



bastard



logline

Shortly after discovering the existence of his bastard son, a priest is tasked with exorcising the boy's demon. However, he quickly learns that his past failures as a father are all but in the past, and have manifested in a hellish and horrifying possession.

characters

WESLEY

After his wife dies in childbirth, Wesley spent a year sleeping around, drinking, and recoiling from his loss. In a desperate attempt to find peace, he joined the clergy, just like his father. Now, years later, he is approached by FAY, a woman he had a fling with in his days of debauchery, and the mother of his bastard son.

Wesley lives with immense guilt for having been so absent in his daughter COLLETTE'S formative years, and is shocked to learn that there's another child he wasn't there for. So, he agrees to perform his son's exorcism, in a Hail Mary attempt to redeem himself as a father. Through exorcising his bastard son, he's forced to confront the impact of his absence, and how in a way, he's been almost as absent for Collette.

Wesley also lives with the childhood trauma of having witnessed his father, a renowned Catholic exorcist, killed during an exorcism. Thus, performing this ritual is not only an attempt to redeem himself in the eyes of his children, but also a vengeance mission to kill the monster that may of murdered his father.

Through the harrowing exorcism process, Wesley will realize that holding onto his father's murder has impeded him from being a father to Collette, and that the only way to truly be a father to his children is to look forward.



bastard



characters (continued)

COLLETTE

Collette grew up devoid of any solid parental figures. For her early years, Wesley was an unreliable drunk. And from her teen years to the present, he threw himself into the clergy as a means of avoiding his fatherly duties.

Collette is reticent and resentful of Wesley's new little family, but insists on coming along, yearning for a deeper connection to her family. Despite her anger towards her father, she ultimately understands his pain, and longs to reconcile with him.

HOWIE

Wesley's 8-year-old bastard son is adorable, charming, and most likely possessed by an agent of Satan. Unlike your typical cinematic victim of possession, Howie doesn't live chained to his bedpost; he walks around the house. He eats dinner at the table. He plays with his Legos. He keeps Fay a prisoner in her own home, keeping up the pretense that they're a happy, normal family. The demon in Howie relishes the charade and the pain it causes Fay, and only rears its true demonic nature once his father arrives to exorcise him.

FAY

Fay and Wesley had a month-long fling during Wesley's wild years, resulting in a son, Howie. She has long since given up on the notion of a husband or father for her son, and now wants nothing more than Howie to be safe and returned to normal.



Outline

We open on a woman's SCREAM. This is **ELLIE GALLO**, experiencing the joys of childbirth. Besides her is her husband **WESLEY**, gripping her hand tightly as doctors and nurses bustle about. The atmosphere in the room is tense; everyone knows something is wrong. Ellie successfully delivers their baby, and her grip loosens from Wesley - she's dead. A nurse swaddles the baby up in a **BLACK BLANKET**, and hands it to a speechless Wesley.

20 YEARS LATER, Wesley stands before a mirror. He fastens a white Priest's collar over his black uniform. His eyes are dead, worn down by decades of disappointment and stagnant grief. His chambers, like his life, are bare. We watch him open a drawer, containing the clean and folded **BLACK BLANKET** we saw from the opening. He sadly puts it away, just as there's a knock at his door.

Visiting his church chambers is his now-adult daughter, **COLLETTE**. Resentment seems to run in the family, because Collette has a *lot* to resent. She asks her father why he was absent at her med school graduation. He counters that she hasn't come by to see him in almost a year; we get the sense that letting each other down is a two way street between them.

Collette resents Wesley for joining the priesthood after Ellie's death, viewing it as him running away from his responsibilities- and his duties as a father.

That afternoon, while sweeping the pews, Wesley is approached by **FATHER GREICO** and **FATHER LUCA**. Greico is giving Luca a tour of the church, and wants him to meet Wesley. Greico mentions that Wesley is the son of the renowned (and late) **GEORGE GALLO**. Luca reacts with reverence, expressing his admiration of Wesley's father, as well as his condolences. The encounter leaves Wesley uneasy, and he excuses himself. Outside, we see a mysterious woman, **FAY**, watching the church from her car.

