

Back Spin Study Guide

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Plot Summary

In *Back Spin*, sports agent Myron Bolitar is called on to investigate the kidnapping of Chad Coldren, son of two professional golfers, while Chad's father Jack is well on his way to winning the U.S. Open. Myron is drawn into a plot that goes back to the last time Jack Coldren nearly won the U.S. Open, twenty-three years ago. Myron's investigations suddenly shift when Jack Coldren is murdered and Chad is released. Finally, Myron traces the murder to Jack's wife Linda, who shot him because he could not succumb to the kidnapers' real demands, that he throw the U.S. Open.

As the story opens, Myron is attending the U.S. Open. Jack Coldren is unexpectedly leading, and promising newcomer Tad Crispin is in second place. Jack's wife Linda, a professional golfer as well, asks Myron for help. Their son has been kidnapped. Jack agrees to help, even though his friend and business associate Win refuses to assist because Linda is his first cousin, related to Win's estranged mother.

The kidnapers phone twice without making specific demands. Meanwhile, Myron learns that Chad used his ATM card at a cash machine near a sleazy motel. At first, Myron suspects that Chad might be pulling a hoax, but he soon learns that one of the kidnapers is a neo-Nazi thug.

Slowly, Myron uncovers possible suspects. Jack's former caddy, who Jack blamed for his loss at the U.S. Open years ago, has disappeared. He's possibly committed suicide, but he could be out for revenge. Esme Fong has signed Tad Crispin as a spokesman for a new line of golf clothes, and if Jack loses, her ad campaign will be a success. Chad's best friend's father is a rich crook, and Jack has a mysterious argument with his female caddy.

The kidnapers send Chad's severed finger to Linda, and Myron is horrified. Then, he tracks down the neo-Nazi and finds that he's been murdered. The next thing Myron knows, Jack has been murdered, too. Then, the kidnapers release Chad, leaving Myron with unanswered questions. Jack's wife Linda is arrested, and her lawyer makes Myron an attorney of record to protect her.

Myron learns that Esme is really Lloyd Rennart's daughter from his first marriage, and she kidnapped Chad to make sure Jack lost the U.S. Open. After Tito, the neo-Nazi, cut off Chad's finger, Esme killed him. Myron turns Esme over to the police. Myron realizes that there's more to the story, though. Jack knew that the kidnapers wanted him to lose the U.S. Open, but he kept winning anyway. When his wife Linda found out, she killed him to save her son. As Linda's attorney, Myron can't go to the police, and Linda will likely never be brought to justice for her husband's murder.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

In *Back Spin*, sports agent Myron Bolitar is called on to investigate the kidnapping of Chad Coldren, son of two professional golfers, while Chad's father Jack is well on his way to winning the U.S. Open. Myron is drawn into a plot that goes back to the last time Jack Coldren nearly won the U.S. Open, twenty-three years ago. Myron's investigations suddenly shift when Jack Coldren is murdered and Chad is released. Finally, Myron traces the murder to Jack's wife Linda, who shot him because he could not succumb to the kidnapers' real demands, that he throw the U.S. Open.

As the novel begins, Myron is watching the U.S. Open at Merion golf course in Philadelphia when an elderly man approaches him, offering that Myron could become the agent of pro golfers Jack and Linda Coldren, if he helps them out of trouble. Linda has been a major player in women's professional golf, and Jack, who has had a lackluster career, is having sudden success at the U.S. Open, sporting a commanding lead. Myron goes with the man, who he learns is Stone "Bucky" Buckwell, Linda Coldren's father. He's also Myron's business partner Win's uncle, the brother of Win's estranged mother Cissy Lockwood.

Myron meets Linda Coldren. She's watching her husband Jack on TV. He currently has a commanding lead in the U.S. Open. Twenty-three years ago, at the beginning of his career, Jack had the lead at the U.S. Open but choked at the end of the tournament. His career has been lackluster at best. Now, he's winning again. Linda recognizes Myron's name. He is a former basketball player who injured his knee in his first professional season, ending his career. Linda reveals to Myron that her son's been kidnapped.

The kidnapers haven't demanded ransom yet, but claim to have 16-year-old Chad Coldren and promise to kill him if Linda goes to the police. Chad has been away for two days, and Linda assumed he was staying with his friend Matt. If Chad disappeared before the tournament, the kidnapers aren't targeting Jack to make him lose. Myron wonders if Chad could be behind his own kidnapping, but Linda is sure he isn't. Myron thinks it odd that Linda hasn't been in touch with her son for two days, but Linda insists Chad is mature and independent.

Myron agrees to investigate as if the kidnapping is real, and he asks for Matt's phone number. He also gets a list of Chad's credit and ATM cards. Linda can't think of any enemies who would do something like this. Myron checks Chad's answering machine and downloads information from his computer. He finds no phone calls or e-mails from Chad's friend Matt, but Chad's last call out was to Matt. Myron calls his assistant Esperanza and tells her what's happened. She's worried about Win's reaction when he finds out Myron is conducting an investigation related to his mother.



Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The novel begins with Myron's first contact with the situation that will drive the plot, the kidnapping of Chad Coldren. Myron is an outsider looking in on the situation and delving into it to find out what is really going on. The reader is also such an outsider and follows Myron's involvement from beginning to end. The approach of Bucky draws the reader into the situation, just as it draws Myron into the situation.

The setting of the U.S. Open provides a backdrop of professional sports that not only explains Myron's involvement, but also creates ongoing tension. The championship is at stake. Immediately, the reader realizes that Jack is winning, and that his victory is thrilling. This potential victory is a point of suspense. Will Jack maintain his lead? Even though Jack does not know it yet, his lead is threatened by the news of his son's kidnapping. This creates dramatic irony, since the reader knows what Jack cannot. As his wife, and the reader, watch him leading on television, Jack does not suspect that his nearly assured victory is about to be threatened.

The subplot of Win's relationship with his family is also introduced in the beginning of the novel. Myron's friend Win won't have anything to do with his mother or her side of the family. The reasons, though, are a mystery, another incentive for the reader to keep turning the page.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

Esperanza finds out that Chad's ATM card was used the previous day around 6 p.m. Myron suspects that the kidnapper wouldn't have risked exposure to take out less than the maximum withdrawal. Myron goes to the ATM location to investigate and finds nearby a sleazy area with a no-tell motel, the Court Manor Inn. Inside, Myron is greeted by a cheerful manager named Stuart Lipwitz.

Myron shows the manager Chad's photo, but Stuart refuses to help. He wants to maintain his clients' privacy. Myron tries to bribe Stuart, but fails. Still, Myron suspects that Chad has been at the hotel. Myron claims that Chad was assaulted at the motel, by someone with a key from the front desk, but Stuart calls his bluff. If that were the case, Myron would already know that Chad was there. Myron leaves in defeat.

Myron calls Win and agrees to meet him at Merion for dinner. After he hangs up, Bucky calls. The kidnappers have phoned again, asking for ransom, but didn't say how much. Jack took the ransom call at Merion. Myron meets Bucky at Merion and goes to talk with Jack, who is at the driving range with his caddy, Diane Hoffman. Jack says that he received an emergency call while he was on the course. The kidnapper used an electronic voice changer to disguise his or her voice. Jack is more receptive to the idea that the kidnapping could be a hoax, but he can't think of a reason.

Myron guesses that the motive for the kidnapping might be to hurt Jack by stopping him from winning the U.S. Open, and Jack says if so, it could be anyone, not necessarily his son, trying to hurt him. Jack seems to react to the address where Chad's ATM card was used, but he doesn't elaborate. Instead, he asks Myron about his basketball career and how important winning was to him. Chad confesses that, even though his son has been kidnapped, he still cares about winning the U.S. Open.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Myron begins his investigation by looking for any information he can find. He doesn't know what will be helpful and what won't. He doesn't have a theory. His first step is simply gathering as much information as possible. The first clue is that Chad's ATM card has been used, and this brings him to a new location and in contact with a new character. Stuart Lipwitz, with his emphasis on excellent customer service in a sleazy by-the-hour motel, adds comic relief to the plot but also creates an obstacle for Myron to overcome. Myron suspects that Chad has been to the motel, but he doesn't know for sure. He also doesn't know why Chad came there.

The phone calls from the kidnapper serve to move the plot forward. Each time the kidnappers call, it gives Myron more information and enhances the potential danger to Chad. The call at Merion defeats Myron's precautions of recording phone calls to the



Coldren's house. Like Jack Coldren, Myron is competing in a game, only this game has higher stakes. Myron's opponents are the kidnappers, and his goal is to safely return Chad to his family. Myron takes on these tasks because he has a strong sense of competition, one that's been squelched by having to give up his basketball career. He's starting out behind the kidnappers, with no information. He is the underdog, and the reader roots for Myron as he tries to defeat the odds and find out the truth.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

Myron meets his partner Win at the Merion clubhouse. They order iced teas. Myron tells Win that he's helping investigate the kidnapping of Jack Coldren's son. Since Linda Coldren is Win's cousin, the niece of his estranged mother, Win will not help. Myron asks about the empty seats at the table, and Win says he has a potential client coming, Tad Crispin, a promising young golfer. Tad was the favorite to win before Jack Coldren's initial success at the Open. Tad doesn't believe he needs an agent but wants to hire Win as a financial adviser.

Myron asks Win about Jack, and Win explains that Jack blames his caddy for spoiling his chances at the last U.S. Open he almost won, over twenty years ago. Win doesn't want to talk about Jack, though, and loud, energetic Norm Zuckerman joins them. He introduces Esme Fong, the marketing VP in charge of the new golf line. Esme has signed Linda Coldren as spokeswoman for the women's golf clothing line. As the men joke around, some members of the golf club seem offended by Norm's loud, outspoken Jewish cultural bent, but Norm laughs it off.

