

Inexcusable Study Guide

Inexcusable by Chris Lynch

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Plot Summary

Inexcusable is a novel for young adults written by Chris Lynch in 2005. This is an account of an accusation of rape from the perspective of the person accused. Keir, a high school senior, cannot come to terms with the idea that he would be capable of such an act. Gigi, one of his closest friends, is in a fury that he has raped her and that he does not know what he did was wrong.

Keir describes the last few months at high school. He permanently injured a football player during a game and this earned him the nickname Killer. He also gets into a fair bit of trouble hanging out with the football team.

It is on graduation night that things get much worse. Upset that his sisters didn't come in for the ceremony and accompanied by Gigi, who is upset her boyfriend Carl didn't come, he heads to Norfolk to surprise his sisters. Things don't turn out as planned and Keir and Gigi stay overnight in a vacant guesthouse on campus. He now won't let Gigi leave the room until she can see that what has just happened is not rape. But it is Keir who finally understands what he has done.

This is the story of Keir's coming to terms with the truth about himself and the responsibility that he holds for his actions.



Pages 1-44

Pages 1-44 Summary

The novel starts with Gigi Boudakian screaming at her friend Keir Sarafian. She wants him to admit that he raped her. They are both seniors in high school. The story is told from Keir's perspective. Gigi has asked Carl, her boyfriend who is in the air force, and Keir's father Ray, to come meet them, but they have not yet arrived.

Keir apologizes but he won't admit what he did. Gigi tells Keir that she said no, but in Keir's eyes, "it was nobody's fault." Keir says he loves Gigi, how could he rape her? As Gigi screams, Keir tries to muffle the sound. She bites his hand and he falls on top of her.

Later Keir reasons with himself. How could his two sisters love him if he could be a monster? He has a great relationship with his father and they've only gotten closer since Keir's sisters left for college. He calls his father Ray. They go for dinner and they play Risk. Ray is a great father. How could his child be anything less than great?

Keir relates an experience from his past that also looked different than it was. Keir was hoping to go to college on a football scholarship. One day near the end of the season, Keir took a run at a player on the field. Though he did it by the book, the player was badly and permanently injured. There was a week of investigations, and Keir was then cleared of any wrongdoing. The player wrote to Keir letting him know he does not hold him responsible, and colleges sent him invitations. Nonetheless, many people still saw it differently, and Keir developed the nickname Killer.

Keir was proud of his nickname until he saw his father's disappointment about it. Keir was also concerned about his father being alone in an empty house once he goes to Norfolk, where his sisters are.

Pages 1-44 Analysis

This novel starts off with immediate and extreme conflict. A girl who Keir claims he loves accuses him of raping her. Keir does not think he has done anything wrong. It makes Gigi even angrier that Keir doesn't realize what he's done. Even though it is Keir who is telling the story, even though we are only hearing his thoughts, it is clear from the outset that Keir is in deep denial.

Keir surmises that "the way it looks is not the way it is." There is much one can learn from his personality in this first part of the novel. Keir's defense is as much as in his own mind as to the outside world. He believes to his core that he is a softie, and that the name Killer is particularly funny on him because it does not really represent who he is at all. In fact, he enjoys the name precisely because it adds a bit of toughness to his softer persona.



Keir believes that good people don't do bad things. He would not be loveable, he reasons, by his sisters, his dad, his friends, if he were capable of such darkness.

Keir is proud of his relationship with his father. He almost brags that he prefers hanging out at home on a Saturday night to going out carousing with the boys. He likes that they drink beer together, that they are a team. The dynamics of the house have changed since the girls left for college, and Keir discovers that he enjoys this manly bonding in a different way than his enjoyment of the household with his sisters, who he also loves and respects deeply.



Pages 45-82

Pages 45-82 Summary

Keir looks back on end-of year party for the football team. At one point they vandalized a statue of Paul Revere. At the time, they saw it as fun and clever. They wanted to better highlight Revere's sidekick, Dawes, who never gets credit. But the next day, it is clear that the group broke the statue of Dawes as well. What seemed like a good time in the moment did not carry the same tone in the clear light of day. The people in town were not happy, and Keir wonders how they got so rough so quickly.