At Collette's apartment that night, she stumbles upon an old framed photo of Wesley and Ellie. She lets out a small smile despite herself, thawing out. Resolving to extend an olive branch (or at least an olive twig) she decides to drive to the church and make peace with her father.



Outline (continued)

Meanwhile, Wesley gets ready for bed in his chambers, and as he does every night, he opens the drawer to look at the Black Blanket. He's horrified to see, however, that it's gone. Before he has time to react, a KNOCK AT THE DOOR. He opens the door to reveal Fay, and we see instantly that he recognizes her.

Some time later, we pick up on them sitting in the pews, talking. We learn that he had a month-long fling with Fay in between Ellie's death and him joining the clergy. Fay drops the bombshell that their brief time together left her pregnant- and with a son. Wesley's son. Of course, Collette appears at the church threshold, eavesdropping on the shocking conversation.

However, Fay goes on to deliver even more news: she believes their 8-year-old son, **HOWIE**, is possessed. She pleads for Wesley to come help her exorcise her son, but he refuses. Here, we learn about Wesley's father: George Gallo was a well-known priest, recognized for his acute and respected knowledge of possessions and exorcisms. Despite Fay's insistence that Wesley owes her - owes *them* - Wesley denies any knowledge of his late father's practices, and sends her away.

Wesley retreats to his chambers, where he opens up a secret drawer, containing his father's journal, exorcism notes, etc. He sighs and goes to bed.

We enter a dream sequence, a haunting memory from Wesley's childhood. 8-year-old Wesley watches in awe as his father, George, takes in a panicked Spanish man and his CONVULSING DAUGHTER. George sends Wesley to his room, but Wesley watches through a crack in the door as his father performs an exorcism on the girl. Just when Wesley thinks it can't get any worse- he watches his father's NECK GET SNAPPED by the possessed girl. Wesley awakens in a sweat. He knows he has to do the exorcism.



Outline (continued)

The next morning as Wesley sets out to drive down to Fay's house in the backwoods Rutwick County, he finds Collette waiting for him outside his car. She insists on joining, because obviously Howie just needs medical attention, and as a med student she can provide it. But we get a sense that she's genuinely worried about her dad, and yearns for a deeper connection to her family.

As they drive, Collette's PHONE RINGS. Her ringtone is "All I Have To Do Is Dream" by the Everly Brothers (or some other legally safe song). Wesley is touched, as this was Ellie's favorite song. Collette is embarrassed that her father saw this moment of sentiment, and puts back up her walls.

That evening, they arrive at Fay's house. Fay is immensely grateful, and tries her best to be warm to Collette, who, as expected, has no intention of being kind to the mother of her father's bastard child. Wesley asks to be introduced to Howie. However, unlike your typical possession victim, Howie is not tied up in bed. He's simply playing with blocks in the living room.

Howie is a total charmer - adorable, sweet, and positively thrilled to have lost his first baby tooth today. It's almost as if Howie *knows* Wesley is his father. Wesley is completely won over, but Fay insists he can't be trusted. Collette notices shadows around Howie's eyes; like his eyes are sinking into his head.

That night, Collette awakens in the guest room to a muffled *crunching* sound. She reaches for her phone on the night stand - but it's gone. That's weird... She walks into the hallway, following the crunching sound into Howie's room. She finds him sitting at his desk, munching on something. His eyes have sunk further into his skull now; truly disturbing. Collette tells Howie to spit out whatever he's chewing - and he spews out several CHEWED UP TEETH onto his desk. He's been chewing on his own teeth. He turns to Collette and flashes a rictus grin, bloodily displaying the few teeth he has left.