If Jack loses the U.S. Open, Tad Crispin, who is in second place, will win. Then Zoom will have two U.S. Open winners in their ads, and Tad will be a winner in an exciting comeback at the end of the tournament. Esme leaves, and Norm says that she's a Yale graduate that he recruited from Nike. Esme is heading off to see Linda, and Myron excuses himself to call and warn her. Linda didn't cancel the appointment because she didn't want to act strangely. Myron talks to Jack and gets the name of his former caddy, Lloyd Rennart. Perhaps the current kidnapping has to do with Jack's former loss, the one he blamed on his caddy.

Myron phones Esperanza so that she can research Lloyd Rennart. Esperanza's graduation from law school is coming up. In addition, Esperanza is going to have lunch with Myron's girlfriend Jessica. Myron phones Jess to ask about the lunch date, since Esperanza and Jess don't get along. Jess tells him that he's being nosy. When Myron returns to lunch, he meets Tad Crispin. Win explains to Tad his role as financial adviser. In his capacity as financial consultant, his first recommendation is for Tad to hire an agent: Myron. Myron points out that Tad could be making more money by carrying logos on his clothes and equipment. Then, Myron is interrupted by a cell phone call from Linda Coldren. The kidnappers called again.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Tad Crispin is introduced as a potential suspect. Even if Myron does not suspect him, the reader knows that Tad is in second place at the U.S. Open. A win would be an incredible boon to Tad's career. Since Myron is vying to become Tad's agent, he is also



putting himself in a potentially precarious situation. Tad's interests may conflict with the interests of the Coldrens'. The more the reader thinks over the situations in the book, the more red herrings and potential dangers present themselves.

Jack's former loss at the U.S. Open twenty-three years ago is another tantalizing mystery, leaving the reader looking for connections to the present plot. Norm Zuckerman and Esme Fong are also potential suspects. If Tad wins, the Zoom clothing line will have a wildly popular, come-from-behind hero as its spokesman. The subplot of Zoom's clothing line and of Myron's potential client serve to add suspects to a growing pool and create motives for Myron, and the reader, to choose from.



Chapters 7-9

Chapters 7-9 Summary

Linda plays a recording of the call from the kidnapper. The kidnapper knows that Esme is in the house, calling her by a racial epithet. Jack explains who Esme is, and the kidnapper demands a "penalty" of \$100,000. The call ends with Chad's scream. Myron wants to call the FBI, but Linda and Jack are adamant that calling the authorities would put Chad in danger. Myron gets his friend Lisa at New York Bell to trace the phone number from the caller ID, and he learns it's a pay phone at Grand Mercado Mall in Bala Cynwyd. Even though it means leaving a potential client, Myron goes off to investigate. He asks Win to get surveillance video of the ATM where Chad's card was used.

Myron drives to the mall and goes to the food court, where most of the payphones are. After locating the phone where the call was made, he tries to get information out of the workers at one of the fast-food restaurants, but they are unhelpful. Then, he talks to a group of teenage girls sitting at a table. They describe a tall, skinny man with a bald head, beard, and swastika tattoo, wearing jeans and work boots, who made a call. He had a hand-held device with him. The girls think it was a beeper, but Myron assumes it was a tape player with a recording of Chad's scream. He gives the girls his business card, in case they have more information.

After deciding that one of the kidnappers was probably watching the Coldren's house, Myron parks his car at Merion and walks to the house to see if he can spot anyone. He sees no one. As he's watching the house, Esme leaves. A bit later, Myron hears a sound. In the back yard, Jack Coldren is arguing with his caddy, Diane. Diane finally slaps Jack and leaves. Later still, Myron sees someone climb out of Chad Coldren's window. Myron wishes Win were there to follow the figure. Myron runs after him but loses him at a dead-end called Green Acres Road. They figure either fled into the woods or one of the wealthy houses. Myron waits for an hour, but nothing happens. He leaves.

Chapters 7-9 Analysis

Myron is more concerned with Chad's kidnapping than with his own business. He is ready to drop his meeting with Tad at any new development. The phone call, ending in Chad's scream, moves the plot forward and creates more urgency and danger. It also creates a lead. Myron gets a phone number from his caller ID equipment, and he's led to a new location, the Grand Mercado Mall, and a new suspect, the neo-Nazi. This character is obviously a bad guy. The girls describe him as gross looking and scummy. His swastika tattoo marks him as the most evil type of villain. He is unattractive in every way.



Even though the discovery of the neo-Nazi is a step forward, Myron also takes a step back. The kidnappers know more than he does. They know of Esme Fong's visit to the Coldrens' house. Myron is struggling to figure out why and how they could know and put the pieces of the puzzle together. As he tries to solve one mystery, he is confronted with more. Why is Diane fighting with Jack? Who is the figure who climbs out of Chad's window? At Green Acres Road, Myron hits a dead end in more ways than one.



Chapters 10-12

Chapters 10-12 Summary

Myron returns to Win's family estate, where they are staying at the guesthouse. Myron's not sure what the real motive for the kidnapping is—money, or making Jack lose the U.S. Open. It might even still be a hoax. At the guesthouse, Myron sees Win's Jaguar and an unknown Chevy. He finds Win sitting in the dark drinking brandy, and joins him with a Yoo-Hoo. He hears a toilet flush and realizes Win has brought home a woman, a stranger.

Myron asks Win about Jack's chances of winning the Open, and Win says that Jack has a fire in his eyes that shows his determination to win. According to Win, Jack lost his drive to win twenty-three years ago when he lost the U.S. Open, and now he's just regained it. Win has known Jack Coldren since Jack was fifteen. Win sees the desire to win as selfish and not admirable. Win's "date," a prostitute, leaves in a taxi, and Win takes off in the unfamiliar car.

Myron can't sleep and waits up until Win returns at 3:30 in the morning. Then, only three hours later, he is awakened by Esperanza. She's brought information about Lloyd Rennart, who killed himself eight months ago by jumping off a cliff in Peru. The body has not been found. Myron catches Esperanza up on what's been happening, including Win's "night visiting," taking old, untraceable Chevies into bad neighborhoods to deliver vigilante "justice" to criminals. Win interrupts them, awake and chipper. He tells Myron that Tad Crispin is interested in signing on with Myron, and he gives Myron the security tape of Chad's ATM card being used.

Myron visits Linda and Jack Coldren. He tells them about the figure who left through their window the previous night. Linda says that Matt Squires, Chad's friend, lives on Green Acres Road. Myron shows them the video, which shows Chad, smiling and laughing, taking out the money. There's someone else in the car, but he or she can't be seen. Linda is still not convinced that the kidnapping is a hoax, but Jack thinks it is. Myron tells them about the man at the payphone. Maybe that means it's not a hoax. Linda offers to become Myron's client if he keeps investigating. She's positive that Chad's in trouble. Myron promises to check out Matthew Squires' house.

Chapters 10-12 Analysis

Win's character and subplot are explored in this section. Win is secretive and quiet. He clearly has strong emotions that he hides, because strong emotions are the only explanation for his refusal to see or speak with or be involved with his mother. Myron even describes meeting Win's mother on one former occasion, and Win refused to acknowledge her presence. Beneath the surface, something is simmering.



Win's personality is ambiguous, if not sinister. He has sexual hang-ups and problems with women, and his companion for the evening is a prostitute. More disturbing is Win's nighttime prowling, which is clearly motivated by the disturbed emotions that he does not show on the surface. Esperanza mentions that she thought Win stopped doing that, indicating that it's out of the norm for him. Myron is worried about Win's nighttime prowling, making it seem even more sinister. The untraceable car shows that Win is doing something illicit, and it creates suspense for the reader.

Meanwhile, the ATM tape and the person who climbed out of Chad's window point toward the kidnapping being a hoax. Linda is steadfast in believing that her son is in trouble, and this pushes the story forward. Linda's character takes on the dimensions of a femme fatale in film noir. She is an attractive woman in trouble, but she may not be exactly what she seems.



Chapters 13-15

Chapters 13-15 Summary

Myron goes to the gate of Matthew Squires' house and asks to see him. The disembodied voice on the intercom asks if he has an appointment and refuses to let him in. The speaker won't even identify himself. Myron phones Sheriff Jack Courter, sheriff of Reston, New Jersey, to ask about the Squires family. Jack tells him that Reginald Squires, known as "Big Blue" is a criminal, possibly involved in drugs and prostitution. Jack doesn't know if Squires was ever involved in kidnapping, but he might be. After he hangs up, Myron wonders why Chad was using the ATM and decides to visit the Court Manor Inn again.

To get information out of the uncooperative manager of the Court Manor Inn, Myron stands outside of the motel with a camera, taking pictures of everyone who heads toward the motel. Stuart Lipwitz comes out to object. Myron promises to leave if Stuart tells him whether Chad was at the motel, and Stuart calls it blackmail. Another car drives up, and Myron's camera drives away the older man with a young prostitute.

Stuart heads back to the motel, and soon a large, muscled black man shows up and asks him to leave. The man doesn't want to use violence, but he says he will if he has to. He agrees to tell Myron that Chad was at the hotel and only stayed one night. He won't give Myron any more information, and Myron agrees to leave. Then, Myron receives a call from one of the girls he questioned at the mall, telling him that his suspect is at the McDonald's in the food court.

When Myron arrives at the mall, his suspect is just finishing his burger. Myron follows the man out to the parking lot, where he gets into a pickup truck sporting a Confederate flag. Myron follows the truck in his Ford Taurus. Myron calls the Nazi "Crusty" in his head. Crusty stops the pickup and gets out, running, and Myron follows to an old building. When he goes in, he is ambushed by Crusty and two friends with tire irons. Myron calls them "Beneath the Planet of Crusty Nazi" and "Escape from the Planet of Crusty Nazi" to himself. Myron can see that the three are on cocaine.

Crusty demands to know why Myron's following him, and Myron makes up a story. He says he was following Crusty as a test and wants Crusty to sell cocaine. Crusty knows that Myron was asking about him and the phone call at the mall, though. Myron kicks one of Crusty's friends and runs for the car. Crusty breaks Myron's window with his tire iron, and Myron is barely able to drive off after hitting Crusty in the nose.

