

The Broker Study Guide

The Broker by John Grisham

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Plot Summary

The Broker is another legal thriller by bestselling author John Grisham. In this novel, Joel Backman was sent to jail six years ago for illegal possession of military documents. Backman was a powerful lawyer who often brokered deals between his clients and the United States government. His downfall was brought about by three young Pakistani men who discovered nine secret high tech satellites and then created a computer program that allowed them to take control of the satellites. The CIA wants to know who the satellites originally belonged to. The head of the CIA, Teddy Maynard, believes the best way to find out what Backman refuses to reveal is to have him pardoned from jail, relocated to a foreign country, release his location to the top three suspects, and sit back to see who kills him. However, Maynard underestimated Backman's will to survive. The Broker is a novel filled with espionage and danger, one that will satisfy Grisham fans and newcomers alike.

President Arthur Morgan is in the final hours of his presidency, spending those hours trying to decide to who he should grant pardons. Morgan refuses to receive bribes from one criminal, unable to stomach the man's crime. Morgan knows that his presidency was impressive only for the overwhelming loss in his bid for reelection, so he sees the pardons as a way to redeem some of his self respect. However, when Teddy Maynard, head of the CIA, comes to see him, President Morgan is shocked at his request. Maynard wants Morgan to pardon Joel Backman, a Washington broker who went to jail six years ago in a sensational case involving high tech satellites and accusations of treason. Maynard explains that Backman never confessed to what he knew about the satellites, but the CIA would still like to know who the satellites belonged to. Maynard would like to have Backman released so that he might release his location to the top three suspects and see who kills him first.

Joel Backman is miserable in his jail cell, but does not expect his cruel treatment to improve. Therefore, Backman is surprised when he is dragged out of his cell in the middle of the night and informed that he has been granted a full presidential pardon. However, in order to accept the pardon, Backman must agree to a relocation program designed to protect him from his powerful enemies. Backman quickly agrees. Backman is placed on a military transport plane and taken to Italy, where he spends a day in the hospital. Attempts are made to drug Backman for questioning, but Backman refuses to take any medication or food from the hospital staff. Out of frustration, the CIA moves Backman out of the hospital and to a small hotel where his new life is set to begin.

Backman is given the new name of Marco Lazzeri and told that Marco is a Canadian citizen whose parents were Italian. Marco has decided to relocate to Italy to get to know his roots. To make this more believable, Backman is paired with Luigi, a mysterious handler who instructs Backman on how he should dress, eat, and behave in public. Luigi also arranges for Backman to begin an intensive study of Italian with a young student named Ermanno. Luigi warns Backman that he must become proficient in Italian as quickly as possible because he will be left on his own in a matter of months.



Backman, who is thrilled to be out of prison, studies hard and enjoys his few moments of solitude. After a week, however, Backman is whisked out of this small town and moved to the larger community of Bologna, when Robert Critz, President Morgan's friend and assistant, is murdered in London. Luigi warns Backman that this murder could be related to his own pardon and that the danger has just increased. Backman is given a small apartment in Bologna and the freedom to explore the city as he likes. Backman meets a law professor at a local café on one of his first mornings in Bologna, making his first friend since going to jail.

As Backman continues his lessons most mornings, he finds himself drawn more and more to the city. Backman often requests that his lessons take place on walks through the city so that he can explore. When alone, Backman often walks for hours, exploring the history and the beauty of his adopted city. A request for money allows Backman to buy himself new shoes and a slicker that takes away from Luigi his ability to track Backman through the transmitter in his shoe. However, Luigi finds it easy to follow Backman on foot and uses the spy equipment in his own apartment to follow Backman's comings and goings.

When the new semester starts at the university, Ermanno wants to return to school, so another tutor is hired to help Backman with his studies in the afternoons. This tutor is a woman close to Backman's age whose husband is dying of cancer. Backman finds this woman fascinating, giving his life a new purpose that was missing before. At the same time, Backman uses his new friend at the university to receive a package from his son containing a cell phone that will allow them to communicate without Luigi being aware. With this phone, Backman is able to learn a few things important to his future plans.

Backman is confronted one morning by agents from the FBI. Frightened for his safety, Backman makes a run for it. Backman travels to a new town, but quickly discovers that without a passport he cannot even rent a hotel room. Backman returns to Bologna and asks Francesca for help. Francesca gives Backman her husband's passport. With that passport, Backman is able to travel to Zurich, where he recovers some cash he has hidden in a bank there as well as four disks that contain the computer program JAM his Pakistani clients created in order to control nine high tech satellites they accidentally discovered.

