

# [Nameless boys: communicating abuse in magariel’s novel](https://assignbuster.com/nameless-boys-communicating-abuse-in-magariels-novel/)

Emotional and physical neglect take up many forms, yet abuse is always blind, irrational and unacceptable in any capacity. As a whole, the United States is not lenient when dealing with child abusers, domestic violence and overall child endangerment, which is why Daniel Magariel’s first novel One of the Boys is a harshly accurate depiction of what takes place in an unregulated, dysfunctional family system. This cryptic suspense novel begins shortly after two brothers are whisked away to New Mexico by their dangerously eccentric father following his crippling divorce. The first person perspective storytelling of the youngest son is imperative for the gravitational elements laced in this novel, elements that place readers in the figurative position of a social worker. One of the Boys is a chillingly casual debriefing of a child witnessing, enabling and perpetuating abuse forms such as substance abuse and domestic violence, including but not restrained to parenting by means of intimidation and brute force. Throughout the book, the reader is forced to come to the conclusion that serving as “ one of the boys” was the psychopathic agenda of the overbearing yet negligent fickle Father character, who is the only true antagonist in One of the Boys; this agenda is unmasked through rhetorical devices including hostile symbolism, direct parallels and sinister character development (Magariel 5). These rhetorical elements are validated through realistic social facets such as the legal system and moral principle.

The father character in One of the Boys used analogies and metaphors to manipulate his sons into functioning as the main providers of the household. The father would coax his children into despair, destitution, and betrayal by means of intimidation tactics and brute force. For example, immediately after a botched tornado chasing excursion with his two sons, the Father in One of the Boys exclaimed “ looks like the storm was hunting us, ” in response to the group not finding a single tornado yet the fence of their front lawn “ had been torn from the ground,” and this passing metaphor would direct the fleeting escape-like tone for the rest of the book (Magariel 9). Initially, it appears that the boys are disillusioned by their Parent’s toxic relationship due to the fact that they have witnessed their father “ whip their mother with a belt” during the time that the family lived together. The youngest son recalls his Mother’s submission to pain and recounts how when the Father grew foul, “ she was so terrorized by him that she would just give up her entire being.” Ridden with guilt from that memory of his Mother while receiving his own thrashing from the Father character, the youngest son agrees that there was “ nothing left of” him or his Mother “ other than a plea for mercy,” as both have now fallen victim to a tyrant (Magariel 24). The mother of the two boys in this story was far removed from the standard maternal role, and this aspect was written into the character traits of the younger son who alienated her via false molestation allegations. The conflict that exists between the mother and her youngest son is so intense that the child buries large quantities of his anguish and only registers his inner turmoil when thrust towards the fringes of repression. To avoid the negative introspection, the youngest child was forced to “ bury the bitch,” as his father said, “ its what she gets for messing with” the family (Magariel 19). Other forms of symbolism displayed by the Father are seen after he returns from his reunion with his ex-wife in Kansas. No information about their Mother who “ thought she was the hero” was given to the Boys, other than the fact that she would not be returning to the family. On his return, “ he drew the blinds, called for a lockdown” and informed the Boys” that anyone caught contacting” their Mother “ would be sent to the brig, guillotined,” in essence, “ the biggest fucking code red” either of them “ had ever seen.” (Magariel 125) The Father literally shuts down any opposing operation that the boys were planning, yet they would continue to liberate themselves because they have “ escaped once already,” and they would “ do it again” by any means necessary. Their attempts were shabby at best, as their only true means of survival were traits inherited from their Father. The decision-making skills of both children increase in antisocial tendencies as the narrative progresses.

It is the duty and prerogative of the parent to instruct their children socially, morally, ethically and productively, yet the Father in One of the Boys encourages his children to misbehave and disrupt the lives of others. One of the most prominent social offenses enacted by the Father would be jeopardizing and eventually eradicating his Older Son’s athletic career. “ Sober and suited up” in a facade, he does so by meeting with the Basketball Coach at Rio Rancho High School. Inside of the school, the Younger Brother showcased his basketball prowess while the adults discussed school transfers and why the Older Son “ would also be grateful for a change of scenery,” unbeknownst to him that his Father’s actions would disrupt his playing eligibility (Magariel 44). After Coach Baez of the Older Brother’s basketball team and the Father Character got into a physical altercation, leaving the Father bruised and bloodied, the Older Brother resigned from his position on the team. One of the Boys is riddled with examples of lapsed judgment not only from the Father but from his offspring as well. For instance, the Youngest son’s “ Father had instructed him to make friends with the biggest kid at school,” and in compliance with his Father’s request, he found a horrible acquaintance (Magariel 27) During a misconstrued attempt to earn his Father’s affection or acceptance, the Younger Son employed one of his delinquent classmates to purchase Cuban Cigars, on behalf of his Father’s birthday. He did so by lending the notorious neighborhood punk Philip Olivias, his last $40 in hopes that this individual would not take advantage of his naivety. The Son was oblivious to the issue that he was getting scammed by the older child until he unwittingly purchased and consumed the drugs that his money was obviously spent on.