Chapters 13-15 Analysis

Another suspect is added to the pool when Myron learns that Matt Squires' father is an off-balance criminal. Though he has everything he needs, he needs to amuse himself by dabbling in violence and crime. Reginald Squires is protected by his wealth, and he



doesn't need to care about other people. He has no inner inhibitions, and the constrictions of society don't apply to him because of wealth and privilege. A lower-class person with the same predilections would soon find himself in jail, or worse.

Myron's trick of taking photographs of the people coming into the Court Manor Inn is clever. He isn't breaking any laws, but he's endangering the thing Stuart cares about most: his customers. Myron attracts a higher up, getting him one step closer to forces that can help him. He also learns new information, confirming that Chad was at the hotel for one night. Though Myron is self-deprecating, he shows that he has both intelligence and physical fighting abilities.

The neo-Nazi suspect turns up again, and now Myron must put both his physical and mental capabilities to work. Although Myron is a better fighter and much smarter than the neo-Nazi, he finds himself in a three-against-one fight, as the underdog yet again. Myron first tries to talk his way out of the situation and then uses his quick physical reflexes to escape. Despite constantly reprimanding himself for stupidity, Myron's actual feats are impressive.



Chapter 16-18

Chapter 16-18 Summary

Myron can't find any information about the pickup's license number, since it's got expired plates, probably stolen. He finds nothing at the abandoned building where he was attacked. Myron wonders if the Nazis ran into Chad at the motel and kidnapped him on their own, but he suspects that there's something more going on. At Merion, Jack is playing the fourteenth hole against Tad Crispin, and Myron runs into Norm and Esme. Norm has bought advertising on a golf bag. Now the caddie has a towel draped over the bag. Myron is not a golfer, and yet Norm points out, he seems to be wooing all the high-name clients, like Tad, Jack, and Linda. Myron ducks Norm's probing. Then, Norm notes how good-looking Esme is, wondering if she's only half Asian. Myron excuses himself.

At the fourteenth hole, Jack seems to be "in the zone" and makes a put for a birdie. Myron heads over to the corporate area, where companies put up sponsored tents, mainly as an excuse for executives to attend the tournament. Myron finds Esperanza at the Locke-Horn tent, sponsored by Win's financial services company. Esperanza has found Lloyd Rennart's wife, an artist. Lloyd has no death certificate yet, possibly because his body is missing. Esperanza broaches her graduation from law school. As an attorney, she wants her own office. Also, she wants to become a partner in the firm. Myron at first responds by joking, but then he admits that he's caught unprepared. He's just been beat up, and he needs time to think about the idea of a partnership. Esperanza agrees to talk later.

After Esperanza leaves, Linda finds Myron in the Locke-Horn tent. He tells her about being attacked and again suggests calling in the FBI. Linda rejects the idea. She tells him that, as a new mother, she took two years off of her promising golf career. Then, she traveled with Chad and a nanny for a year. Since then, she's been balancing her career with motherhood, and she has mother's guilt. Myron suggests that Jack might have stayed home with Chad. On years when Jack didn't qualify for the professional tournaments, he did stay home.

Linda says that Chad used to idolize his father, but she's not sure anymore, now that he's older. Linda also confesses that she and her husband are distant. Myron is attracted to Linda, and she asks him about himself. Myron is reticent, admitting that he used to work for the government with Win and that he dates Jessica Culver. When Linda asks about his dreams, Myron tells her that he wants to marry Jessica and have a family. Linda tells Myron that she knew Win when he was just a child, and he idolized Jack. Win was always detached, and his mother is the same way. Linda and Myron talk until Myron has to leave for his appointment with Tad Crispin. The meeting results in no deal, and Myron rejoins Linda. They walk to her car, where Linda finds a package. It contains a note from the kidnapers and a severed finger.



Myron is terrified and wants to call in the FBI. Linda refuses and tells Myron he's fired. Myron says that she can't know it's Chad's finger, and she counters that she does. Linda says she never should have sought Myron's help and tells him good-bye. Linda drives off. Myron tries to pull his thoughts together. He wonders how the envelope was delivered to Linda's locked car and realizes that Crusty could never have gone unnoticed at Merion.

Myron drives to Win's guesthouse and blurts out that the kidnappers cut off Chad's finger. Win discounts the tragedy as minor, instead asking about the deal with Tad Crispin. He says that other tragedies are more meaningful to him, describing how an anonymous tip the previous night led police to the buried bodies of two boys and physical evidence allowing them to arrest the suspected molester and murderer. Myron asks about Win's mother, and Win says his mother is not responsible for who he is. Myron begs for Win's help, but Win refuses. Inside, Esperanza is watching Wheel of Fortune. Myron realizes that she came to Philadelphia to help, and she agrees to help him.

Chapter 16-18 Analysis

The story jumps from dirty, drug-infested back alleys to the high-class Merion golf club. The crime and depravity that Myron runs into is an underworld flowing beneath the surface of Philadelphia. It intertwines with the lives of the wealthy and privileged, and not only in unbalanced people like Reginald Squires. Chad Coldren has certainly come into contact with the underworld, and it is a secret side of the life at Merion.

Myron has just been beat up, and he's at one of his lowest points in the story. He's pushed lower as Norm points out to him that his relationship with the Coldrens, which isn't supposed to attract any attention, is noticeable. He goes back to rest, and he finds himself confronted with another problem. Esperanza is important to Myron and to his firm, but now she's asking for more than he's prepared to give. Like in his personal relationship with Jessica, Myron is afraid to make a commitment. He doesn't know what will happen if things go sour after he makes Esperanza his partner. His professional relationship with Esperanza directly parallels his personal relationship with Jessica.

Linda comes to Myron for comfort, or is she using him for some obscure purpose? Linda seems more and more like the traditional femme fatale of film noir, an attractive woman with something to hide. Usually, she turns out to be bad news. Is her interest in Myron real, or is it fake? She emphasizes her role as a mother and the importance of her son Chad to her, but Linda's marriage is emotionally over, leaving an opening for Myron's growing attraction to her. Myron is nervous about his relationship with Jessica, even though they are happily living together, and while he is physically separated from his girlfriend, he is vulnerable to the approach of another woman. Myron's talk with Linda is marked by sexual tension.

Myron's growing feelings for Linda are suddenly cut short when he walks her back to her car and discovers Chad's severed finger. She immediately turns cold and cuts off



Myron, choosing her son above everything else. With Linda, ultimately everything comes back to her son. Myron, however, has been drawn into the drama. He can't distance himself from other people's problems like Win can, and he feels responsible for the injury to Chad. Myron's emotions cloud his judgment. He goes to his steady, stable friend Win and gets rebuffed. The reader also learns about Win's nighttime hunting activities. It's likely that instead of their being a "witness" to the molester burying the two bodies, Win tortured the molester to find the information. Still, this isn't certain. Why didn't the molester then run, knowing he'd been discovered, or move the bodies? Win's investigative techniques are left in the dark.



Chapters 19-21

Chapters 19-21 Summary

Myron returns to the mall food court to find the same group of airheaded teenage girls at the same table. He can tell which girl tipped off Crusty by the look on her face almost immediately. Myron doesn't remember her name, but it begins with M. He pretends to be an undercover cop and says he has one loose end, Crusty's accomplice. He says if the accomplice doesn't come forward, she could be charged with attempted murder. Then, Myron waits by the restroom. When the girl, Mindy, gets up, Myron remembers her name. She doesn't head toward him, though. She goes to the exit.

Mindy refuses to talk with Myron, and Esperanza follows her to a payphone. Myron's receptionist, Big Cyndi, traces the number: the Parker Inn bar. Myron finds out that Crusty's real name is Tito, Tit to his friends, and gets Mindy to come with him and Esperanza to the bar by threatening to tell her friends that she's involved with Tito.

After Myron, Esperanza, and Mindy arrive at the rough biker bar, Esperanza adjusts her clothes to look sexy and, carrying her cell phone with an open line to Myron for safety, goes in to find out information. One of the bar patron recognizes Esperanza from her days with the Fabulous Ladies of Wrestling. The bartender, Hal, recognizes that Esperanza doesn't belong in his low-class bar and asks what she wants. For \$150, the bartender tells her that Tito and his friends come in every night except Wednesdays and Saturdays. She wants to give him the money the next day, if Tito shows, but Hal threatens Esperanza with rape. She gives him the \$150 and promises him another hundred to keep quiet.

Myron goes back to Win's guesthouse with Esperanza to relax, eat pizza, and impress his friends with his knowledge of Jack Klugman. Based on episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, Myron has realized that Jack Klugman must have worn a toupee in *The Odd Couple*. At the end of the evening, he leaves Jess a message that he loves her.

The next day, Jack Coldren starts rapidly dropping strokes from his lead, and Myron assumes he's rattled about his son's severed finger. Myron says he'll renegotiate Tad Crispin's deal with Zoom, and Win calls it unethical. Esme Fong is on edge. If Jack loses his lead, it means a huge boom for Zoom's new golf clothing line. On the sixteenth hold, Jack hits his ball into the same hazard that cost him the U.S. Open twenty-three years ago. By the eighteenth hold, Jack is behind and must hit a twenty-two foot put to tie. Miraculously, he makes it. The two golfers will play a play-off round the following day.

Chapters 19-21 Analysis

Myron's experience being beat up by the neo-Nazis leaves him battered and without much information, but it does give him a lead. In another example of his intelligent



deduction, Myron knows that he was set up by one of the girls at the food court. Because they are just teenagers, Myron is able to see immediately which one of the girls is responsible, and she's his first real lead to track down the neo-Nazi.

The book's portrayal of teenagers is completely unflattering. The girls at the food court are airheaded and critical. Mindy is sucked in to a relationship with someone who has no redeeming qualities whatever, and her greatest fear is that her friends will find out and ostracize her. Chad and his friend Matt are no different. When Myron plays Chad's answering machine, he finds a ditzy "typically teenage" message from one of Chad's schoolmates. For all the maturity that his mother attributes to Chad, it will be revealed that he's involved in an illicit relationship that's not at all mature, and his friend Matt is no better.

