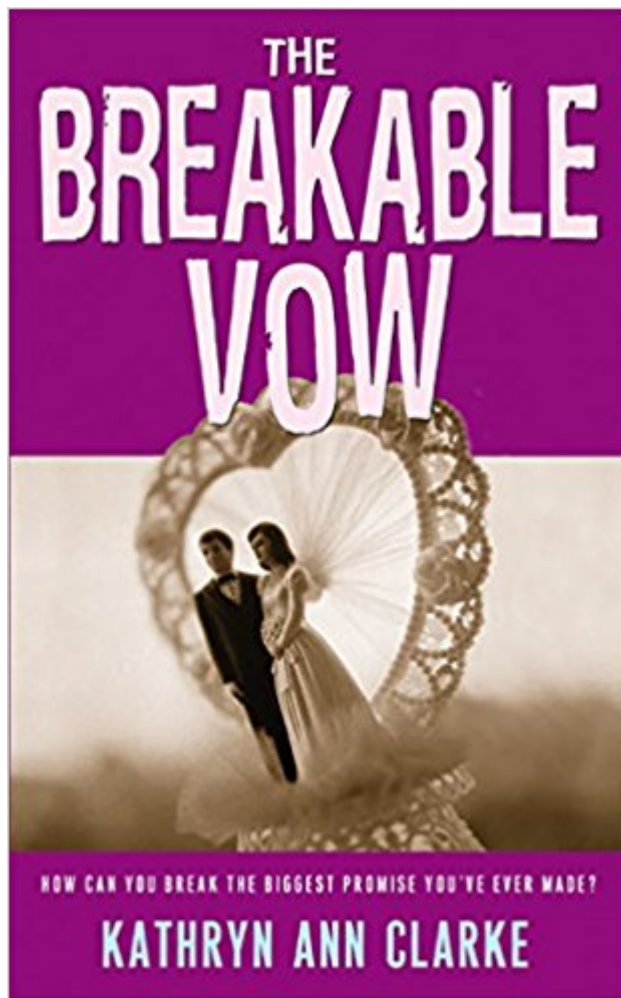




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# The Breakable Vow



## Synopsis

One night will change her life . . . Annie McGowan is eighteen years old, smart, wisecracking, fun-loving . . . a typical teenager. Yet circumstances force Annie out of the security of high school and into a world of problems all her own. Faced with an unexpected pregnancy and a turbulent, violent relationship with her boyfriend, Kevin, Annie's life begins to spiral out of control. And though her worst fears about Kevin are realized, in the heat of the moment, she finds the courage to fight back. First-time author and domestic violence expert Kathryn Ann Clarke brings clarity and compassion to an often hotly debated issue. In this inspiring debut novel, one remarkable young woman faces the most difficult odds and emerges on the other side -- whole. The Breakable Vow features a special educational Classroom Guide section in the back of the book that discusses: How to Recognize the Danger Signs of an Abusive Relationship, Safety Planning, Break-Up Planning, Cycle of Violence, Questions to Ask About the New Person in Your Life, and much more.

## Book Information

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Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Being a Teen

## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up Annie, 18, is looking forward to the rest of her life. She's been in a relationship with Kevin, and they are certain that they're in love. He has a temper, but that doesn't concern her because she knows that he cares deeply for her. Several weeks after spending a night together, Annie discovers that she is pregnant, and her life begins to spin out of control. Deeply religious, she refuses to accept Kevin's offer of money for an abortion, and, after a tumultuous pregnancy, has a baby girl. Her partner's abuse ebbs and flows, and his threats and her fear that he will take Mary