The end-of-year soccer party was a calmer affair, until the football players crashed. They got rowdy and forced some soccer players to go skinny dipping in the freezing lake. Keir remembers it had all been in good fun, but the video of the event depicts something different, including a moment caught on film of the football players peeing on the soccer players' clothes. Keir does not appear in the video, and though he does not realize this, it is likely that he was the person filming at the time.

Keir now speaks of prom. Gigi went as his date with the consent of her boyfriend Carl (away for work) and her father, a carpet magnate. Keir describes a beautiful event with great food and time spent with Gigi. Keir found himself hitting on Gigi to the point where she was going to leave. When Keir realized this, he apologized and convinced Gigi to stay.

After the party wound down, Keir and Gigi walked shoeless at dawn to the International House of Pancakes. Over their food, Keir told Gigi how great she is. He asked if she loves him. Gigi said she did not. She then asked Keir about the football accident and if he was okay with what he'd done to the other player. Keir said he was fine and reminded Gigi that even the player let him off the hook. Gigi expressed her feelings that Keir has become rougher than he was before the incident, and before the nickname. They reminisced about times when they were younger. When he pushed, Gigi said she almost loved him. Aside from the 'almost,' Keir felt this was the perfect night.

For a moment, Keir jumps back to the present in the room with Gigi. Keir wants to sort things out with her. He tells her he will admit she's right if she wants and then she needn't bother telling Carl and his father, that they can just keep the knowledge between them. When Gigi reaches for the doorknob, Keir grabs her wrist, desperate for her to stay and understand. Keir sees Gigi's fear and her tears, and knows this isn't going the way he meant for it to go.

Jumping back in time again, Keir speaks of his final months at high school, when he went from developing a belly to working out and running. He also declined to have a post-graduation party his father had offered, and instead asks for a limousine ride.



Keir's sisters called from Norfolk to say they wouldn't be able to come to his graduation ceremony as they were in the middle of exams. Keir thought they were joking.

Pages 45-82 Analysis

Earlier, Keir clearly believes that good people aren't capable of doing bad things, yet in this section, he offers three examples that show otherwise. He mutilates the statues, humiliates the soccer players, and hits on Gigi when he knows it is against the rules. These are all incidents in which he took part, kind soft loveable Keir. These incidents had made sense to him in the context of the moment, yet inevitably the cold light of day revealed a different picture.

These three incidents are all slightly different. In the case of the statues, Keir admits being fully involved in the wreckage, though the next day he convinces himself someone must have come along after them to do more damage. At the soccer party, Keir makes a point that he was not one of the people who took part in the peeing incident. He does not see that being there at all was a sign of complicity.

The third incident-hitting on Gigi at prom- has Keir claiming even less responsibility. He says Gigi had her hands everywhere, chasing his hands, yet when he actually describes her dancing, there is no mention of her touching him. He says that Gigi was the problem.

Even after Keir apologizes and convinces Gigi to stay for the rest of the party, Keir continues to interpret each action Gigi makes as a sign of a shared emotion. He reads into things to an unreasonable degree.

The way Keir is handling the current situation is not what he would expect of himself, yet every step he makes to try to make things better, he worsens the situation significantly. Keir is so sure that if he can just get Gigi to listen to him, she'd understand. Yet his attempts at forcing her to stay in the room leads him to use force - a force that he knows looks wrong yet he holds on to a justification in his mind.



Pages 83-120

Pages 83-120 Summary

Keir persists in trying to have Gigi listen to him. When she opens the window, he closes it and grabs her at the same time. He does not let go of her. Keir then explains that it is the other way around, that Gigi had hurt him, having punched and scratched him. He says he would never hurt Gigi like that. Keir tells Gigi he is not keeping her in the room, yet he doesn't let go of her body.

Keir again leaves the present scene, this time to speak of his graduation ceremony, which, he discovered, was not attended by his sisters. He calls their absence inexcusable. The ceremony was followed by many goodbyes, and when Ray and Keir arrived back home, it felt like a goodbye as well. When the limo driver - a gift from Ray - was waiting outside to collect Keir, Ray presented him with a second gift - a phone. Keir also had a present for his dad - a bottle of his favorite scotch. They both took a swig before Keir departed.

Keir had had very specific plans, including going through a drive-thru with the limo, but once he was in the limo, he didn't really know what he wanted to do. He popped a blue pill he'd been saving for such an occasion and left it to the limo driver, Rollo, who took him to Ken's house.

