alek. It was a sunny day, bright with hope and possibilities. After she dressed Michael and JoBeth, she put them in the playpen and washed the breakfast dishes. When the last of the plates were dried and put away, she looked around the tiny flat, and each way she turned brought the room into a sharper focus, as if she was seeing it for the first time. The yellowed linoleum floor, the tin cupboards, the fluorescent ceiling light, the stained porcelain basin and dish drain, the sputtering ice box, the mismatched chairs, and plastic table top. They were poor. Not just poor, but poor poor. Impoverished, the five of them living in a two bedroom first floor flat. JoBeth and Michael shared a crib at the foot Vinnie's bed and Susan slept in a closet for goodness sake. She understood as the dingy white wall color flickered in the rays of the fluorescence that she, Evie Edwards, was now Evie Korli, a twenty-eight year old woman with four children and an uneducated husband, living shamefully hand to mouth. She knew very well how it had all happened and she knew that to stay another minute, in this state of claustrophobia, would impede any chance of improvement in her situation. This was her consoling thought as she packed up the house, "Whatever happens can't be any worse than this."

Chapter Eight [manipulation, internal conflicts of priests]

In this chapter we learn more about Howard and his internal conflict about his feelings for Evie and her children.

Susan has a strong scene where we learn her back story and who she perceives the life Evie is trying to make for them.

Excerpt: As he gazed up at the window again, the curtain moved freely this time, and JoBeth stood in the window shyly waving her little hand at him. Instead of waving this time, he brought his hand to his forehead and saluted her like she was a soldier and she returned the gesture, an image of her that Howard would remember for the rest of his life. Whenever he thought of JoBeth, how he had loved her at that moment, he standing on the corner, and she standing in the window looking down on him, her tender gaze, her small hand bent at her little wrist, her thumb tucked into her palm, as she tapped her smooth forehead above her clear blue eyes, then thrust her hand perfectly angled into the air, innocently demonstrating her unbreakable courage, her resilience.

Chapter Nine [deceit, manipulation]

In this chapter we learn how Howard's plan to steal money and buy a house for Evie and her children.

Excerpt: This path he had chosen was beyond reparation. How silly it seemed to him now that he had rationalized his lusty thoughts of Evie, when now the guilt sat not inside his head, but deep inside his heart. What Howard had done he could not undo. He was alone now, in his silent prayers, when he could ask God for forgiveness. Howard understood, with much sadness, that he had lost the privilege of participating in the commune of prayer, the immunity of priesthood. Even the most forgiving of parishioners, Howard imagined, would not grant him redemption, if ever he was brave enough to confess his sins and ask to be forgiven. Would someone like Mrs. Fletcher be willing to absolve Howard of these unimaginable deeds and allow him to forget the past and move on? Howard tried too to imagine Father Murphy's reaction to Howard's sin, or Evie's parents, or Lucia, the little florist girl, or his father and mother. What could he say to them, how would he explain the unexplainable?

Chapter Ten [gender roles, estranged fathers, damaged relationships]

In this chapter we learn more about Evie's life and why she is making the choices she is. There is a strong scene when Alek appears at Evie's door. She is not home, and Alek is drunk. Vinnie and Susan struggle to stay calm and keep their father out of the apartment.

We learn more about Vinnie, Susan, JoBeth and Michael and how their lives have changed since Evie left their father.

Excerpt: Vinnie ran his hands along the lockers as he headed to Father Russo's office. He took the stairs two at a time to the third floor, before opening the door he peered through the window into the hallway. He saw Father Russo exit the teachers' lounge carrying two sodas. It turned out that one would be for him. After he sat down in the chair by Father Russo's desk. Father Russo said they would talk for a little bit while they drank their sodas, then they would pray together. Vinnie thought this counseling thing didn't seem as bad as it had sounded at first. It didn't feel like a punishment to be excused from math class, drink soda at school, talk about how he behaved, and why he made the choices he made. Vinnie was accustomed to spending a whole day in the corner when he misbehaved.

