

No Fourth River Book Themes

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1) Child Abuse

Extracts from No Fourth River:

“Fear was the first emotion any of us ever learned.” and “Every night was a game, a lucky dip of punishments and hell my father might inflict on one of us next.”

From her early years, Christine was a victim of (non-sexual) child abuse. The horrors she went through continue to shock readers of No Fourth River. Christine’s story raises awareness and gives hope to others who are or have been in a similar situation. Christine suffered abuse at the hands of the adults responsible for her well-being: her father and the authoritarian nuns at the boarding school.

“It is not enough that she shared her story; she endeavours to empower the reader. It is quite a refreshing approach that is entirely selfless.” Review from CarolineS on Goodreads.com

Some of the abuse Christine was subject to:

At the hands of her father:

- Physical beating and being forced to hold stress positions for a long period of time.
- He punished his children with days of isolation by forcing them to live in the cellar.
- He made his children trim the grass or hedges with a blunt knife or another inadequate tool.

- Electroshock therapy in an attempt to cure her bedwetting problem.
- Forcing her to eat 25 extra salty TUC biscuits every evening at 6 pm and she wasn't allowed any drink until the next day.
- He constantly told Christine she was useless, worthless and would never make anything of her life.
- The household lived in constant fear. *Extract from No Fourth River: "We were all extremely scared of our father, especially when he was drunk."*

In boarding school at the hands of the authoritarian nuns:

- They slapped her several times.
- The nuns told her numerous times she was unwanted, unloved, worthless and shameful.
- The nuns made her walk through all the dormitories carrying her wet bed sheets whilst a nun repeated on the loudspeaker: *"Attention. The girl in bed 49, has wet her bed. Make way for the bed-wetter."* A scene quite like Cersei's walk of shame in the TV show Games of Thrones. The nuns encouraged the other children to laugh and spit at Christine and calling her dirty names.
- The many years Christine suffered in boarding schools left her deeply wounded and scarred although in later life she found ways to deal with this.
- Christine lived, for many years, in a constant atmosphere of fear, hate, humiliation and worthlessness. She suffered alone, in silence.

2) Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse affects children too

In a household where domestic abuse takes place, the abused partner is not the only victim; the children are the silent victims. According to statistics in the U.K, 1 in 5 children is exposed to domestic abuse. These children are left with mental scars that can last a lifetime and affect every aspect of their lives. Christine was no different until she took charge of her life and created a better version of herself.

Her first female role model was her mother, a woman who had the nervous disposition of someone always under scrutiny, always held up to measure against standards that were always out of her reach. Her father was as physically and mentally abusive to his wife as he was to his children.

Extract from No Fourth River: "He intimidated and humiliated her in much the same way as he treated us."

In this environment, Christine learned that a woman's opinion and value was worth very little in their household. The man of the house ruled the roost and was always right. This had a negative and lasting effect on Christine's life and impacted her first marriage, during which she endured physical and mental abuse herself, before being beaten into a coma. It is shocking that at an early age, Christine describes the relationship with her father as "My father was the hunter and we were his defenceless prey." Extract from No Fourth River.

Christine's first marriage

Christine's first marriage was a violent one that saw her beaten into a coma after 11 months of marriage and left her fighting for her life. Looking back, Christine's violent marriage was a natural progression from her abusive childhood and wild adolescence.

Starved of love and affection, Christine fell into the arms of the first one who showed her some love and offered some longevity and commitment to their relationship. Because she was used to her relationship with others being abusive and selfish, the violence of her marriage was normal to her. Christine suffered through various humiliation, both in private and in public by her husband.

Example from No Fourth River:

He regularly took Christine's car home while she was having classes in evening school out of malice. The first time Christine called the police and reported her car stolen, after that, she

just took the train home.

Harry

Harry, Christine's first husband was the typical abuser, he was a master at belittling and undermining his wife's confidence. Although he wanted money, he was against the concept of working for his money. He wanted easy money, money he did not have to work for, money given to him in a lump sum, from his wife's diamond magnate father. He resented his wife's ambition and willingness to better herself, to learn and to gain the skills needed to earn her living and to better their lives.

Extracts from No Fourth River:

"My earliest idea of love and marriage came from my parents, and that meant I thought of the whole thing as something of a misery—an enslavement of sorts."

"We started arguing and fighting all the time but each time it would get bad, he would apologize. Harry was a master at apologies and I always believed him. I wanted things to get better."

"Despite his apologies, his drinking and penchant for humiliating me became worse and worse the longer we lived together. He hated that I earned more money than he did. He simply could not cope with that at all."