When they first pulled up, Keir was in no rush to go in. In fact, he was frozen with indecision. He had an inexplicable fear about the party. Soon, though, Gigi comes to the limo and gets inside. She is warm and friendly and convinces Keir to come inside.

The house is full of people, music, dancing, and food. Keir is also brought to a room where the football team has been partaking in sniffing drugs and taking pills. Keir is somewhat reluctant but decides to join in. Upon leaving the room, he sees Gigi speaking on a telephone, crying. He tries to stand there to give her moral support, but she chases him away. Keir returns to the limo, despondent.

Pages 83-120 Analysis

The situation between Keir and Gigi has escalated. Before, he held her wrist to prevent her leaving. Now, he wraps her in his arms. It seems as if Keir has broken with reality when he has the thought: "...the harder I squeeze Gigi Boudakian, feel her bones and smell her skin, the more helplessly I love her and the less I want to let her go." This is not a thought that inconsistent with Keir's character until this point, and is brought out by desperation.

Keir is changing, or accessing a side of him that he kept buried before. He even turns the blame and aims it at Gigi, saying she is the person who punched and scratched, that he would never do such a thing to her. He has no qualms at all saying such a



thought, indicating he has lost sensitivity towards others. He also clearly lacks comprehension of what he has done.

The ceremony makes Keir sentimental. He is nervous to return home with his dad, knowing they are that much closer to parting ways. This reflects a common feeling among late teens to resist leaving childhood behind, while simultaneously getting impatient for the next stage of life to begin.

Keir is also battling another dichotomy. He freezes in the limo, deciding if he wants to go to the party or not. He sees this as a defining moment, a choice he has to make between being a soft, nice guy, or a rough football player.

Keir has had a beer with his father and a swig of scotch before he's even gotten into the limo. He then pops a pill, and at the party he gets further into drugs and alcohol. He does not mention these facts as a defense of his actions, for he still feels he did nothing wrong.



Pages 121-165

Pages 121-165 Summary

Not long after Keir was safely back in his limo, Gigi came out to see him. She was upset that Carl has decided not to come to town for her graduation. Keir also felt upset that his sisters didn't come. While Keir took another pill, Gigi borrowed Keir's phone, only to learn that Carl isn't even on base where he'd said he'd be. Keir shows Gigi a photo of his mother, who died when Keir was too young to remember.

In a spur-of the moment decision, the two asked the limo driver to drive to Norfolk to see Keir's sisters. On the way, Gigi received a text from Carl and got so angry with him that she put Keir's new phone in the fridge. Keir put his arm around Gigi while consoling her and Gigi fell asleep like that for the remainder of the drive.

A stranger - Grace- opened the door of Keir's sisters' apartment. She explained that Fran was out on a date, and Mary was in Baltimore with some friends, having completed her exams. As Keir and Gigi left, he squeezed Gigi's far too tightly, and stopped once Gigi brought this to his attention.

Keir slips back into the present, where he ensures Gigi doesn't leave the room. He is no longer holding her but he keeps her away from the window and the door. He says they had sex, that it wasn't perfect but so what, he loves her. For the first time, Gigi says the words "You raped me." Keir points out that they slept together, which was preferable to the sex they'd had anyway. Gigi repeats again and again "I said no."

Back in time again, Keir now he speaks of walking around the beautiful campus with Gigi, how he felt then that she was his best friend. Then they return to the apartment where Fran greets them, quite surprised.

Keir was extremely upset with his sisters. Fran reminded him that he left their graduation ceremonies early, and embarrassed them by getting sick at the parties. Fran continued to express her anger. She said that Ray lets Keir think whatever he wants to, without presenting him with reality. She said they'd been dreading him coming to Norfolk, because he'd changed. They'd heard about the statues, the parties, the football incident. She pleaded for him to take responsibility for his actions. Soon Gigi decided it was enough, defended Keir to his sister, and led him out the door.

Gigi was eager to get home, and it was quite some time before Keir admitted to her that Rollo was not coming to pick them up. He had a solution, though. He had a key to the school guesthouse and a key to one of the bedrooms inside. Gigi reluctantly agreed.