Often, Father Howard asked him about his family too. Vinnie spoke freely about his mother and siblings but he was reluctant to discuss his father. He felt a sense of disloyalty and fear when the subject was broached by Father Howard; as if his very survival depended on his silence. This allegiance to his father was something that confused Vinnie, yet it was one of the strongest feelings he had — he felt it strongly and without question — it was wrong to speak ill of your father. Grandpa Will had told him many a time, "Speak well of your family, of your enemy, say nothing." Vinnie thought of his father as both his father, and his enemy. Father Russo never pushed Vinnie to answer, he would move onto a new subject and encourage Vinnie to keep talking. He leaned in and nodded his head vigorously if Vinnie described a feeling or thought he had about how he could improve his behavior. When Father Russo opened the bible and asked Vinnie to read, he didn't mind at all.

Chapter Eleven [conspiracy of silence, structural violence]

In this chapter the Bishop pays a visit and meets with Howard. It doesn't go well at all. Howard and Vinnie get caught in the Bishops web and neither break away from him unscathed. We learn about Howard's time in the seminary. It is revealed that the seminary priests were sexual predators and preyed on the your seminary students. We also learn about Howard's parents and why they sent him to seminary school in the first place.

Excerpt 1: Before he went to look for Father Murphy, Howard stopped at the men's room to check that his collar was in fact straight, and to gain his composure. The call with the Chancellor still shook him, a quiet unease had seeped into his jaw bone. He stroked and kneaded the side of his face to unleash the tension that had crept towards his temples. Howard stood in front of the mirror, his teeth clenched, his bowels were noisy and full. Why hadn't Father Murphy told him of the Bishop's visit? Why? The Howard in the mirror didn't look like the Howard he knew. The mirror no longer reflected the compassionate, gentle face he had inherited from his father, instead the reticent, worried face of his mother stared back at him. His eyes darted about like hers, and as if she was standing behind him he heard the hush hush sound she made whenever he spoke of a discomfort or need. Howard, hush hush. "Our Father," Howard prayed, "strike me down if Father Murphy knows of my deeds. Strike me down." And again, Howard heard the hush hush from his mother's lips, her never ending fear that he would bring unwanted attention to himself. Howard felt a rush of heat to his face, a tightening in his knees that prevented him from moving. He splashed some water on his face, looked once more into the mirror, "Please God, please help me," he whispered, then dried his face and went to look for Father Murphy.

Excerpt 2: Howard stepped through the doors, a different boy, a bruised and sore boy; a boy who wouldn't understand how much he had lost until he was a very old man, in a very old chair, on a damp and raw day, mourning the person he had not become. In his wrinkled pajamas, and stocking feet, Howard would stare out a window in his small room at Opus Bono Sacerdotii, a hospice for old priests. He would remember that rawboned, enthusiastic, boy who had entered the seminary, so compact and slim at just twelve years old. The braveness of his earlier self, standing at the door to the Seminary, his father proud of his sacrifice, his offering of his youngest son to the Church. That boy, the one his father loved and kindled, the innocent boy who saluted his father before he passed through the Seminary doors, the Howard that his father knew, had died there. The Howard he had become, was born to Father Bohr, a thief and a beast.

Chapter Twelve [grooming]

In this chapter Howard has finally stolen and betted enough money to buy Evie a house. He does so but the compromise he makes to forego his name gives him great shame.

Excerpt: “Well we’ll see, I guess,” Evie said, and stood to let Howard know it was time to go. Howard finished up his drink in one gulp, stood, and put his coat on, as he asked, “Shall I help you with the kids?”

“Yes, I’ll show you where they are. While you’re bringing the car around, I’ll pack up. Team work!” Evie said as she walked towards the hallway to Stan's office. She turned and motioned for Howard to follow her. Stan was surprised to see Howard in his office helping Evie with the kids. Stan raised an eyebrow at Evie, but said nothing.