"He came from a lower social background and his parents were on benefits. He couldn't stand that I found a job, that I was more successful than him."

"...as someone who grew up being abused, I just wasn't shocked by his behaviour."

"He said he loved me. I made excuses for him and believed I could change him."

"When he wanted sex, I agreed- whether or not I wanted it. Not that he really asked. It would be more accurate to say I complied without fighting back."

"You never think of the person you grew to love for what they do but for what you think they are—and perhaps that was my biggest downfall."

"My main problem was not that Harry was abusive and violent; it was that I was too afraid and full of self-doubt to leave him. Loneliness is the cruellest of all emotions and I avoided it to the brink of my own death."

"I was the first woman in Belgium ever to have to pay alimony, so my lawyer told me."

3) Inspirational

The inspirational and relatable aspects of No Fourth River

One of the prevalent themes in No Fourth River is 'inspirational'. Christine's main reason behind sharing her story is to inspire others who have had a bad past in order to give them the courage to turn their own lives around as she did. No Fourth River is unlike any other book describing an abusive past. It certainly covers a horrible childhood and early adulthood. What really sets this book aside is how the author not only shares her woeful story but how she wants to inspire and empower.

Christine also shares 12 'Valuable Messages' at the end of her book. In these messages, she imparts the wisdom and the lessons she learned through her life.

#BraveMe

No Fourth River is gripping, harrowing, uplifting and inspiring. It is a shocking true story of survival, courage, redemption and triumph that will pull at the readers' heartstrings and engage their emotions. A story that strikes at a visceral level and one that latches onto the brain like a tick.

It is an inspirational tale that shows that you can move beyond your perceived limitations and fears. A story that resonates with readers who are struggling to find the strength not only to survive a shattered life but to thrive in style.

In *No Fourth River*, Christine lays bare the events and consequences of her past, but the novel also highlights one of her goals: Helping others realise that they have the power to change their lives, despite how bad their life can be. There came a turning point in Christine's life when she said enough was enough, she deserved better. She worked her way out of poverty and a violent marriage in order to build the life she really wanted. Having lived through shocking abuse and hardship from a very young age, she knows that changing your life is not easy, but it can be done.

'Tough times don't have to define you, they can refine you.' – Quote from *No Fourth River*

In the era of awakening to how the world has been treating women, in the times of the #metoo campaign that made us aware of things we didn't see thus far, Christine's novel is completely aligned with this recent trend in our society. She encourages others to share their stories of how they have overcome hardship in their lives and shine a light on domestic violence and surviving a bad past with the hashtag #BraveMe. This campaign is to give people a platform to share their own inspiring stories and in turn, give courage to others who suffer in silence. The movement focuses on our resilience and ability to push through bad experiences in order to live the life we want to live.

Read the #BraveMe stories here: <http://nofourthriver.com/bravemestories>

What readers think

However, when it comes to inspiration and inspirational stories, what matters the most are the opinions of the readers. Here's what they are saying:

Review extracts from readers:

"I have learned so much for myself from "No Fourth River"! It makes me ask myself – if Christine has overcome so much adversity and has made her life a success in every sense, whatever on Earth can stop me?" Review on Amazon.co.uk by Pure Nature Cures

"What a truly inspiring and empowering read! I read this book in two days I couldn't put it down. Christine's story resonated with me on many levels, especially in the way she was able to move beyond her past and become a successful woman despite everything." Review on Amazon.co.uk by Dina Blanco

Please visit <http://nofourthriver.com/reviews> for a selection of reviews.

4) Adolescence And Bad Choices

Being a teenager is not easy for most, Christine's abusive childhood led her to a tumultuous adolescence. Christine sought acceptance and approval in all the wrong places, she was heavily influenced by peer pressure and did what was needed in order to be accepted. This led to some bad decisions, including promiscuity and heavy alcohol consumption. The friends Christine found during her adolescence, did not only have a bad influence on her, but none of them was there for her when she needed them the most.

Extracts from No Fourth River:

"I learned the wrong kind of lessons. You know, the ones that keep you trapped inside misery forever. I just didn't know better."

"I wanted to do things to them that they liked, so they would like me for it."

"I modelled my new self so closely on my new friends that I never even considered what I actually liked myself."

“Now I had the magic potion to take the sting from their words and I could get it at any pub”

“I was desperate and desperately lonely. I had no money, no job, no food, no real friends, no love and no home to live in.”

5) Parenting

Christine’s family was a typical 1960 family, with mum taking care of the house and kids while dad was the sole breadwinner. But this family was not the typical loving family where the children are loved and supported and mum and dad love and support each other.