Once in the room, Gigi gave Keir a warm kiss and then went to sleep. Keir was still wide awake, and sad. He soon crawled into Gigi's bed to lie beside her and sleep. When Gigi, asleep, turned towards Keir, he kissed her. He kissed her and he didn't stop



kissing her, she awoke, she was moaning, she was moving around, but he kept his mouth on hers as he undressed and he says "I held her whole being with mine."

Now Gigi and Keir are still in this room, Gigi telling Keir he has raped her, and Keir certain that if he just explains it right, if she just remembers who he is, she will understand and see he didn't rape her. At a point, he walks in front of her and stares into her eyes, forcing her to stare into his. And, certain that this will solve the situation, Keir kisses Gigi on the lips. And he doesn't stop. He brings her to the bed. She is like a rag doll, unresisting but unwilling. He takes off her clothes. He is kissing her face everywhere. He is raping her. And all at once he understands. He stops. Gigi gathers her things and leaves. Keir awaits his future, and the consequences.

Pages 121-165 Analysis

This section brings the past story through to the point where it catches up with the present. Clues about Keir's life that had not been understood before now fall into place.

Fran reveals a great deal of information that wouldn't have been accessible from Keir's perspective. Ray is not healthy for the kids, he doesn't force them to face their actions or to take responsibility. The fun and great times Keir has had with his father are reflective of his father indulging him even through troubled times, as when he got sick at his sisters' graduation parties.

Fran tells Keir what Ray should have told him a long time ago. Keir has been evolving into an indulgent and irresponsible person who keeps getting into trouble.

The final scene in the novel is an exact reversal of what Keir has been trying to achieve since the beginning. Keir has been so intent on showing Gigi the light, he is sure that his kisses and his affections, will make her come to her senses. In this forceful act that it is Keir who finally awakens to what he is doing and what he has done. He does not run away. He has nothing to hide behind and he will now be held accountable for his actions.



Characters

Keir Sarafian

Keir is a teenager wrapping up his final year of high school before going to Norfolk on a football scholarship. Keir lives with his father Ray, and he idolizes his two sisters Fran and Mary, who are already at Norfolk.

It is Keir who relates this story to the reader. Keir uncovers truths about himself as he reveals them to the readers. Keir thinks of himself as a softie, someone with a good heart, and yet he's adopted the nickname Killer. He is aware to a certain extent that he has been dabbling in rougher antics lately and he will have to decide who he really is.

Keir is at the precipice between being a teen and adulthood, between living in his father's house and going out into the world on his own.

Keir believes he has not raped Gigi for the entirety of his tale, until the very last moment when he sees the truth.

Gigi Boudakian

Gigi Boudakian is a senior at the same school as Keir. Her father is a carpet magnate. Her boyfriend Carl is in the air force, and has managed to miss both prom and Gigi's graduation ceremony.

Keir and Gigi grew up together and Keir thinks he is in love with Gigi. She is warm, positive, fun and gentle. She defends Keir to his sister and she encourages Keir to think of himself in a positive light.

Gigi is scared and angry. She has been raped and is now being held in a room against her will by one of her closest friends.

Ray Sarafian

Ray is Keir's father. Keir thinks the world of him. Ray plays a game of Risk with his son that never seems to end. His wife died a long time ago and he fiercely preserves her memory.

Keir is concerned that when he leaves for college, Ray will be all alone in the house.



Ken

Ken is the quarterback for the high school football team. He has a graduation party at his house, where he offers Keir an extensive variety of drugs.

Rollo

Rollo is the limo driver that Ray has hired as a gift to Keir. Rollo drives Keir and Gigi to Norfolk, but Keir tells him they will make their own way back.

Carl

Carl is Gigi's boyfriend. He is in the air force, and the relationship has been dwindling since he has been away. Carl is also a friend of Keir, which allows for Keir to take Gigi to prom.

Fran

Fran is Keir's sister. She goes to Norfolk college and lives with her sister Mary and a third roommate, Grace. Fran intentionally keeps her distance from Ray, who she loves but who is not healthy for her. Fran tells Keir that she has concerns about his behavior.

Mary

Mary is Keir's other sister who lives with Fran. She told Keir she would be unable to come home to his graduation ceremony due to exams but in truth she went to Baltimore with her friends instead.

Grace

Grace lives with Fran and Mary. When Keir shows up in Norfolk, it is her who answers the door and breaks the news that neither sister is at home.