Howard and Evie took turns bringing each child to their bed and watching the car. Howard carried JoBeth up to the apartment first and gently laid her on a small mattress near the wall. JoBeth woke, ever so slightly as Howard tucked a cotton blanket under her chin. JoBeth sat up, her face groggy with sleep and half-finished dreams, and saluted him. Howard raised his hand to his forehead and returned a salute, as he heard the soft thumping and creaking of Evie’s footsteps on the stairs. Howard flicked on the nightlight, and returned to the car to retrieve Susan. He passed Evie on the staircase with Michael swaddled in his waffle blanket, her face pressed close to his, murmuring a lullaby, her voice surprisingly deep and husky. Last was Vinnie, Evie half carried and walked him up the staircase. The full weight of his body slumped against Evie’s; his untied shoelace dragged behind them. Howard feared they would trip and fall but Evie guided him to his bed patiently self-assured. He woke, like JoBeth, just for a moment.

“I need to say my prayers.”

“You can say them twice tomorrow,” Evie said, and shepherded him into bed.

Evie walked Howard to the door. An exhaustion swept through her and she leaned against the wall and felt a faint dizziness coming on again.

“Are you okay? You look tired,” Howard said tenderly, his hands pushed deep into his pockets, his eyes shifted about, he was afraid to look directly at Evie. He mostly wanted to keep the stillness between them, of the children’s slumber, of the quietude of the night that revealed the intimacy that had developed between them, of the fascination he had with all that was yet to be said.

Chapter Thirteen [gender roles, patriarchy, deceit, betrayal]

The story ends with Howard going to Dell’s. He struggles to profess his love for Evie and her children. He tells Evie about the house and drives her to see it.

The final scene: Howard interrupted now dreading that she will refuse him, “Evie, this is stupid of me. I’m just confused. So sorry. Please get in the car, out of the rain.” Evie did not resist this time. She ran around the front of the car. Howard watched her

legs glow in the headlights, her head bent forward, her neck long and graceful. He loved her and there was no righting the wrongness of it because it didn't feel wrong, it felt as he always imagined love would feel; mysterious and good. Soaked in the glare of the parking lot light, he looked straight ahead through the windshield, the wipers vigorously working to clear the pelting rain. There was no more self-deprecation, no more questioning of his intentions. Howard swallowed, a blackness had descended into the car, and the weak light was such that he couldn't see his hand in front of his face. As the car door opened, the dome light came on, Evie's face alit, her jaw clenched tight to stop her teeth from chattering.

"You're freezing cold," Howard said as he took off his overcoat and wrapped it around Evie. Evie didn't say anything, instead she pulled the coat tighter around herself, the smell of the wool and his scent warmed her instantly.

"Thank you Father."

"It's Howard, call me Howard now."

"Howard," Evie said quietly, "Howard it is."

"Yes, like that, I am Howard and you are Evie, and we will make a new life for you and your children."

Howard was surprised to see Evie shake her head yes. He had expected hesitation and a long serious talk to convince her his plan would work. But there was none of that. She simply shook her head yes and they drove away.

Howard reached over and held Evie's hand as they rode along the dark roads and swaying trees. The rain fell, pitiless, without a break all the way down Route 20 until Howard pulled into the drive of 17 Prestige Place. All was still then. Cradled in the branches of the trees that surrounded the house, their secret life began.

Howard held his hand up in a wait sign. Evie waited. He came around to Evie's side of the car and opened the door, as if she were a lady. Howard took the key from his pocket and put it in Evie's hand. She stared at the key in her hand for a long time, a time long enough for Howard to anguish over his plan again, to succumb to his doubt. Could he really make a better life for Evie and her children? Would this sodden path to desire ever be forgiven by God? The intensity in which Howard felt the need to bring parity to his situation, that his love for Evie and her children should equal his love for God as a prerequisite for him to choose one or the other seemed ridiculous at this moment, standing under the clearing sky. Evie reached for Howard's hand, looked into his eyes, then led him to the house, unlocked the door, and stepped inside. Howard followed her, but not before looking to the sky, his final act of contrition, before he shut and locked the door.