***Extract from No Fourth River:** “Fear was the first emotion any of us ever learned.’ while most young children are given lots of love and made to feel safe.”*

Father

Christine’s father was a domineering, strict and selfish character who ruled the roost with a firm hand.

***Extract from No Fourth River:** “Everything had its place- and the children were no exception.”*

Although he came from a modest background as a mechanic, Christine’s father made his fortune in the diamond industry. He was a rich man but never gave his five children much. When he died, one of his children took over the business and kept most of the money for himself without sharing it with his family.

He constantly reminded his wife and children of his position, he was the one in charge and he particularly delighted in reminding everyone that he was superior, he was successful and he knew best. He told his children over and over again that if they didn’t follow his rules, they wouldn’t do well. He took reprimanding and disciplining his children too far. He was physically as well as verbally abusive.

He punished his children with long hours, often days of isolation, withholding meals, painful stress positions and physical blows. One of his favourite punishments was to make the children trim the grass or hedges with a blunt knife. The family took care to stay out of dad’s way. Extract from No Fourth River: “My father was the hunter and we were his defenceless prey.”

Christine fell out with her father when she left home, and the two never reconciled.

Mother

Christine’s mother was the only female role model Christine had for a long time. She was fearful of her husband and she was not exempt from his cruel words, physical blows or punishments. She had four children in four years and had trouble coping and keeping her children safe. Christine ended up with a disfiguring injury that marked her for life.

***Extract from No Fourth River:** “She would regularly let things happen to us, preferring a distant style of parenting that led to a lot of wounds, scars, and burns.”*

Christine’s relationship with her mother improved as the two got closer after the death of Christine’s father and after Christine ended her first marriage. Christine looked after her mother, during the last stages of her dementia, until she passed away (see photos in the photo section).

Breaking the cycle of abuse

Christine parenting style differed wildly from that of her parents. From her own hands-on experiences, she knew how disastrous the effect that lack of support, love and understanding can have on one’s life. She endeavoured to provide love and security to her twin daughters, making up for what she lacked during her own upbringing.

Due to her own past, Christine was anxious when her daughters hit their teenage years. She was a strict but loving parent. However, she had to find the right balance of giving her daughters advice and letting them find their own path.

Extracts from No Fourth River:

“I found myself getting too strict with them. The more they pushed for new freedoms, the tighter I clung to them in fear of what mistakes they might make. I worried, though, that I was starting to make the same mistakes as my dad. He’d been right about the people I was mixing with, but he had failed to explain it to me, and I just thought he was cruel.”

“We were all survivors, programmed from the very start of life to tiptoe around the pillar of fury that was my father.”

“Mum could never do anything right in my father’s eyes. She was, just like the rest of us, constantly told that she was useless.”

“Mum never got involved in any decision about our education. She could never say anything that was acceptable to him. Her opinions were always considered useless.”

6) Entrepreneurship

The beginning

Christine had no money when she started her first business. She started her business empire with a small bank loan.

Extracts from No Fourth River:

“I had no money, no job, no food, no real friends, no love and no home to live in.”

“The room was positively filthy and much smaller than I had hoped once all the stuff had been moved out of it. The windowless room was cold and dark. It stank of old cigarettes and spilt booze, and some of the stickiness would not come off the walls. One single, bare, flickering bulb hung from the ceiling. So this was the place that would be better than home, this tiny, dirty, filthy room. I settled in as best I could.”

Tenacity and hard work

She did not let anything get in her way and started by cold-calling 100’s of potential customers when she set up an Apple dealership, her first business venture. She worked her socks off and her Apple dealership had a multi-million turnover in the first two years. She became a phenomenon in the computer industry – a woman who had outdone all her male competitors.

She set about finding ways to earn her own money where she would be in total control and did not need to answer to anyone. She never wanted to beg for money again like she did when she was married to her first husband who demanded all her money to waste it in pubs and on gambling.

Serial Entrepreneur

Christine is now a successful serial entrepreneur and has set up 15 different businesses since the start of her entrepreneur’s journey. Her first foray into entrepreneurship, started soon after she decided to take control of her own life after she came out of her coma. She is a best-selling author, Internet Marketer, Entrepreneur, Infopreneur and Public Speaker. She has spent years helping others take control of their own finances and led them down the entrepreneurship path.

Extracts from No Fourth River, after Christine decided to turn her life around:

“The nuns. The girls at boarding school. My father. Harry. Even the teachers at my second boarding school told me I would never make anything of my life.”