When Esperanza goes into the biker bar is the only time that the point of view of the book changes. Instead of following Myron's thoughts and feelings, the reader is following Esperanza. This heightens the immediacy and danger of the situation. Instead of staying in the car, the reader follows the character that is going into greater danger. Esperanza's identity as a former pro wrestler is a help to her, but as a woman, she is subject to greater danger than Myron would be.

Incredibly, the U.S. Open ends in a tie, a knuckle-whitening turn in the drama of Jack's potential comeback. The reader is reminded that both Norm and Esme have a lot at stake, as does Tad. This dramatic climax to the U.S. Open sets up what will happen next and leaves the reader at the end of yet another chapter with yet another cliffhanger.



Chapters 22-24

Chapters 22-24 Summary

Esperanza has discovered that Lloyd Rennart's widow is an artist named Francine, and she's made an appointment for Myron with her by telling her that Myron's a reporter from the local newspaper, the Coastal Star, doing a story about local artists. When Myron arrives, calling himself Bernie Worley, she leads him to her studio, a carefully laid out art installation. Myron thinks it's just a room. To cover his faux pas, Myron tells her he's a sports reporter on temporary assignment.

Escaping the uncomfortable subject of art, Myron asks about Francine's family. She has a son, Larry, who is seventeen. When Myron pries about her husband's suicide, pretending to have met Lloyd, Francine realizes he's not who he's pretending to be. Myron tells her who he really is, and Francine says that after Jack blamed Lloyd for his loss, Jack started drinking and killed his wife in a car accident. Then, Lloyd sobered up, remarried, and bought a bar. He never talked about the U.S. Open incident. His body cannot be recovered from the deep fissure where he jumped.

The next night, Myron watches the Parker Inn, but Tito never shows. His friends "Escape" and "Beneath" are there, and Escape is injured from the fight with Myron. Myron follows Escape to his house, attacks him, and tortures him by bending back his fingers. Escape doesn't seem to know anything about Chad, but he gives Myron Tito's address. Myron leaves Escape bound in duck tape. Myron finds Tito shot dead in his truck in front of his house. He searches the truck and finds Chad Coldren's ring, which must have fallen off Chad's severed finger.

Myron decides that he can't call the police, since he's just tortured and threatened Tito's friend to get Tito's address. He'll be the police's first suspect. He also doesn't want to alarm the kidnapers and put Chad in more danger. He puts back the ring, and then he goes back to untie Escape, warning him not to leave and threatening him with more torture or death.

Myron wants to warn Chad's parents that something has gone wrong with the kidnapers, but he doesn't want to be detected. He drives back to the Coldrens' street and parks between two neighbors' houses. He stays hidden in the shrubs as he works his way toward the house. Then, he hears footsteps. Linda Coldren is heading back toward her house. Myron attracts her attention with a rock. Myron tells Linda that one of the kidnapers is dead, shot twice in the head, but he hasn't found Chad. He wants more information, but she runs into the house.

Chapters 22-24 Analysis

Although Myron has shown himself elsewhere as intelligence, his impersonation of an art reporter is horrific. Myron knows nothing about art and can't even pretend to grasp



Francine Rennart's point of view. He makes mental digs at the New York Art Institute. He gives himself away almost immediately. Myron has made similar mental commentary about golf and golf fans, but he is even farther out of his element in the art world. He can't appreciate the fields he doesn't understand or relate to, and this inhibits his ability to investigate. Myron is lucky that Francine gives him information about her husband.

Throughout the book, Myron moves back and forth from one area of leads to another. This keeps the story going at a strong pace. After leaving Francine, part of the Rennart investigative track, Myron returns to the neo-Nazi lead. When Tito doesn't show up at the bar, Myron must decide what to do, and he decides to take on the role of Win. Myron breaks into a man's house, binds him, tortures him, and threatens him. Has he crossed a moral and ethical line? Does he have the right to behave this way because he is trying to save a boy? Even though the neo-Nazi didn't seem to hesitate to attack Myron, does that give Myron the right to violently attack back?



Chapters 25-27

Chapters 25-27 Summary

The next morning, Myron is visited by two uniformed cops. While he's in the patrol car, his phone rings. Linda Coldren calls him and asks him to come see her as soon as possible. The cops drive Myron to Merion, where the media is gathered. Jack Coldren has been shot dead in the quarry, the hazard on the sixteenth hole where he lost his lead in the last U.S. Open and nearly lost this one.

Myron meets Detective Corbett, who is investigating the murder. The detective asks if Myron has been having an affair with Linda Coldren. He was seen in the tent with her the other day. When the police question Myron about his movements, Myron asks to see Linda first. He says she is a potential client of his firm. He refuses to answer questions until he sees her. The detective tells him that they'll trace the phone records on the call that he received to see if it was from Linda.

Myron goes to Linda Coldren's house and meets Victoria Wilson, Linda's lawyer. Linda is a suspect. A witness saw first Jack and then Linda entering the Merion course the previous night. Also, Myron's car was spotted on Linda's street, and Jack Coldren had started divorce proceedings, claiming his wife was unfaithful. Victoria knows about the kidnapping but doesn't want to inform the police. Since Myron is an attorney, Victoria appoints him a co-counsel, advising him that he can't testify to anything Linda has told him as her attorney. Linda tells Myron that the kidnappers called the previous night and talked to Jack. Jack rushed out, and Linda went after him. She claims she didn't find him at the golf course. After she tells her story, the phone rings. Chad has been released.

Victoria and Myron go to pick up Chad. He's on Porter Street, still on the phone with his mother. Chad is in shock, and they take him to the family's doctor. After the doctor treats him, Victoria and Myron go in to ask Chad questions. He tells them he spent Wednesday night at Matt's house, and then on Thursday a man carjacked him after school, put a bag over his head and tied him up, and drove him off. The day his finger was cut off, he says he heard the man arguing with a woman. Once, they had him call his father. Another time, they recorded him screaming. Then, they just let him go.

Myron knows that Chad is lying and tells Chad about the surveillance video of the ATM machine. Chad confesses that he wasn't carjacked. He was abducted from the hotel, but he wanted to keep his female friend out of the investigation. He spent the night at the motel with Esme Fong.

Chapters 25-27 Analysis

Coben uses clever timing at the beginning of chapter 25. In the last chapter, Myron has found Tito's dead body, and he realizes that he'll be the prime suspect, since he assaulted and intimidated Tito's friend to get the victim's address. The reader is as



tense as Myron is about what will happen next, and immediately Myron is visited by two cops who refuse to tell him what is happening. The suspense of this sequence is heightened by the reader's knowledge that Myron could be a murder suspect.

When the reader learns that Jack Coldren is dead, the suspense is fulfilled with a surprise turn to the plot. In quick succession, there have now been two murders, and a kidnapping has escalated rapidly. Instead of Myron being a suspect, Linda, the femme fatale, is the prime suspect, and Myron's feelings toward her make it urgent for him to find out what is going on.

Myron values truth. Victoria is cautious and wants to hold her hand from the cops. Her main priority is to save Linda, no matter what happens. Myron's main priority is to find out the truth and expose secrets. His instinct is to tell the police about the kidnapping, not to maintain Linda's interest through secrecy. Still, he is put in a position of secrecy when Victoria makes him Linda's co-counsel.



Chapters 28-30

Chapters 28-30 Summary

Myron thinks he sees what happened. Esme Fong is in charge of Zoom's deal with Tad Cripsin. She seduced Tad, and then because Jack started winning, she kidnapped Chad to throw Jack off his game. When he continued to perform well, Tito cut off Chad's finger, possibly without Esme knowing. Then, Jack pulled off the final put for a tie. Not wanting to take the chance that Jack would win the next round, Esme killed him and then let Chad go. Myron is heading off to confront Esme when he hears an icy voice call his name.

Myron is confronted by Win's mother, Cissy Lockwood. She knows about Myron because she has private investigators keep track of her son. She tells Myron that, when Win was young, Jack Coldren took him golfing, but somehow the golf lesson never happened. Win returned with his father and went into the stables. They found Cissy having sex with Win's riding instructor. Win has not spoken to her since. Now, Cissy is dying of cancer, within weeks, and she wants to be able to make her peace with Win in the time she has left. At least, she wants to give Win the chance to make peace with her. After she leaves, Myron takes a taxi to Esme Fong's hotel.

On the way to see Esme, Myron calls Win and arranges to have dinner that night. He meets Esme outside her hotel, and they walk together. He mentions Chad, and she seems wary. Then, he asks about the last time she saw Chad, and she claims she hasn't seen him in weeks. Myron asks why a successful, attractive, twenty-something would seduce a teenage boy, and at first she denies that she knows what he's talking about. Myron tells her that he knows about her and Chad meeting at the Court Manor Inn and lies that she can be seen on the ATM surveillance camera. Esme begs him not to tell Myron.

Esme doesn't want to lose her job and claims it was a mistake. The young boy was attractive and sweet, and there would be no strings attached. She says the last time she saw him was at the motel and that when she left, Chad was still asleep. She didn't plan to see him again. She spent the day at Merion and then came back to her hotel, worked with Norm until midnight, and went to bed. She says that no one knew about the affair, but Myron suspects that Matthew Squires would have known. Esme gives Myron her cell number, and Myron promises not to tell Norm.

Chapters 28-30 Analysis

As the novel begins swiftly heading towards its climax, Myron begins to put together pieces of the puzzle. He has found out yet another secret, and he is hastening on his way to explore it. Cissy Lockwood interrupts him at a crucial moment, leaving the reader in suspense while the subplot of Win's family takes priority. The story of Win's



estrangement from his mother comes out, and it involves Jack Coldren. Will the two stories meet up? An attentive reader may even wonder if Win is somehow involved in the mystery, although Myron never questions his friend.

Win's secret about his past is that he saw his mother having sex with his riding instructor. Is it believable that this could cause a life-long rift between mother and son, and potentially even Win's sexual issues and attitudes toward women? Win suggests that his personality isn't completely dependent on his mother, and perhaps a combination of his native personality and the events of his childhood shaped his adulthood.