Backman flies to Washington DC. Even while he has both Chinese and Iraqi killers on his trail, Backman sets a meeting with officials from the Pentagon to turn over the JAM disks in exchange for them calling off the killers. The exchange is arranged and Backman is given what he wants. The following day, Backman meets with a reporter to whom he tells he plans to start a new firm in order to make his enemies think he will remain in Washington. Backman then returns to Italy where he hopes to continue his friendship with Francesca.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

John Grisham is the author of more than eighteen legal thrillers and several memoir type novels. This novel, *The Broker*, is about a power broker from Washington DC who finds himself forced to broker one last deal in which his own life is the prize.

In chapter one, President Arthur Morgan is spending his last hours of his presidency attempting to decide which criminals deserve pardons and which do not. Morgan is a one term president who lost his bid for reelection in an embarrassing landslide election. Morgan only wants to create a situation now in which he can slide into obscurity. Morgan turns down one attempt at bribery, not because he does not want the money, but because he cannot stomach the man's crime. Morgan turns his attention to a high profile criminal, one who swindled a great number of people in an investment scam but is now dying. As Morgan considers this case, Teddy Maynard, head of the CIA, comes to the Oval Office for a visit. Maynard wants Morgan to pardon Joel Backman, an ex-broker who went to jail six years ago in a highly publicized case. Maynard explains that Backman still has information the CIA wants and that he hopes if Backman will not confess upon being pardoned, that leaking his whereabouts and watching who kills him will answer some of the remaining questions related to his case.

In chapter two, Backman is taken from his cell in the middle of the night and informed that he is to receive a presidential pardon if he will agree to certain conditions. Backman asks for protection, aware that there are many powerful people who would like to see him dead, and is told that protection is one of the conditions. Backman quickly agrees to the pardon. Backman is quickly dressed in military clothing and taken to a military airport where he boards a transport plane for a destination unknown to him.

In chapter three, the morning after Backman's pardon is filled with speculation about his whereabouts as people once close to him begin to speculate on his next move. Carl Pratt, his ex-partner, is frightened that Backman will return to the firm they built together and attempt to retake the reins. As Pratt considers this possibility, he remembers the shock in the courtroom when Backman suddenly agreed to a plea deal in the aftermath of Jacy Hubbard's death that resulted in indictments against Pratt, another partner, and Backman's son, Neal, being dropped. As Pratt worries about an uncertain future, Backman's plane lands and he is taken to the base hospital under the name Major Herzog.

In chapter four, Pratt revisits the case that led to Backman's downfall. Three Pakistani computer scientist discovered nine high tech military satellites while attempting to find and create a program to control an Indian spying satellite. The three Pakistanis named these satellites Neptune and created a program called JAM that could control them. The three scientist then went to Washington DC, where they hired Backman to help them sell the program and control of the satellites to the highest bidder. As Pratt revisits this



case, Backman is examined by a doctor and told he is dehydrated and needs an IV. Backman refuses. In fact, Backman refuses to take any medication or food from the hospital staff.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Joel Backman has gone to prison because he attempted to sell a program that controls nine high tech military satellites to a foreign country. No one knows at this point who owns these satellites, but it is clear to the reader that the CIA is desperate to know. In fact, the CIA is so desperate that they talk an outgoing president into pardoning Backman so that they can set him up to be killed. The CIA hopes this murder, or the murderer, will finally give them a clue as to who originally owned the satellites and who Backman was attempting to sell them to. This is the conflict that will propel the plot through the rest of the story.

Backman is an arrogant, powerful man who fell a long way off his self imposed pedestal. Backman is a hard-to-read character for the reader, but he appears to be somewhat humbled. However, Backman is not stupid. Backman refuses to take any food or medication from hospital staff, showing the reader that he knows the CIA is after his secrets and would stoop to drugging him to get answers. This shows the reader as well that Backman will not allow the CIA to have him killed if he can help it. The problem is that the reader is unsure if Backman suspects that this is the end game the CIA is planning.



Chapters 5-8

Chapters 5-8 Summary

In chapter five, Neal Backman, the only child of Backman's three children who still speaks to his father, learns of his father's pardon. Neal, who was forced to relocate to Virginia in the wake of his father's downfall, wonders how long it will be before he hears from his father. At the military hospital, Backman is given a file that contains everything he needs to know about his new identity. Backman is to be Marco Lazzeri, a Canadian citizen whose parents are both Italian. Backman is instructed to memorize the information and be prepared to leave within the hour. Backman is driven off the military base and through the countryside of Italy, finally arriving in Treviso. Backman is sent into a café where he meets his handler, Luigi.