Outline (continued)

An hour or so later, after they've bolted Howie in his room, Wesley and Fay catch up in the kitchen over a drink. Or in Fay's case, several. Wesley recounts his life after Ellie's death; how he joined the clergy, how Collette has resented him every day of her life, how he's been, in general, a pretty subpar father.

Wesley also pulls out his father's journal, explaining that Howie's symptoms do in fact point to exorcism. The sinking of the eyes, and the ingestion of the teeth. It represents the demons consuming the host from within. Wesley starts to believe Howie might really be possessed.

Just then, they faintly hear "All I Have To Do Is Dream" playing from upstairs. They follow the muffled-yet-recognizable ringtone into, of course, Howie's room. Howie appears to be asleep, unaware of the phone ringing under his covers. Wesley lifts up the covers. No phone. Then he lifts up Howie's shirt - to reveal the lit up phone screen shining through Howie's stomach. Collette's cell phone is inside him.

Cue pre-exorcism montage. Following the notes from his father's journal, Wesley sets up the ALTAR in the back garden. Using stakes, herbs, plants, torches, etc., Wesley builds a pentagram altar in the dirt. They creep into Howie's room (still sleeping) and carefully carry the "boy" out to the garden.

And so brings us to the exorcism. Shaken, Fay stays in the house while Wesley and Collette perform the daunting task. Howie awakens as they fasten his wrists and ankles to the stakes in the ground and begin the ritual. The exorcism is a combination of Colombian, Haitian, and Catholic tradition, with a good amount of original moves thrown in there as well.



Outline (continued)

Suffice to say it does not go well. Howie gets under their skin, taunting them with traumatic memories, like Ellie's death, Wesley witnessing a demon kill his father, and Collette's pain over growing up essentially parentless. In fact, the demon even claims to be the same one who killed Wesley's father. Howie breaks free of the ropes, and grabs Wesley's father's journal - hauling it into the fire of the torches. In a gust of demonic force, all the torches flicker out in unison, plunging us in darkness.

Moments later, we hear Fay SCREAM from inside the house. A terrifying sequence ensues, in which Wesley and Collette navigate the pitch-black house in search for Fay; and the demon on the loose. They follow the screams, arriving to Howie's bedroom just in time to see him SNAP FAY'S NECK. Wesley slams the door and bolts it while Howie giggles.

Wesley heads to the guest room and immediately begins packing. He can't do this - especially without his father's journal. However, he's stopped by Collette. For the first time, she's the one who wants to stay and finish this. She rallies behind her father, insisting that he can do this without the aid of his father's book. Wesley nervously agrees, and resolves to try again. Here, Wesley actively chooses to put his father's death behind him, instead focusing on saving one of his own children.

Wesley and Collette perform the exorcism again, this time without Wesley following his father's notes to a T. Wesley successfully expels the demon, causing Howie to vomit a parade of CICADAS, followed by Collette's cell phone, and finally, the black blanket.

The torches flicker, and we see vague flashes of a jackal-like demon escaping into the woods. Wesley has the option to pursue it further, potentially avenging his father - or let it go, staying behind with his children. Wesley turns his back to the woods, and kneels down. He puts his arms around his children - for the first time putting fatherhood above all else.



themes

BASTARD explores, on a surface level, a father searching for redemption from years of absentee parenthood. Wesley utilizes grief, indulgence, and now the priesthood to avoid his fatherly duties, still too at odds with his own father's peculiar death to be a father himself.

For Wesley, exorcising Howie's demon is an opportunity to atone for not being in his son's life. In reality, it's a band-aid, an alternative to any emotional olive branch to Collette, the child who he's been physically present for, but emotionally absent.

The emotional core of BASTARD is the torrid relationship between Wesley and Collette. Both father and daughter ache to put their painful past behind them, but decades of resentment and hurt don't heal easily. Just as Howie keeps Fay a prisoner in her own home, Wesley and Collette are prisoners to seemingly unmendable wounds.

The story explores what separates family from simply a blood connection, and the sacrifices it takes to be a parent.