from her keep Annie in the marriage. It takes a final, violent event to prove to Annie that she has to break free--but is it too late? Unfortunately, the novel is marred by awkward sentence structure and didacticism. While the conversations between characters are more realistic, teens will be put off by the pedantic tone of the narration. This is an important topic, but the book is too long and rambling to hold the interest of young adults.--Lynn Evarts, Sauk Prairie High School, Prairie du Sac, WI  
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"I was surprised and delighted to see the involvement and enthusiasm of a multi-cultural population of young women..." -- Susam M. Sanders PhD Associate Professor Public Services Graduate Program Depaul University, Chicago, Illinois "The topic was well recieved and the students really got into the book." -- Karla Fiaoni, J.D. Adjunct Professor Governor's State University "This book provides the reader with the shocking reality of dating abuse. It allows the reader to enter the world..." -- Sr. Mary Therese Mount Assisi Academy Lemont, Illinois --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Every adolescent girl should read this book

I gave this book 4 stars because I happen to know that this is a true and factual story and also because the information at the back of the book detailing what the indicators are of an abuser are excellent. Covers both physical and psychological/emotional abusers. A few of them were real eye openers.

I read this book in middle school had to order it! It's amazing!

I received this book in the mail exactly when I was I would. It was in great condition, just like the description said.

I was a bit disappointed because the book was not in as good of condition as described. However, being I didn't pay much for it, I am not too upset. But I received it fast, so that was awesome!=0)

A few years ago, I picked up my son from a Catholic high school (SW corner of Chicago, sort of rhymes with "Fairest"). The school had recently gone from all-boys to co-ed, and at the intersection

outside the parking lot we pulled up alongside a red sedan carrying two kids in school uniforms--a boy and a girl. They were talking, when all of a sudden the driver--the boy--wound up and smashed the girl in the face with his fist. The girl's head flopped forward, but at that point the light changed and we lost them. My son and I were horrified, but we had a description of the car, part of the license plate number, and a good look at the kids. I knew the school had a list of students who were registered to park in their lot, and I figured that would be enough information for the school to track them down--especially if the girl had a busted lip or black eye. As soon as I got home, I called the school to report the incident. I was connected to an administrator who cut off my narrative to ask, "Did this happen on school property?" "No," I said, "It happened at the light on 115th..." "Well, then--it did not happen on our property, so it's not really our problem. Thanks and have a nice day." That reaction was almost as shocking as incident itself. Unfortunately, the admin's response is all too common. Annie, the protagonist in "The Breakable Vow," musters the courage several times to seek help. Not only is she shot down and dismissed, but when her husband finds out that she's been "disloyal" to him, he feels compelled to smack her around some more to teach her a lesson. My daughter read this book as part of her (all-girl) high school's effort to raise awareness about abusive relationships. She passed it on to me, and I can honestly say it was a riveting story. Because it's based on a true story, I knew the author (presumably the victim) survived her ordeal. It resonated with my daughter on several levels, and I think the book's message will stay with my daughter, and her friends, for a long time. The book follows Annie's relationship with a popular, handsome jock from the time they start dating in high school, to her pregnancy and their subsequent marriage, and to the Texas college town where her husband is on a football ride. Confined to student housing with a small child, Annie is lonely for her Chicago family; her husband has cut her off from having any social contacts at all unless they involve him. He fits the typical abuser profile: she "makes" him hit her, then he's effusive in his regret and concern. He methodically erodes her sense of self-worth and independence, and his attacks after each of her "transgressions" become more and more vicious. But fortunately, Annie has enough fortitude and courage to resist his total control, and she's able to take steps to help herself. Her fears for her child's well-being force her to remain strong. The portrait of this young family is compelling. Annie's husband is not a monster 100% of the time: the reader can easily see how he was able to continue his abuse for so long, because his reasoning seems plausible to outsiders. Also realistic is Annie's home life. Her father is a widower with several children, Southside Irish Catholics who are traditional in the practice of their religion and their relationships with each other. It's a stable, wholesome home; the dad is always loving and affectionate toward his kids, and they seem balanced and secure. So how did Annie fall into this