After talking with Cissy, Myron can pick up the kidnapping plot again. When he questions Esme, his theory of the kidnapping seems to fall apart. Esme admits the affair but denies being involved in the kidnapping. She seems fearful of losing her job but doesn't seem to know that Chad's been kidnapped. More twists are ahead before the plot will be resolved.



Chapters 31-33

Chapters 31-33 Summary

Myron and Esperanza drive to Matthew Squires' school and park across the street. Myron suggests trying to find him during the lunch break, but Esperanza says it would be better to pretend to be parents and tackle the campus now. Before they do, Myron asks Esperanza to interview Esme's doorman later, and Esme says the sheriff in Peru supports the story of Lloyd Rennart's suicide. The cliff, known as El Garganta del Diablo, is a popular location for suicides, and the bodies are impossible to recover. Myron asks her to get more information. He's curious about how Lloyd got his money, and about the car accident that killed Lloyd's wife.

As Myron and Esperanza are talking, the black man from the Court Manor Inn, Carl, accosts them. Carl recognizes Esperanza. He, too, used to be a professional wrestler. Carl has two thugs with him, and he directs them to drive to Reginald Squires' house and into a dark garage. Carl disarms Myron, and ushers them out of the car. Reginald Squires appears in the glare of a spotlight, and when Myron mouths off, he orders one of the goons to hit Esperanza. Carl asks for the job, so he won't leave bruises, and he attacks her. Myron recognizes it as a wrestling act; Carl is faking the fight.

Reginald questions Myron about his interest in Matt, and Myron tells Reginald about the kidnapping. Reginald is horrified that a kidnapping took place at his motel, and he instructs Myron to find the kidnapper for him so he can kill the person. He also gives Myron permission to talk with Matt.

Matt knew that Chad was dating an older, Chinese woman and that they were meeting at the Court Manor Inn. Matt went to see Chad that night, but he saw Jack Coldren in the parking lot, looking at Chad's car, and decided to leave. He also tells Myron that he was the one who climbed out of Chad's window. Back at the Coldren house, Myron talks to Diane Hoffman, Jack's caddy. She thinks Linda is behind the murder and kidnapping. She says her fight with Jack was because he wouldn't go to the police. She laughs at the idea that she was sleeping with Jack. Victoria tells Myron that the police have the finger, but she still hasn't told the police anything about the kidnapping.

Tad Crispin calls Myron. The press wants a statement, and the golf commissioner wants to award him a trophy as winner of the U.S. Open. He wants to hire Myron. Myron advises him to say nothing and meet him at Win's. When Myron arrives at Win's, he learns that Jessica talked to Win, because she's worried about Myron. Myron tells Win that Cissy is dying. Win already knew. He refuses to see her but implies that he still loves her.



Chapters 31-33 Analysis

The plot of the Court Manor Inn and the plot of Matthew Squires link up when Myron learns that the black muscle man, Carl, is in the employ of Reginald Squires. Carl is an employee, following orders from Reginald, because of Reginald Squires' wealth. Clearly, though, Carl is more apt and more intelligent than Reginald is. He is also more civilized. He is able to fool Reginald and get Esperanza and Myron out of a tight spot. Why is he in a subordinate position? The reason is Reginald's wealth and position. Simply, Reginald can afford to be irresponsible, violent, and even foolish.

Myron has a tendency to joke whenever he is nervous, using humor as a defense mechanism. When he does this with Reginald Squires, it gets him in trouble. Esperanza is going to be physically assaulted. Myron already respects Carl, but now Myron is indebted to Carl for preventing Esperanza from being hurt. Esperanza and Carl's past acquaintance as professional wrestlers is a plot coincidence designed by the author, and it gives Carl a reason to help Esperanza out, as well as the means to do so.

Myron is able to turn Reginald from an enemy into a dangerous ally by explaining the story to him. Reginald, like Stuart, is horrified at the idea of a kidnapping at his motel, and this allows Myron access to Matt Squire and more information that he need to unravel the plot. Reginald, in exchange, wants to kill the perpetrator. This subplot is never fulfilled. One of the kidnapers, Tito, is dead, and the other one ends up in the hands of the police. Will Reginald Squires take any action against the kidnapper, or against Myron for not turning the kidnapper over directly to him?



Chapters 34-36

Chapters 34-36 Summary

Tad Crispin arrives. The USGA has awarded him the victory in the U.S. Open. Myron's strategy is to announce that Tad considers the U.S. Open a tie and donate Jack's half of the prize to charity. They'll get good press out of the deal and plan to leak the donation instead of announcing it. When Win leaves the room, Tad asks Myron to be his attorney. Tad was Linda's lover, and he thinks Jack knew. That means Tad has multiple motives. He now wins the U.S. Open, with all the good publicity that goes with it, and his lover's husband is dead, so his name won't get dirtied in a divorce.

Esperanza returns with the news that Lloyd Rennard paid cash for his bar and bought his house outright without a mortgage. There's no record of him working, paying taxes, or gaining an inheritance after Jack fired him. She also confirms Esme's alibi before sitting down to enjoy a movie with her two friends. Myron falls asleep on the couch.

The next day, Victoria calls Myron with the news that Linda's been arrested. The police have found the murder weapon, Jack's handgun, buried between the crime scene and Linda's home. The police found the equipment that Myron hooked up to tape the kidnapers' calls, and they found a tape of the kidnapper calling when Esme was in the house. They've found no tape of the last call, the one that supposedly sent Jack running out of the house. The envelope that the severed finger came in is the same kind Linda recently bought, as is the pen used to write on it, but the writing can't be identified as hers. Myron says no mother would cut off her son's finger, but Victoria brings her to Linda to explain. Linda confesses that she's not Chad's real mother.

Linda and Jack hired Diane Hoffman as a surrogate mother and legally adopted the child. Diane found them and her son, and that's why Jack hired her as his caddy. Linda says that, though she didn't love Jack anymore, she still loves her son and wouldn't hurt him. They discuss the other suspects. Tad is a suspect, as is Esme. Myron also tells them about Lloyd Rennart. Being fired led to his drinking and the car accident that killed his wife, and he's disappeared after an apparent suicide. Linda says they received an unsigned postcard from Peru asking for forgiveness. Myron thinks that whoever paid off Lloyd might have a motive for hurting Jack, but Victoria asks him not to dig into the past.

Chapters 34-36 Analysis

Tad is reaping rewards from Jack's death, and this exposes him clearly as a suspect. In addition, Myron is "spin-doctoring" for Tad. He is manipulating the media and creating a public persona for Tad that's different from his private persona. He's doing what's required as an ethical sports agent by helping Tad, but he's also morally appalled at what he's doing.



Myron faces a similar dilemma as Linda's co-counsel. Ethically, as a lawyer, he is bound not to disclose anything that Linda has told him. However, the ethics of being a sports agent or a lawyer only considers what's "best" in a narrow realm. A lawyer or agent is responsible to his or her client, and larger issues about what's morally right or wrong for others or for society as a whole are disregarded.

Linda is arrested, heightening the stakes for Myron. The evidence against her has been mounted up by the police. At the same time, some of the mysteries of the novel begin to be explained. Diane Hoffman is Chad's real mother, explaining her argument with Jack. Lloyd apparently sent the Coldrens a postcard from Peru asking for forgiveness. This supports his apparent suicide.



Chapters 37-39

Chapters 37-39 Summary

Myron calls Francine Rennart. She's heard about Jack Coldren's murder. Myron tells her about the postcard that Lloyd sent to the Coldrens from Peru. He wants Francine to help him find the person who paid off Lloyd. Francine has a few boxes of Lloyd's personal things in the basement, and she gives Myron permission to go through them.

While Myron is back at Win's guesthouse, Carl comes to see him with a young black woman named Kiana, a maid at Court Manor Inn. She saw Jack at the Court Manor Inn twice the previous week, with a male companion. She describes the other man as older, white, with dark hair and a beard. Jack recognizes the description as Norm Zuckerman.

Esperanza returns with an old newspaper article about the accident that killed Lloyd's first wife. Lloyd had been drinking. The article implies that someone else was in the car but doesn't tell whom. Myron tells Esperanza about Jack's affair with Norm. It gives Norm a motive, to keep it secret that he's gay, but it doesn't explain the kidnapping. Esperanza suggests that the kidnapping might still have been a hoax, and that Chad's finger being cut off wasn't part of the plan. Then, Chad killed Tito as revenge. Myron isn't convinced. He's off to see Francine Rennart.

Victoria calls Myron in the car to let him know that the police have found Tito's body. He was shot with a thirty-eight, a different type of gun than killed Jack. Victoria asks if Myron delivered Cissy's message to Win, and Myron realizes that Victoria told Cissy where to find him. Myron confirms that he delivered the message but tells her nothing more. Cissy's condition is worsening.

Myron arrives at Francine Rennart's and goes to the basement to look through Lloyd Rennart's boxes. He finds old golf trophies and other mementos. Lloyd's high school diploma and college yearbook are there, along with a photograph of Lloyd in the army. Finally, Myron finds Lloyd's wedding album from his first marriage. Myron's curiosity drives him to open up the photo album, and he's shocked by what he sees.

Chapters 37-39 Analysis

Myron begins uncovering the last pieces of the puzzle as the story nears its end. Jack Coldren was gay and had an affair with Norm Zuckerman. Someone else was in the car with Lloyd Rennart and his wife, when his wife was killed. Tito was shot with a different gun than the one that shot Jack. All of the clues are coming together, and the final one is kept secret at the end of chapter 39 to add suspense for the reader. Myron opens up Lloyd Rennart's wedding album and sees...something. This is the final clue, and the key to the puzzle.

Events come quickly, one after another, in short chapters as more and more information is revealed. The reader has little time to think through the clues but may have a vague idea of the direction the story is taking. The fast pace and cliffhanger endings to short chapters are designed to build more suspense and make the ending a page-turner.