In chapter six, Luigi takes Backman to his hotel room, shows him his new clothes, and hands him a cell phone he is to use to only call Luigi. Luigi explains that he will be teaching Backman how to behave like an Italian and he will provide a teacher who will give him intensive lessons in Italian. Luigi warns that it is very important that Backman learn Italian as quickly as possible. After lunch, Luigi and Backman go to Ermanno, the language tutor's house. It is arranged for Backman and Ermanno to meet several hours in the mornings and again in the afternoons after lunch. Afterwards, Backman is allowed to wander the city alone, something he has not done in six years.

In chapter seven, a reporter who wrote extensively about the Backman case meets with Pratt. They discuss the possibility that Backman's life is in danger and whether Backman is aware of this fact. At the same time, Critz visits a bar in London where he has gone with his wife and is approached by a man he does not know. This man offers Critz a large sum of money if he will give the man the whereabouts of Joel Backman. Critz agrees, confident he has enough contacts left in Washington to find out.

In chapter eight, Backman is alone in his hotel room and restless. Backman wants to order a cup of coffee, but does not know the words. Backman takes the materials Ermanno gave him and begins to study the vocabulary, naming things around his room. Over dinner he questions Luigi, but receives few answers. Back in his room, Backman continues to study until, minutes before the kitchen closes, he is able to order his coffee. The next day Ermanno is impressed with Backman's progress.

Chapters 5-8 Analysis

It appears to the reader that Backman has few friends left in the United States. Trice divorced, Backman has only one child of his three who will speak to him, but this child appears reluctant to hear from his father after Backman's downfall reflected on his own legal career. Backman's ex-partner would rather Backman disappear and speculates how quickly Backman will be killed by his enemies. It seems Backman has no one to



turn to; therefore, it is not surprising to the reader that Backman so completely embraces this new situation in which he finds himself.

Backman is in Italy and must learn the language so that he might survive on his own after his handler leaves. Backman's handler, Luigi, refuses to tell him anything about himself, leaving Backman wondering if he can even trust the man. Not only this, but Backman finds himself suspicious of Ermanno, the young tutor hired to teach him Italian. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Backman throws all he has into learning Italian so that he can survive on his own. This shows the reader how determined Backman is to survive this situation.



Chapters 9-12

Chapters 9-12 Summary

In chapter nine, Backman falls into a routine of studying and eating. One afternoon, Luigi changes the routine by forcing Backman to eat his dinner alone in a local diner. Backman impresses himself with how well he does in ordering the meal. Unbeknownst to Backman, Luigi makes daily reports to his supervisor, Whitaker, who in turn makes daily reports to Julia Javier, Teddy Maynard's employee. Julia has a daily meeting with Maynard in which she reports everything about Backman's progress in Italy. They also discuss Backman's family and other people he might attempt to contact, arranging to have their phones and homes tapped in case he does.

In chapter ten, Critz begins contacting people he once knew in Washington DC in an attempt to find out where Backman is. Unfortunately, people do not remember Critz as fondly as he thought they would. At the same time, Backman is forced to pack up and leave with Luigi. Luigi refuses to explain why they are moving, or anything else Backman wants to talk about. All Luigi is willing to tell Backman is that his life may be in danger.

In chapter eleven, Maynard learns what Critz is up to and orders his murder. Critz is approached in a bar by a man who claims to be an American football fan. Critz begins talking to him about his favorite NFL team, unaware that the man is a CIA operative sent to kill him. Critz leaves to go to the bathroom and his friend slips a drug into his drink. After finishing the drink, Critz begins to fall asleep on his feet. The man leads him into the street where he is grabbed by people in a van. Critz is injected with heroin before being dumped on the street and run over by a sports car. The next morning when Backman again pushes Luigi about his motives, he learns that Critz was killed. Luigi takes Backman to Bologna, where they take small, uncomfortable hotel rooms and have a forgettable meal. Backman is already missing Treviso, but he is willing to do anything to stay alive.

