



## Summary

Jacob Finch Bonner was once a promising young novelist with a respectably published first book. Today, he's teaching in a third-rate MFA program and struggling to maintain what's left of his self-respect; he hasn't written let alone published anything decent in years. When Evan Parker, his most arrogant student, announces he doesn't need Jake's help because the plot of his book in progress is a sure thing, Jake is prepared to dismiss the boast as typical amateur narcissism. But then . . . he hears the plot.

Jake returns to the downward trajectory of his own career and braces himself for the supernova publication of Evan Parker's first novel: but it never comes. When he discovers that his former student has died, presumably without ever completing his book, Jake does what any self-respecting writer would do with a story like that a story that absolutely needs to be told.

In a few short years, all of Evan Parker's predictions have come true, but Jake is the author enjoying the wave. He is wealthy, famous, praised and read all over the world. But at the height of his glorious new life, an e-mail arrives, the first salvo in a terrifying, anonymous campaign: You are a thief, it says.

As Jake struggles to understand his antagonist and hide the truth from his readers and his publishers, he begins to learn more about his late student, and what he discovers both amazes and terrifies him. Who was Evan Parker, and how did he get the idea for his "sure thing" of a novel? What is the real story behind the plot, and who stole it from whom?

Courtesy of the publisher



## About the Author

Jean Hanff Korelitz is the author of the novels *You Should Have Known* (which aired on HBO in October 2020 as *The Undoing*, starring Nicole Kidman, Hugh Grant, and Donald Sutherland), *Admission* (adapted as a film in 2013 starring Tina Fey), *The Devil and Webster*, *The White Rose*, *The Sabbathday River* and *A Jury of Her Peers*, as well as *Interference Powder*, a novel for children.

Korelitz is the founder of BOOKTHEWRITER, a New York City based service that hosts Pop-Up Book Groups in which small groups of readers discuss new books with their authors. She lives with her husband, Irish poet Paul Muldoon, are the parents of two children and live in New York City.

## Discussion Questions

1. Is writing an innate talent, or can it be taught?
2. Do you think Jake would have stolen the story if he knew where it came from?
3. Does anyone have the right to tell someone else's story?
4. What constitutes plagiarism? Did Jake cross that line?
5. What role does gossip and social media play in this story?
6. Which did you enjoy more, the story within the novel or the plot itself?
7. Who did you suspect @TalentedTom was?
8. The author includes a number of literary allusions throughout the novel; which ones did you notice?
9. Consider the triple meaning of the word "plot"—a story, a gravesite, a secret plan. How did the author involve each of these in the novel?
10. Discuss the conclusion. Were you surprised by the ending?