Objects/Places

Norfolk College

Keir is going to go to Norfolk College on a football scholarship. He had quite a few options, but Norfolk was the natural choice as his sisters are already students there.

When Keir and Gigi take a road trip to Norfolk, they end up in a vacant guest house and it is there where the rape takes place.

Alcohol

Keir drinks a fair bit of alcohol. He drinks with his father regularly and he drinks heavily when he parties with his friends. Keir cites alcohol as a contributing factor to the damage the football team caused to the statues.

Football

Keir is determined to get a football scholarship so his father won't have to worry about paying his tuition. Keir is a kicker, but he sometimes fills in for other roles. It is at one of these times that he permanently injures a player on the opposing team.

Keir sees football players as tough and rowdy.

Soccer

Keir plays soccer in his off-months from football, to keep him in form. He feels that soccer players, in contrast to football players, are softer, friendlier, and less destructive. Keir is trying to discover where he belongs on that continuum.

IHOP

After prom, Keir and Gigi walk to the International House of Pancakes. They speak honestly while they are there.

Keir's house

Keir sees his house as something far more than a house but a place where he and his father are one. They had been nervous when the girls left for college, but they discovered a great joy in being only men in the household.



Risk

Keir and his father start a game of risk on the dining room table when the girls move out of the house. This game continues for the entire year and never concludes. The guys often play it when there is something troubling, and rather than talk about it, they find comfort and escape in the game.

Limousine

Keir sees the limousine as a sign of freedom, of control over one's destiny, and as a symbol of being cool. His father rents him the limo as Keir's graduation gift. Keir ends up going to Norfolk with Gigi in the limo.



Themes

Responsibility

Throughout Keir's final year in high school, his troubling behavior keeps mounting. His father Ray does nothing to curtail the behavior. Some small attempts from his sisters to address the issue go nowhere and they are a three-hour drive away.

While Keir's name was cleared of wrongdoing in the football incident, it would be natural for him to carry guilt about the results anyway. But Keir feels no such guilt. He protects himself from ever being guilty of anything.

The same pattern is repeated in the destruction of the statues. First he claims they have good reason for their actions, and the next day when he sees the consequences, he reverts to saying someone else must have done the damage after he and his friends had gone. Same pattern for the soccer party.

Keir deflects responsibility again and again, without noticeable consequence to his life. So it is not surprising, when he has committed such an extreme act as rape, that he does not for a moment think he is responsible. He says it is nobody's fault, and he truly believes this. Even when he forcibly keeps Gigi in the room, grabbing her wrist, holding back her body, keeping her from the exits, he thinks that Gigi is forcing him to take such measures because she is refusing to listen to him.

This is in sharp contrast to what Keir expects of others. For example, when his sisters don't attend his graduation, he calls their absence inexcusable.

Finally when Keir must face what he is doing, in the act of rape, he understands that he is accountable and will be held accountable.

Date Rape

There are many subtle remarks in Keir's telling of the story that point to him willingly misreading the signals he receives from Gigi. He knows she does not love him, she said so. He knows he has a boyfriend. He knows she does not intend for anything to happen. Yet at the slightest act or gesture of friendship, Keir gets carried away and builds up a tension in his mind that only he feels.

Keir plays a mind-game with himself in order to go through with the rape. He has a trusting, beautiful friend asleep in the same room as him. He thinks it is only natural to lie together. And once he is there, he convinces himself that it would be wrong not to kiss Gigi. He intentionally misreads Gigi's struggle as passion and he refuses to stop kissing her for fear that he will hear the words she is saying to stop. As long as he keeps his mouth on hers, he can mute the sound and convince himself she is moaning from pleasure.



It is difficult for girls to speak up after a date-rape, because people will point to the woman's involvement with their rapist. In this case, Gigi goes to prom with Keir. She gets in a limo with him. She holds his hand from time to time. She sleeps in the same room as him. Gigi is not responsible for what happened to her but others may feel that she contributed somehow to the outcome. Tragically, date rape is often seen as a lesser form of rape, when in fact the opposite may hold true. Gigi trusted her friend Keir implicitly. She defended him to Fran. Again and again she speaks of him as a good person. So not only does she have to deal with the after effects of being raped, but she must also deal with the fact that her trust was broken so completely.