“I met the stranger who was inside me all my life but never had the chance to appear. The stranger I knew well became the new me. I found myself.”

“Never again would I take orders from anyone. I made a promise to myself that nobody would ever control me again and tell me what to do when to do it, and how to do it. I would be completely independent and free.”

The hurdles of being a female entrepreneur

Not only did Christine start from scratch but she was at a disadvantage. In the early 80s, business was very much a man’s world and many of them were not happy about a woman making her own way in their industry nor did they believe a woman could be successful.

Christine recounts: *“One man, in particular, tried to take advantage of the fact that I was a woman. He asked for a meeting with me one night when I was alone in my office. I expected a business proposition, but instead, he tried to rape me. Thankfully, I escaped just in time. In business, you meet a lot of people who want success but are not quite prepared to do the work. These same individuals resent it when someone comes along and work for their success. This resentment is a lot worse when you are a woman.*

Extract from No Fourth River: *“The other passengers on the cruise were all Apple prize winners from all over the world. Richard and I got the feeling that they were not very friendly to us. He felt one of the main reasons for this was because I was the only woman who achieved the target in a male-dominated industry.*

While they didn’t actually “do” anything to make me feel uncomfortable, I felt an undercurrent through their conversations that they were just not happy to have me there. After all, I was a threat to them – taking the top seller’s trophy.”

7) Bedwetting

The cause

Wetting the bed overnight when you are still young is quite common, but for Christine Clayfield, it was something that made her life a nightmare from an early age and plagued her well into her adult life. The causes of her bedwetting were the atmosphere of constant fear, insecurity, low self-esteem, lack of support and loneliness.

Extracts from No Fourth River:

“In retrospect, it was a reaction to the constant fear but at the time, it felt like daily humiliation and evidence that my father was right about my general worthlessness.”

“I was terrified of my father but more terrified of being sent away to some strange place, mainly because of my bedwetting and my ugly scar.”

Bedwetting at boarding school

Because of her bedwetting problem and her scar, Christine was continuously laughed at in boarding school. She was different and she was scared which made her a prime target for bullies. The authoritarian nuns who ran the school did not like that she made extra work for them, they made sure that she was punished and humiliated every time she wet her bed, which was on a daily basis.

The punishments she endured at boarding school include:

- A daily walk of shame carrying her wet bedsheets through all the dormitories in front of the other girls while a nun would repeat on the loudspeaker: “Attention. The girl in bed 49 has wet her bed. Make way for the bed-wetter.”
- Being stripped naked and having four buckets of ice-cold water poured over her head.

- Being forced to stand with her wet bed sheets in the middle of the playground whilst children laughed at her.

Extracts from No Fourth River:

The walk of shame punishment

Christine talks about her boarding school days: “One defining moment of my life was the walk of shame I had to do every morning, carrying my wet bed sheet through all the dormitories, while one of the nuns would repeat on the loudspeaker: “Attention. The girl in bed 49, has wet her bed. Make way for the bed-wetter.” A scene quite like Cersei’s walk of shame on the TV show Games of Thrones.

“In later life, I realised that it was a very influential and defining moment for me because I told myself I would never be laughed at, spit at and bullied again like I did during that walk.”

Ice water punishment

“On one occasion, the nuns dragged me into a bathtub, forced me to undress completely, while they proceeded to pour four buckets of ice-cold water over my head. They made me sit in the tub for twenty minutes, totally naked and shivering of cold. During those twenty minutes, I had to repeat: “I am sorry; I won’t wet my bed again. I am sorry, I won’t wet my bed again, I am sorry, I won’t wet my bed again.”

Holding wet bed sheet over her head punishment.

“You dirty child, I’ve had enough of you. You have to stop wetting the bed!” I started to cry, as I realized it wasn’t the end of my punishments for bedwetting at all. “

“You will stand here for 30 minutes, with the soaking linen on your head so that everybody can see you,” she commanded.

Immediately all the children gathered around me and began laughing and spitting at me, calling me dirty names. The nuns encouraged the children to do so.”

Bedwetting at home

The punishments Christine suffered at school were not the only ones she suffered because of bedwetting. At home, her father was quite cruel too.