Chapters 40-42

Chapters 40-42 Summary

Myron rushes to Norm's hotel and up to his room. Esme Fong is in Norm's suite. Myron tells Norm that he's sorry, but that Norm's secret will have to be exposed. Norm asks how Myron discovered that he's gay, and Myron says that he knows about the affair with Jack at the Court Manor Inn. Norm protests that his reputation, and his company, will probably be ruined, but Myron believes that the affair is connected with the murder. Norm takes the news well. He struggled with being a Jewish businessman, and maybe he can become successful as an out-of-the-closet gay man, as well.

Myron asks Norm whether anyone else knew about the affair, suggesting that his constant companion Esme would likely know. Myron thinks that it explains both why Esme would bed a teenager and why Chad would end up at the same motel as his father. Esme gave up a high-powered, high-paid job at Nike to work for Zoom after Zoom signed Linda Coldren, because she wanted to get close to Jack Coldren. She brought Chad to the hotel so he'd see his father with a man, but Jack saw Chad's car and left. Worse, Jack was leading at the Open, and Esme kidnapped Chad. Esme's real motive is that she's Lloyd Rennart's daughter by his first wife, and she wanted revenge. Myron saw the resemblance in the wedding album photos.

Esme pulls a gun on Myron, but Myron hands her his cell phone. The line's been open the whole time. The police are outside the door, and they've heard the whole conversation. Esme drops the gun, and the police arrest her. It's the same gun that was used to shoot Tito, and Esme says he had lost it. He cut off Chad's finger on his own, without telling her.

Linda is released from jail. She and Myron admit to each other that they feel a mutual attraction. Then, Myron explains that he's been confused by the kidnappers' phone calls and their lack of demands. He's realized that the kidnappers demanded that Jack throw the U.S. Open, and that Jack kept it a secret. When the kidnapper asked for \$100,000, Jack cut him off saying, "That's in—" He was about to say, in addition to losing the tournament. Jack couldn't bring himself to throw the game, even at the risk of his son's life. Even after receiving Chad's finger, Jack made the last, critical twenty-two-foot put. When the last call came in from the kidnapper, Linda must have realized what was going on. She followed Jack out to the course.

Linda says that Jack brought the gun with him to kill himself, knowing that he couldn't stop himself from winning. The drive was too strong. She says that she struggled with Jack, meaning only to injure him so that he couldn't play. Jack wouldn't give up the gun, and finally, she pulled the trigger. Then, Linda buried the gun and erased the tape. As Linda's attorney of record, Myron cannot tell what he knows. Linda is reunited with Chad.



Myron visits Cissy. She is dying. Myron realizes that Cissy paid Lloyd to ruin Jack's chances at the U.S. Open twenty-three years ago. Jack set Cissy up to get caught having her affair, not realizing how serious the repercussions would be. Even though it was an adolescent prank, Cissy wanted revenge. Win comes to his mother's bedside, and he stays with her for three days until she dies.

Chapters 40-42 Analysis

The ending of the story is structured in three prongs, each contained in a separate chapter. Chapter 40 wraps up the kidnapping of Chad Coldren. The clue in Lloyd Rennart's wedding album is revealed, and Esme is unmasked as Lloyd Rennart's daughter. It is a common motif in mystery novels that one of the characters is not who he or she appears to be, and the character's identity is often hidden in the past. Photographs make important clues to identity. Esme fulfills this motif, as she is unveiled as Lloyd's daughter, with a motive of revenge replacing the potential gain motive. In traditional fashion, Esme pulls a gun but is defeated by Myron's foresight and the presence of police outside the door.

Chapter 41 wraps up the story of the murder of Jack Coldren. Linda is revealed to be a true femme fatale, the murderer of her husband. Her son, Chad, is more important to her than anyone else is, and she is willing to kill for him. Myron's feelings for her are squelched by her identity as a murderer. However, Linda's story does not become public. The stories of Esme and Linda are contrasted. Esme comes from a lower-class background, and she is half-Asian. She's had to work her way up as a minority to earn her education and her well-paid position. She wants to get revenge on Jack, but she starts with no thought of murder. She becomes a killer by getting involved in a criminal element. With no qualms, Myron turns her over to the authorities.

Linda, however, comes from a background of the privileged upper class. She is surrounded by wealth and power, and when she gets into trouble, she has a high-powered attorney to call on. That attorney makes sure that Myron's mouth is shut so that he can't do any damage to Linda, and Myron has feelings for Linda that give him sympathy toward her. Linda was able to pursue a career of professional golf because of her wealthy background. When faced with the possible death of her son, she is driven to murder. Is she not guilty enough to be tried or brought to justice? Myron is a vigilante in many ways, and he picks and chooses the criminals he persecutes. He chooses not to persecute the wealthy, powerful woman who is attractive to him, in part because her wealth (in the guise of a high-powered attorney) has bound him to silence.

Chapter 42 ends the story of Win and his mother and wraps up one final loose end, who paid off Jack's caddy to sabotage his chances at the U.S. Open. Cissy is wealthy and powerful, like Linda, and she sought revenge, like Esme. She is never prosecuted or held responsible for her actions, and she is not sorry, saying that Jack "had to pay." Cissy's act of vengeance, however, set in motion all the tragedies of the story. Morally, she can be held accountable for Lloyd's wife's death, Lloyd's suicide, and Esme's

kidnapping of Chad, which resulted in both Tito and Jack's murders. Revenge begets tragedy.



Characters

Myron Bolitar

Myron Bolitar is a sports agent, but he also investigates crimes. He usually enlists the help of his friend Win, a slick and violent agent with a history of secret government work. When he's called on to investigate the kidnapping of Chad and Linda Coldren's son, though, Myron finds himself on his own. He feels out of his depth without Win's help, and he only seems to regain his balance when his assistant Esperanza comes out to help him.

During the story, Myron takes on some of Win's roles. Not only does he follow people and get into fights, but Myron also resorts to torture and intimidation to get information from criminals. Myron is beginning to have misgivings about the tactics he's using, and he feels that he's starting to look at the world in a different way. Perhaps he is becoming more detached and colder on some level, like his friend Win.

Myron is in a relationship with his girlfriend Jessica, but he is afraid of being hurt. He explains his attraction to Linda Coldren because of his fear of his committed relationship with Jessica. Myron is self-deprecating and uses humor as a defense mechanism. This gets him into trouble sometimes, including when he makes jokes while he is being held by Reginald Squires, a rich and loony criminal. Ultimately, though, Myron is an intelligent investigator. He finds out information and figures out the truth of what happened, even though he cannot reveal everything to the police.

Linda Coldren

Linda Coldren is a successful professional golfer, far more successful than her husband Jack is. As important as Linda's golf career is to her, her son is more important. Linda could not have a child of her own, and her son Chad was born to a surrogate. Linda is afraid to leave her husband because she is not Chad's biological mother, and she does not want to lose custody of him.

Linda has complete faith in her son. Even though she has not seen him for two days before the kidnapping, she cannot believe that he is involved in any way. She continuously tells Myron that the kidnapping cannot be a hoax. She also insists that they cannot take any chances and bring in the police or the FBI. She doesn't want to harm her son.

When Linda learns that the kidnappers want Jack to lose the tournament, she realizes that Jack won't be able to throw the game. She ultimately shoots her husband to save her son. Long ago, she has lost any feelings she had for Jack, and she's been unfaithful to him. After the murder, Linda retreats behind her family's high-powered attorney, who will not give any information to the police. Linda's money and position will keep her safe, no matter what she's done.



Jack Coldren

Jack Coldren is a professional golfer. Twenty-three years ago, Jack lost the U.S. Open. It was at the beginning of his career, and Jack had a commanding lead. However, in the sixteenth hole, Jack landed in a hazard. He choked, lost his lead, and lost the U.S. Open. His promising career suddenly ended. Jack never became a big name in golf and often did not make the qualifiers to play professionally.

Jack is gay and stays married to his wife Linda, because it helps him stay in the closet. He is bitterly disappointed. At the beginning of the novel, Jack is back in the U.S. Open at his home golf course, Merion, the same place where he choked years ago. Jack again has a commanding lead, and after years of mediocrity, the drive to win has awakened in him with a vengeance. He cannot let anything stop him.

When Jack learns that his son has been kidnapped, he still wants to win the U.S. Open and regain something of what he lost at the beginning of his career. When the kidnappers demand that Jack throw the championship, Jack cannot bring himself to obey. Jack's whole life has been building up to replaying the events of twenty-three years ago, and he grasps at the idea that the kidnapping could be a hoax. Even after the kidnappers cut off his son's finger, Jack cannot force himself to lose. Finally, he tries to shoot himself, and Linda claims that in the end, he wants her to kill him.

Chad Coldren

Chad Coldren is Jack and Linda Coldren's son. He is sixteen-years-old, and he's been seduced by Esme Fong. He doesn't realize that he's being used by Esme for her own purposes and brags about his catch to his friend Matt. Chad goes to a motel with Esme, where he is kidnapped. He is held captive by Tito, and his finger is cut off. Chad is finally released after his father is murdered.

Windsor Horne Lockwood III (Win)

Win is Myron's good friend and business associate. A financial planner, Win handles the money for all of Myron's sports clients. Myron and Win are staying at a guesthouse on Win's family's estate. Win is wealthy, and the Philadelphia elite are his home territory. However, Win refuses to help Myron with the investigation. Linda is Win's cousin on his mother's side, and Win remains estranged from his mother, refusing to have anything to do with her.

Win has not spoken to his mother since he was eight, when he walked in on her having sex with his riding instructor. The person who arranged for Win's mother to get caught was Jack Coldren, another reason why Win won't have anything to do with the case. Win is a distant and possibly deeply scarred person. He has unmarked cars that he uses to troll bad neighborhoods for criminals, who he brings to vigilante justice.



Esperanza

Esperanza is Myron's assistant, a former professional wrestler whose stage name was "Little Pocahontas." She has just graduated from NYU Law School. When she learns that Win refuses to help on the case, she comes out to Philadelphia to help Myron. Now that she has a law degree, Esperanza wants to become a partner in Myron's firm.