This event also marked the Younger Son’s first experiment with illegal substances, further shifting his mind into corrupt rationalizations, belief systems that allow this child to aid and enable his Father’s substance abuse. Furthermore, the Father’s poor guidance caused the child to be parted from his life savings, marking a poor calculation for the failing financial adviser. Trust and confidence were monumental aspects of living for these children as the Father forced his children to trust him and confide in no one outside of the family. The youngest son was instructed to deceive any individual that stood as an obstacle, more specifically authority figures, by “ being his father’s eyes,” or lookout (Magariel 65). As the Father grew more abusive, the trust dissolved and the bond between the Brothers grew, especially after the Father asked his Youngest Son how they were going to punish the Older Brother in retaliation. The Older Son had contacted the Mother for help, causing her to act bravely against the Father by claiming to “ take him to court and taking her kids back,” an unacceptable ultimatum from the Father’s perspective. After receiving a punishment, “ something that’ll bring him back in line” or “ something he’ll never forget,” the Older Brother rubbed away his “ rope burns” and mental scars, to gather his courage and escape their apartment in Albuquerque (Magariel 99). Both children have access to funds as well as means for maternal contact, yet a pay phone is used only after the father initiates various vindictive methods of child abuse. Unfortunately, neither child would acquiesce to a grand perspective and call the police while in possession of telecommunication. However, authority figures were not particularly allies in the corrupted mindset of the two boys, their Father made sure of that through the use of intimidation tactics.

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway, “ all States have enacted laws and policies that define State roles and responsibilities in protecting vulnerable children from abuse and neglect,” which explains the Father’s paranoia (Child Welfare Gateway). The Father in One of the Boys understands that he has abused his wife and child, which is why the father established lockdown drills and defensive scouting in his own home, as he was unable to trust himself or those who supported him, simply because he knew he was dangerous. The Father would remind the boys of more pleasant times in attempts to make them “ proud of him,” again. He weakly explained that on “ the drive down” to New Mexico “ he was a kid again,” and he wanted the children to view him as such, further minimizing his barbaric actions(Magariel 109). Too often, individuals forget that “ Child abuse is more than bruises or broken bones. While physical abuse often leaves visible scars, not all child abuse is as obvious, but can do just as much harm,” this damage can go as far as the legal status of the children in danger (California Department of Education). Children in severe abuse situations often struggle for an escape, and the Two Sons haphazardly plotted sophomoric stealthy escapes, two failed attempts that rendered the Boys helpless. In the midst of these operations, the Older Brother formulated counter-intuitive heists while engaging in his job at a local grocery store by “ lifting a few bucks whenever his manager wasn’t looking,” a crucial mistake on his own merit (Magariel 56). The initial success of these petty crimes would conclude after the Older Brother was discovered by the grocery store associates and later detained by the juvenile police department for two nights after going on the lam. Armed with only wishful thinking and childish effort, the Two Boys would dig themselves into a hole along with failed enterprises, empty promises and unreliable acquaintances, just like their Father, they’re One of the Boys

In the United States, any degree of child abuse warrants an investigation and in most cases, the child is removed from the more abusive parent. None of the character’s names in this story are revealed, symbolizing the futility of domestic child abuse. This story is narrated in the first person, from the perspective of the youngest and most visibly cryptic of the two offspring. It is clear that the second born has a direct correlation with the emotional inhibitions of his father. The parallel coexisting within the dynamic of the fractured family is unbalanced in the inexperienced hands of the two children. The older son must stand accountable for the societal actions of his father, while the younger son supports the father as his emotional and moral figurehead. As stated previously, the second born child displayed intense remorse in regards to his wrongfully accused mother. The father in One of the Boys is a master manipulator, a parasitic wolf draped in wool, which is the most deplorable reason as to why he misguided his children into harms path. In One of the Boys, the Father’s characterization is a nameless paragon of both mental and physical child abuse, the essential character traits displayed as he orchestrates his children to despise their mother and be free as one of the boys.

## Works Cited

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