Substance Abuse

Pills and alcohol are not responsible for Keir raping Gigi. They do, however, contribute to a pattern of distancing oneself from one's actions. Keir speaks of post-party days where everything from the previous night is hazy. He says that he often does not remember certain events.

This ties in with the theme of responsibility because people are responsible for consuming the drugs or alcohol in the first place, despite their subsequent pleas that they cannot be held accountable for their actions while high or drunk.

There is a fair bit of drinking at Keir's house. Ray never speaks of moderation and he does not ever deny his son a drink.

Style

Point of View

Inexcusable is written from the first-person singular perspective. Keir tells his story as he sees it. The author ensures that readers get all of the information they need, but it is only through Keir's eyes that the story is conveyed.

It is rare that a tale of rape is told from the perspective of the rapist. The resulting effect is that some people may read this and connect to what Keir is saying, and they will see their actions in a new light. Keir thinks of himself as the victim for a great portion of this book, and it is only at the end that he acknowledges he is in fact the perpetrator.

Setting

The setting of the novel is the final year of high school for Keir and Gigi. Scenes take place at prom, at the graduation ceremony, at Ken's party, in the limousine, and in Norfolk. The largest presence, however, is Keir's house. Keir cherishes his house beyond measure, as an extension of his father and of his family as a whole.

Language and Meaning

Keir speaks with the vocabulary of a teenager. He thinks of things in terms of sports, and of football in particular. Keir often says things that echo a much larger truth. Even in seemingly harmless lines, one can often find an indication of his mindset.

Structure

The novel Inexcusable jumps in time. It starts in the present, with Keir and Gigi at a standoff in a room in Norfolk, although the reader does not discover this is Norfolk until the conclusion of the book.

Keir describes the current situation in the room and then jumps back in time to relate the last few months. He continues to jump back and forth until he slowly melds the past with the present and brings his story to this point in time.



Quotes

"...I am only trying to stop the awful sound and the way it looks is not the way it is" (p. 3).

"You had to be a good guy if you were Ray Sarafian's kid. You couldn't possibly be anything less" (p. 10).

"The problem was, she couldn't keep her hands off me. Couldn't keep her hands off my hands, actually...so you can appreciate that Gigi Boudakian was being a little difficult to deal with" (p. 56).

"...and Gigi Boudakian's tears drop, right onto the back of my hand, and this is a nightmare now. I should be the one crying" (p. 69).

"You hurt me, you know, Gigi. That's right. You're the one who punched me and scratched me, and I would never, ever even think of doing anything like that to you" (p. 85).

"I feel a slight shifting of her position in my arms, and I have to respond by squeezing her just a little bit tighter. I don't want to restrict her. But she has to understand. She has to hear me out and talk to me and work this out before we can go anywhere, and I know we can do that" (p. 86).

"They needed to see me having my day. How could me and my day even really be happening if they weren't there to see it" (p. 106).

"She is scaring me. With her tone, her eyes, her presence altogether, she is scaring me. Intimidating me" (p. 139).

""The way you make things look is not the way they are, Keir", Fran said" (p. 150).



Topics for Discussion

What happened in the football game? Was Keir to blame? Why were there no scholarships offered while the incident was being investigated? Why did a flow of many offers come through afterwards?

What is the difference, according to Keir, between the soccer team and the football team? Are those differences connected to the nature of each sport, and if so, how? Where does Keir feel most comfortable? What is the difference between the two after-parties? What do you think of those incidents? Who is to blame?

Why can Keir not acknowledge that he forced himself onto Gigi? Does he just not want to admit his guilt or does he truly believe he's innocent? What are Keir's feelings for Gigi, versus what he says they are? How does Keir keep Gigi in the room? Why does he do so?

Why don't Keir's sisters come to his graduation? What does Keir think of his sisters before he goes to Norfolk? What does he discover about his sisters when he arrives in Norfolk? What are Fran's concerns about Keir? Do you think her concerns are justified? Why or why not?

What is the significance of the game Risk during this story? What is Keir's relationship with his father? Why is Keir nervous to leave home?

Why does Keir finally release Gigi from the room? What has Keir discovered about himself? How do you think Gigi feels about what happened? Keir thinks she contributed to bringing this about. What do you think?