Stone

Bucky is Linda Coldren's elderly father and Win's uncle. He approaches Myron to help when Linda's son is kidnapped.

Cissy Lockwood

Cissy is Win's estranged mother. When Win was young, he saw his mother having sex with Win's riding instructor. Cissy is dying of cancer, and she wants a chance to reconcile with her son before she dies. After initially refusing to see her, Win finally goes to his mother's bedside at the end of her life.

Matthew Squires

Matt is Chad Coldren's friend. Chad's parents assumed that Chad was staying with Matt before the kidnappers called them.

Stuart Lipwitz

Stuart is the enthusiastic new manager of the Court Manor Inn, a motel specializing in hourly rates for illicit affairs.

Diane Hoffman

Diane Hoffman is Jack Coldren's caddy and the surrogate mother who bore Chad Coldren.

Tad Crispin

A promising young golfer, Tad Crispin was the favorite to win at the U.S. Open before Jack Coldren started winning. Tad thinks that he doesn't need an agent, but he wants to hire Win as his financial adviser. Myron convinces Tad that he does need an agent and signs him.



Norman Zuckerman

Norman Zuckerman is the owner of Zoom, a sportswear company. He has signed Tad Crispin and Linda Coldren as spokespeople for his new line. Norman is an outspoken Jew and raises some eyebrows at the upper-crust golf course Merion. He is also gay and Jack Coldren's lover, a secret that may need to be revealed to expose the truth behind Chad's kidnapping.

Esme Fong

Esme is the marketing VP in charge of Zoom's new line of golf clothes. Myron suspects her of trying to sour Jack Coldren's game by kidnapping his son, Chad. Then, Myron discovers that Esme is really Jack Coldren's former caddy's son by his first wife. Esme's mother was killed in a car accident that her father caused after he was accused of sabotaging Jack and fired as Jack's caddy. Esme kidnapped Chad to try to force Jack to throw the U.S. Open, but she is not the murderer.

Lloyd Rennart

Lloyd is Jack Coldren's former caddy. Jack blamed Lloyd for making him lose the U.S. Open twenty-three years ago. Recently, Lloyd killed himself by jumping off a cliff, but no body was discovered.

Francine Rennart

Francine is Lloyd Rennart's wife, an artist who creates installations. Myron pretends to be a reporter in order to talk with her, but he can't fake even a superficial understanding of her art.

Jessica Culver

Jessica is Myron's live-in girlfriend.

Lisa

Lisa is Myron's connection at New York Bell phone company, who can trace phone numbers for him.

Sheriff Jack Courter

The sheriff of Reston, New Jersey, Jack Courter is also a friend of Myron's. He tells Myron that Matt Squires' father, Reginald Squires, is a high-level criminal.



Reginald Squires, a.k.a. Big Blue

Reginald Squires is Matt Squires' father. He is also the head of an organized crime ring and rumored to be insane.

Tito Marshall, a.k.a.

In Myron's head, he calls the bald-headed Nazi kidnapper who phoned the Coldren's from a mall pay phone "Crusty." Later, Myron learns that the Nazi's name is Tito. Crusty leads Myron to a deserted building and ambushes him with two friends, who Myron dubs "Beneath the Planet of Crusty Nazi" and "Escape from the Planet of Crusty Nazi." Later, Myron breaks into "Escape's" house to get Crusty's address out of him, and when Myron gets to Crusty's house, he finds the kidnapper dead.

Mindy

One of the airheaded girls who hangs out at the mall food court, Mindy has a crush on Crusty. She helps the kidnapper set up Myron.

Big Cyndi, a.k.a. Big Chief Mama

Big Cyndi is Myron's receptionist, and Esperanza's former tag-team wrestling partner. Big Cyndi's wrestling moniker was Big Chief Mama, and her six-foot-five, three-hundred-plus-pound figure contrasts to Esperanza's slight build.

Hal

Hal is the bartender at the Parker Inn.

Detective Corbett

Corbett is the detective investigating the murder of Jack Coldren. He questions Myron, but Myron refuses to tell him what's going on.

Victoria Wilson

Bored-looking Victoria Wilson is Linda Coldren's high-powered attorney. She is also Linda's longtime friend. Her mother and father were servants for Linda's family.

Carl

Carl is a large, black former wrestler who works as muscle for Reginald Squires.



Objects/Places

Merion

Merion is the golf course in Jack Coldren and Win's home town of Philadelphia, and the U.S. open is being played there for the first time in years.

MB SportsReps

MB SportsReps is Myron Bolitar's sports agency, located on Park Avenue in New York City.

Court Manor Inn

Chad goes to the Court Manor Inn, a motel specializing in hourly rates for illicit affairs, to have an affair with Esperanza. This is the same location where his father Jack is having an affair with

Drive-Thru ATM on Porter Street

Chad uses a drive-thru ATM on Porter Street near the Court Manor Inn before he is kidnapped but after the last time his parents saw him.

Zoom

Zoom is Norman Zuckerman's sportswear company, which has signed Tad Crispin and Linda Coldren as spokespeople for its new line.

Grand Mercado Mall

The kidnappers' third call is made from a pay phone at the food court in the Grand Mercado Mall in Bala Cynwyd.

Green Acres Road

Green Acres Road is the cul-de-sac where Chad's friend Matt lives. Myron sees a figure leave Chad's room through the window, run into Green Acres Road, and disappear. Later, this figure turns out to be Matt, who uses Chad's window as an entrance to his friend's room.



El Garganta del Diablo, Peru

Eight months before Chad's kidnapping, Jack Coldren's former caddy, Lloyd Rennart, killed himself by jumping off a cliff in Peru, known as El Garganta del Diablo. The name translates as Throat of the Devil. The body has never been found, which is not unusual at the difficult to access chasm.

Locke-Horn

Locke-Horn is Win's financial services company. Win acts as a financial adviser for all of Myron's clients, but the two keep their businesses separate.

Parker Inn

Parker Inn is a dive biker bar, where Crusty Nazi and his friends hang out.

Chad Coldren's Ring

After Tito/Crusty is killed, Myron finds Chad Coldren's ring in the neo-Nazi's truck, proof that Tito is involved in the kidnapping.

The Stone Quarry

On the sixteenth hole in the Merion golf course, there is a stone quarry that makes a hazard. Jack Coldren's body is found in the quarry, where he lost his lead in the U.S. Open earlier in his career, and where he nearly lost this year's U.S. Open.

Lloyd Rennart's Wedding Album

When Myron sees Lloyd Rennart's wedding album, he knows that Esme Fong is responsible for Chad's kidnapping. She's the spitting image of her mother, Lloyd Rennart's first wife.



Themes

The Drive to Win

Win talks to Myron about the drive to win that he sees in Jack Coldren. Win sees this drive as something negative, a force that causes professional athletes to put themselves above all others and neglect their personal lives and those who love them. He believes that Myron had this drive as a professional basketball player. The force of competition activates this desire. Myron doesn't believe that the drive to win is a bad thing. He sees pushing for success as noble.

Jack's drive to win makes him endanger his own son, though. Jack refuses to lose, even though his son has been kidnapped. Even after receiving his son's severed finger, Jack cannot let himself lose. He makes a nearly impossible put to tie the game. After he talks to the kidnappers again, Jack promises to lose, but he knows that he will not be able to hold himself to that promise. His wife knows it, too. Linda ultimately kills Jack, not out of revenge or hatred, but to squelch his overpowering drive to win.

The events of the story support Win's view of the drive to win, showing that the author sees the negative aspects of intense competition. After all, the U.S. Open is only a golf game. Winning it brings money, fame, and career opportunities, but when weighed against the life of a son, few people would do what Jack did. Jack's extraordinary competitive drive ends up being his own downfall.

Justice

Myron investigates crime, and he brings criminals to justice. The question of what is just is a complex one, though. Myron has Esme arrested for kidnapping and murder, but she believes that she was only seeking justice. Through Jack Coldren's actions, her father was ruined and her mother died. Esme wants Jack to pay for what he did. Like Myron, she seeks justice on her own.

Win also seeks justice. He takes untraceable Chevy cars and goes trolling through the bad areas of cities to find criminals. Then, he makes the criminals pay for their actions. Myron's point of view of this vigilante justice is ambiguous. He is opposed to it, but Esperanza points out that what Win does is not too far removed from what Myron does. The only difference is that Win is picking the crimes and criminals to attack. Myron uses almost any means, including torture, threats, and lies, to get what he wants. Are his means just? Myron implies that Win's nighttime activities are sinister, but Win only lets out that he reported where a molester buried two bodies, bringing him to justice. Would Win have faked evidence, or tortured the criminal to find out where the bodies were? If so, is that justice?

Ultimately, Myron puts his own idea of justice above societal justice. He turns in Esme, but he lets Linda go, although he knows that she killed her husband. He risks



disbarment if he turns on Linda, but is this justice? Linda has murdered someone. She did it to save her son, but is it just that she escapes?

Discrimination

The setting of professional golf and the ritzy Merion golf course create an atmosphere of riches. The golfing world is elite and well-off. This is contrasted with the criminal elements that Myron faces, including the neo-Nazi Tito. The picture is complicated by the presence of minorities, and they joke about discrimination. Norm is Jewish, and he receives awkward glances at the golf course clubhouse. Esperanza is Hispanic, and she is not the type that usually heads into Win's expensive neighborhood, except as a housekeeper. Victoria is black, and her parents were servants. Carl is also black, a different kind of servant of a rich criminal.

Both racial and socioeconomic discrimination pervade the story. The criminals who escape without punishment are all well-off white people. Matt's father is insane and incompetent, and yet he's a wealthy and successful criminal. Win's mother bribed a caddy to make Jack Coldren lose the U.S. Open, and yet she is not punished and takes the secret to her grave. Linda is rich and white, and she can afford a high-powered attorney, the child of her family's servants, who is still serving in a servile capacity, although in a more white-collar field. Linda is unlikely to ever go to jail for killing her husband.