relationship? This underscores the sad fact that abuse can and does happen to anyone. Because abusers are manipulative and can turn on and off their disturbing behavior, Annie constantly overrode her instincts to ditch him and instead gave him one more chance, then another, then another...ultimately, the decision to remain this boy's partner was hers to make. And though some of her friends and relatives did encourage her to break up with the boy, others made excuses for him and implied that Annie was overreacting. In one of my reviews for another book, Gavin deBecker's "The Gift of Fear," I mention his statement that with people who are abused, "the first time you're a victim, the next time you're a volunteer." A lot of people took offense at that, and while the statement itself is an exaggeration, his point is valid. The abused person will continue to be abused until she (or he) says, "Enough! This ends now!" and then takes steps to get out of the relationship. The abuser is not going to suddenly realize that beatings are wrong, and then become the perfect, considerate partner. Nor will family or friends be able to pull the abused person out of a dangerous situation and keep her (or him) safe. It is totally up to the victim to draw the line. Annie is a perfect example. It's hard, and she has to overcome a lot of embarrassment and doubt, but there are a lot of people who are only too willing to help. She was able to benefit from that help when she decided, "Enough! This ends now!" and took the risk of planning her escape. The edition of the book we read had several typos, which I hope has been corrected in the following editions. Nothing big, just distracting. The book is part of an anti-abuse initiative, and I think every high school should have a program like this in place. You can try to model good relationships and advise your kids, but it helps to have backup. I would recommend this book to any high school student--girls and boys--as well as their parents. The message in this book could save your life--or the life of someone you love very deeply. Too bad the admin of "Fairist High School, Home of the (rhymes with) Bedhawks" didn't read it.

I loved this book ever since we read it as a group in 8th grade. And was so mad that I forgot the name of it. I've been searching for this book for years. Glad I found it!

Stephanie 3/28/07  
The Breakable Vow, Kathryn Ann Clarke 0-06-051821-9  
In 2001 there was reported 691,710 cases of non-fatal violence from spouses, ex-spouses, and boyfriends or girlfriends. There should not be violence in relationships between people. In The Breakable Vow Annie and her boyfriend, Kevin, had been going out for a while and Annie went on a camping trip with her friend, Rene. Kevin is a pretty jealous guy, so he showed up to surprise her, but was really making sure she wasn't cheating on him. While they were there Rene went off to hang out with

some other camp people, and Kevin pressured Annie into having sex with him. When Annie got back from the camping trip she felt very sick, and found out that she was pregnant. When she told Kevin he told her that his mom could pay for an abortion, but Annie didn't want to get rid of her kid. This story is realistic fiction. One day after one of Annie's doctor appointments Kevin was getting ready to drive her home, but stopped. He said, "Who's Herold." Herold was a guy that Annie met while camping. Then, when she said that he was just a guy she met while camping and didn't do anything with him, Kevin reached over and started to strangle her. She tried to get out, but couldn't. He told her he had no choice, but to strangle her, and that she was a slut. She finally got out of the car and ran home. She wasn't talking to him, but a couple of days later he came to her house and apologized. He said he would never touch her again. So, a couple months later she had her baby, and they got married. They moved to Texas for Kevin, because he had a football scholarship there. They continued to get into fights, and some were violent, but not extremely violent. Annie started going to a counselor. She told her that Kevin hurts her, then acts all nice to get her back, and that she's in big danger. Well, one night when Kevin found out that some boy at Annie's work liked her he came running into the house extremely drunk and it went too far. This was one of the best books I've read in months! It had an interesting topic to start out, and it was very suspenseful. For example, when Kevin found out that some guy at Annie's worked liked her it ended the chapter with this, "She was two steps from the front door when she saw the knob turning." I could not put the book down, because I wanted to know what happened next, and if Annie would get out alright. I 100% recommend this book, because it kept me reading for hours, and the story line never got boring. Also, some books have really stupid endings, but the ending to this book made me feel like I knew what happened, even though it pretty much left you at a cliff hanger. I felt very satisfied after the book ended. I hope that you read this book, and learn some facts on abusers too.

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