Christine’s father’s attempt at stopping her wetting the bed included:

- No drinking after 6 pm.
- Being woken up every 2 hrs to use the toilet.
- Being forced to eat 25 extra salty TUC biscuits at 6 pm and not be allowed to drink until the next morning.
- Being woken up every 2 hours during the night for a period of five months.
- Trying four different medications, all of them had horrible side effects.
- A chart-based reward system for every dry night but nothing ever appeared on the chart.
- Visiting several psychiatrists without any success.
- Using several different machines that sound an alarm each time she wet the bed.
- Several doctors have done various tests, x-rays, scans and ultrasounds to rule out any physical causes and they have concluded it is all in Christine’s mind.
- Electroshock therapy at the age of 14yrs old. Christine will never forget this for the rest of her life and this therapy had a major influence on her rebellious teenage years.

When the bedwetting stopped

None of the above stopped Christine’s bedwetting. Her bedwetting caused her further humiliation and shame as she grew up and started relationships with men.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“I told Harry about my bedwetting before we moved in together. He seemed fine with it and didn’t act like it was a problem. Then came the first day that he actually woke up*

in wet sheets at 6 a.m. He snorted. “Looks like living together is going to be a lot of fun! What the hell! Is this how it’s going to be every day? It had better not be! It stinks and it’s disgusting! Take these sheets off the bed immediately, put clean sheets on and you go downstairs so I can sleep a few more hours in a dry bed.”

Christine stopped wetting the bed in later life. She calls it an “unexpected miracle”.

8) The Power of A Positive Mind

Christine owes a lot of her achievements to having a positive mind set. It started when she woke up from her coma and realised that if she wanted her world to change she had to do it herself. Despite her past full of misery, instead of letting her past dictate her future, Christine decided she had to move forward.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“I made the ultimate decision. I realized that nobody was going to come to my rescue, I needed to rescue myself from the bad place I was in. I am my rescue and it will never end unless I end it.”*

When she started building the life she wanted, she put together a list of everything she wanted in order to keep her focused on the positive and not the negatives like her abusive past.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“I remember a quote I read in a book by Napoleon Hill: “Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.” After reading that quote, I made my list of things I wanted to achieve in my life.”*

Having reaped the benefits of having a positive mind, Christine imparts the lessons she learned as ‘Valuable Messages’ at the end of her novel No Fourth River.

Extract from No Fourth River:

“Accept your past without regrets. Tough times don’t have to define you, they can refine you.”

“The only limits you have are the ones that you accept. If you believe in yourself, anything is possible.”

“Don’t ever say something is impossible if you haven’t tried it. The word ‘impossible’ has the word ‘possible’ in it!”

9) The Power of True Love

When Christine talks about her love life, two things come across very clearly:

1. She had kissed a lot of frogs.
2. She has found her soulmate and has spent the last 27yrs raising a family with him.

Her journey was not an easy one but when she found the right person, he made her life complete. He stood by her and supported her. They both made sacrifices for each other to make their relationship work. Love, however, was never easy for Christine. She comes from a family with no love or affection and had no idea what love really looks or feel like.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“My earliest idea of love and marriage came from my parents, and that meant I thought of the whole thing as something of a misery—an enslavement of sorts.”*

Christine’s scar made it hard for her to make friends and she was shy when it came to boys. Her first foray in love when she was just a teenager meant she was an easy prey to anyone who showed her some attention.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“Receiving such lavish attention when I had been starved of it all my life was exhilarating.”*

She met Harry her first husband while she was working in a bar. She had left home and had no contact with her family. Harry had showered Christine with attention and praise but he had an ulterior motive that became apparent only after they got married. When he didn't get what he wanted he carried on beating Christine until 11 months into their marriage, he beat her into a coma.

After she left her first husband, Christine did not trust men at all. When she started dating again she had a rule in place of “no sex for the first six months, so that ulterior motives were removed from the equation.”

Extract from No Fourth River: *“I had zero tolerance for any man who might use me for either sex or money.”*

Richard, Christine's now husband of 27yrs

After several failed relationships Christine did not want to take any chances. When she met her now husband Richard, he was still married to his first wife. They did not start dating until he ended his relationship with his first wife.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“Sometimes when you lock eyes with people, you know at that very moment they will affect your life. That's how it was with Richard, the very first time I looked into his eyes.”*

Christine was still weary to commit so she did something unheard of, something that got the approval of numerous readers of No Fourth River: she compiled a question list and a compatibility list.

Extract from No Fourth River: *“For months, I had been developing a compatibility list of what I wanted in a partner. I had to break out my list and make sure that Richard was the one. On that bench, I spent the morning questioning and re-questioning Richard as my perfect partner, and he indulged me.”*

Extract from an Amazon review: *“I wish you would publish your list of questions for your future mate as it would be a helpful guideline for other engaged folks. To have honest answers to such basic questions would surely be an eye-opener.”*