Esme Fong, however well-off she is, is still a half-Asian woman. She is the daughter of a former caddy and has no wealthy family. She is a kidnapper, and she killed Tito. Are her crimes truly worse than Cissy and Linda's? Like Cissy, she seeks what she thinks is just private vengeance. Like Linda, she kills in a situation where she believes it is necessary. Still, she is turned over to the police and will likely be in jail for life. Is it a coincidence that the only ethnic criminal from a poor background is the one prosecuted?



Style

Point of View

The novel is told from Myron's point of view, by a third-person semi-omniscient narrator. Although he is a sports agent, Myron's real role in the story is that of a detective. Having the reader experience the story inside Myron's head allows the reader to become the detective. As Myron unravels clues, the reader slowly learns what is happening as well. The reader learns Myron's theories and speculations as he recounts them to himself.

At one point during the novel, the narrative point of view leaves Myron. The story follows Esperanza instead, when she goes into the neo-Nazis' dive hangout. At this point, Esperanza becomes the lead investigator, going into danger to find out evidence. The reader doesn't follow Esperanza when she's researching on the Internet or at the library. The element of danger makes it important for the reader to follow her into the bar, because the situation will create suspense and excitement. Myron follows the action through the open phone line, and the reader follows through Esperanza's point of view.

At important points during the story, the reader is not privy to Myron's thoughts and experiences. This happens when Myron uncovers important clues that lead him to the next level. The author is keeping the readers in the dark to increase their suspense. When Myron is in the dark, the reader is allowed access to his mind. However, when Myron uncovers an important piece of evidence, like when he first opens Lloyd Rennart's wedding album, the reader does not see what Myron sees. The author leaves the reader in suspense until the next chapter.

Setting

The setting is among the golf world, at Merion's golf course in Philadelphia, during the U.S. Open championship. The sports setting allows the author to address the theme of the drive to win at all costs and sets high stakes for the characters in the form of the U.S. Open championship, a career-making event. The U.S. Open going on in the background provides tension. The reader follows along with Jack's dramatic winning streak and waits to find out whether he will lose his lead.

The golf setting explains how Myron, a sports agent, gets involved in the drama, but it also makes him a fish out of water. Golf is not Myron's game. He feels very uncomfortable in the wealthy setting and on the golf course. He is a basketball player, and he finds the outlandish clothing and the behavior of the golf fans inexplicable. This adds a touch of humor to the story, as well. Only at the end of the story does Myron seem to begin to understand the allure of playing golf.

The city of Philadelphia also provides a backdrop of long-standing wealthy families like Win as well as rampant poverty and ethnic diversity, allowing the author to explore the theme of discrimination. Not too far from the exclusive golf course and club, Myron finds



a sleazy by-the-hour motel and a backwards neo-Nazi criminal. The wealthy go to the low-class neighborhoods to have illicit affairs, and the criminals come to the wealthy neighborhoods in the employ of the criminal idle rich.

Language and Meaning

The novel is narrated from Myron's point of view, and much of the language reflects Myron's thought processes. As Myron is sneaking down the street toward the Coldren's houses, he jokes that the shrubs are talking to him, reflecting his wry sense of humor in the narration of events. Myron also builds up theories in his mind, and he asks questions. The story's narration uses questions to create suspicion and suspense in the readers' mind.

The author also uses different types of language for different characters' dialogue. Norm's dialogue is peppered with Yiddish slang, like meshuggener and goy. He speaks loudly, pointing out to the horrified club members that he doesn't have a tail or horns, a once popular myth about Jewish people. In contrast, Win's dialogue is often minimal. Win can be quiet to the point of being non-responsive, even with his friends.

Characters' dialogue and tones also change depending on the situation. When Myron is uncomfortable, he tends to joke and wisecrack. He gets into trouble when he makes jokes after being brought by force to Reginald Squires' home. When he talks to his girlfriend, Myron is sappy and loving. At one point, he calls her only to tell her urgently that he loves her. Myron also tends to be self-deprecating, always able to retreat into self-effacing comments about his abilities.

Structure

The novel is divided into forty-two short chapters. Chapters are often ended on a cliffhanger to build suspense in the reader and to cause the reader to keep turning pages. The chapters become shorter near the end of the novel, as the pace of the action increases, building up to the climax. The events of the story become more urgent and more serious as the story progresses.

In the beginning of the novel, Myron investigates a kidnapping. He doesn't even know that the boy is in danger, suspecting a hoax. The kidnapping becomes more serious when Chad's finger is sent to his mother in a package. The boy has been maimed. Even then, Win compares Chad's plight to the molestation and murder of two little boys, telling Myron that worse things happen every day. The situation gets direr when Myron finds that one of the criminals has been shot.

The biggest turning point in the story happens when Jack Coldren is killed. The investigation into a kidnapping has become an investigation into a murder, and the readers have no way of knowing who will be in danger. Linda is arrested for murder, adding even more suspense. The truth of the matter is revealed climactically in the last few chapters, as Myron uncovers first the true kidnapper and her motive, and then the

true murderer and her motive. In the denouement, the estrangement between Win and his mother is finally resolved.



Quotes

"'I don't know,' Myron admitted. 'Like I said before, investigating is not very scientific. You do some legwork and you push some buttons and you hope something happens.'" —Chapter 3, pages 23-24

"Myron spotted Win at a corner table with six chairs. He sat alone. His expression was both glacial and serene, his body completely at ease. A mountain lion patiently waiting for prey." —Chapter 5, page 47

"The perpetrator must have escaped through the woods. That meant that he had planned an escape route or, more probably, he knew the area well. Could mean that it was Chad Coldren. Or it could mean that the kidnappers knew what they were doing. And if that was so, it meant there was a good chance that they now knew about Myron's involvement and the fact that the Coldrens had disobeyed them." —Chapter 9, page 91

"Jack gestured at the television, his face reddening. 'Then how the hell do you explain what we just saw? Huh? He was laughing, Linda. He's having the time of his life at our expense.' He stopped, struggled with something. 'At my expense,' he corrected himself." —Chapter 12, pages 112-113

"Myron looked at him. 'I would say "blackmail is such an ugly word," but that would be too cliché. So instead I'll just say "Yup."'" —Chapter 14, pages 123-124

"Win had an eerie way of seeing the world in black and white; lately, Myron had found his own gray areas blackening. He didn't like that. He did not like the change that experience—seeing the cruelty man inflicts on man—was forcing upon him. He tried to hold on to his old values, but the rope was getting awfully slick. And why was he holding on, anyway? Was it because he truly believed in these values, or because he liked himself more as a person who believed?" —Chapter 15, page 131

"'A mother's guilt, the worst kind there is. The pangs are constant and ceaseless. They haunt your sleep. They point accusatory fingers. Every joyous swing of the golf club made me feel like I was forsaking my own child. I flew home as often as I could. I missed some tournaments that I really wanted to play in. I tried damn hard to balance career and motherhood. And every step of the way, I felt like a selfish louse.' She looked at him. 'Do you understand that?'" —Chapter 17, page 155

"But as Jack studied the break in the green, some sort of transformation seemed to take place. The fleshy features hardened. The eyes became focused and steely and—though it was probably Myron's imagination—a hint of yesterday's 'eye' seemed to flint up in them. Myron looked behind him. Linda Coldren had spotted the change too. For a brief moment she let her attention slip and her eyes sought out Myron's, as if for confirmation. Before Myron could do more than meet her gaze, she looked away." —Chapter 21, page 197



"'But that's the way it is.' He could feel her eyes on him now. 'No matter what you might want to do, morally and legally you are not allowed to talk to anyone.'" —Chapter 27, page 238

"She seemed only worried about her reputation and her job, not a murder rap. Or was this just a clever diversion? No way of knowing for sure." —Chapter 30, page 260

"Win's face was a stone. 'Who says I don't love her now?'" —Chapter 33, page 283

"Myron felt like a heel. Spin-doctoring—just another hat today's sports representative must wear. You had to get dirty sometimes. Myron did not necessarily like it, but he was willing. The media would portray events one way; he would present them another. Still he felt like a grinning political strategist after a debate, and you cannot get much lower than that." —Chapter 34, page 287

"'Reasonable doubt, I like,' she said. 'But the unknown, I don't. Look into Esme Fong. Look into the Squires family. Look into whatever. But stay away from the past, Myron. You never know what you might find back there.'" —Chapter 36, page 303

"The first photograph almost made Myron scream out loud." —Chapter 39, page 318

"'And when I first started out, everyone told me to tone it down. Stop being so Jewish, they said. So ethnic. You'll never be accepted.' His face had true hope now. 'Maybe I can do the same for us closet faygelehs, Myron. Be in the world's face again, you know what I'm saying?'" —Chapter 40, pages 321-322

"'Jack destroyed my life,' she said. 'I realize that he was only a teenager pulling a prank. He apologized profusely. He told me that he had not realized that my husband was on the premises. He said that he was certain I would hear Win coming and hide. It was all a joke, he said. Nothing more. But none of that made him less liable. I lost my son forever because of what he did. He had to face the consequences.'" —Chapter 42, page 342



Topics for Discussion

Victoria says that, as Linda's lawyer, Myron cannot morally tell the police anything that he knows. Is it truly moral for Myron to keep what he knows secret? Can the moral action and the ethical action as a lawyer be different?

Compare Esme's search for justice by hurting Jack Coldren and Win's search for justice by becoming a vigilante. Is either truly searching for justice?

Why would Tito, a neo-Nazi, work for Esme, a half-Asian woman?

In what ways is Win's wealthy family privileged?

Why does Win refuse to talk to his mother during his entire adult life, after he sees her having sex with his riding coach when he is a child?

Why does Myron feel driven to investigate Chad's kidnapping?

Myron reproaches himself for spin-doctoring for Tad Crispin, and Win reproaches Myron for renegotiating Tad's contract with Zoom. Are Myron's actions as a sports agent ethical? Are they moral?

Is Linda's shooting of her husband justified?

What role does Linda's guilt over spending time away from her child to pursue her professional golf career play in Linda's attitude toward the kidnapping and her murder of her husband?