In chapter twelve, Backman wakes after his first night in Bologna and begins walking the city. Backman finds a small café that is packed with business men and people from the local university. Backman meets a man there named Rudolph, an American who moved to Italy in the fifties due to his support of communism. Rudolph teaches law at the university. Backman wonders briefly if Rudolph is one of the operatives assigned to watching him, but thinks he is real. That afternoon, Backman insists Ermanno take him on a walking tour of the university that includes showing him the law school.

Chapters 9-12 Analysis

Backman quickly falls into an easy pattern, but the reader quickly sees how much danger he is in. Backman is relocated after Critz begins searching for him, paid by



someone who wants to find Backman. This reminds the reader about the plan the CIA have for Backman and suggests that it is already working even though the CIA has not released his whereabouts yet.

Backman settles in Bologna, where he quickly makes a new friend. Backman wonders if this man is one of his operatives, leaving the reader both aware of Backman's situation and the fact that Backman knows that he is being watched. This suggests to the reader that Backman knows more of his situation than he has appeared to know so far.



Chapters 13-16

Chapters 13-16 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Backman continues to force his will on his tutor, forcing him to change his teaching style even though Ermanno is not happy with Backman's forcefulness. Later, Backman goes to the university and finds Rudolph's office, leaving him a note to alert him to his visit. At the same time, Luigi meets with his supervisor and shows him the safe house where he plans to move Backman that night and the apartment next door where Luigi will be able to monitor Backman night and day. Backman is thrilled with the new apartment.

In chapter fourteen, a funeral is held for Critz that has been delayed because of President Morgan's schedule. The widow does not believe her husband died in a drunken accident as the London police clearly believe, but she decides not to force the issue because of the heroin the police found in his blood. On that same day, the FBI receive a tip from an informant that three million dollars was placed in a Grand Cayman bank in return for a presidential pardon. The FBI immediately focus on Backman as the source of the money, turning to Teddy Maynard to find him. However, Maynard refuses to reveal Backman's whereabouts or his plan for him.

In chapter fifteen, Backman returns to the same diner a few days later and meets with Rudolph again. They discuss Italy and all the places Backman would like to go visit. After the visit, Backman walks in the snow and his shoes leak. Backman talks Luigi into giving him money so he can buy new shoes. Backman also asks for either a new teacher or to be moved to an English speaking area such as London or Australia. Luigi promises to ask his supervisor. A short time later, Backman is introduced to Francesca Ferro, a young tour guide who will be teaching him in the afternoons. Backman learns almost immediately that Francesca has been instructed not to ask Backman about his life or to offer any information about her own.

In chapter sixteen, Backman takes the money that Luigi has finally given him and buys a new pair of snow boots and a parka. From the stores, Backman boards a train and goes into Milano. At the airport, Backman approaches several people and asks them to take a letter and mail it for him once they reach the states. Two people agree. However, one woman throws the letter away. The second, however, takes the letter home and mails it a few days later. At the same time, Luigi meets with his supervisor and assures him that Backman has shown no interest in approaching anyone from his past.

Chapters 13-16 Analysis

Backman continues to appear to be going along with his handlers passively, as though afraid for his life. However, Backman is cultivating a relationship with a local man for reasons the reader is not clear about at this point. At the same time, Backman buys



himself new shoes and sneaks off to the airport in Milan in order to have someone mail a letter for him. This suggests that Backman knows more about what's going on around him and he has a plan in place to take care of it.

At the same time, the FBI has discovered that President Morgan took a three million dollar bribe to pardon someone. This begins an investigation that is focused partially on Backman. When Maynard refuses to tell the FBI where Backman is, it begins a series of events that could lead to either Maynard's retirement or the FBI's involvement in Backman's situation. Either way, it only seems like a good thing for Backman at this point since the reader is pretty sure he did not offer a bribe for his pardon.



Chapters 17-20

Chapters 17-20 Summary

In chapter seventeen, the FBI continues to follow the bribe money as it moves from Grand Cayman to Singapore to Saint Christopher. At the same time in Italy, Backman meets with Francesca in the Basilica di San Francesco. Francesca gives Backman the tour in Italian, forcing him to practice his vocabulary. Afterward, they visit two towers that are the only remaining towers from a time in which it was quite a statement for a family to live in one. In Virginia, Neal receives a letter from his father asking for a device to email with and money. Neal reads the letter multiple times, unsure of what he wants to do.

In chapter eighteen, Dan Sandberg, a journalist, gets wind of the FBI investigation into a bribe paid for pardons and contacts Rusty Lowell with the CIA to find out the true story. Lowell tells Sandberg that Teddy could end up being forced out if he continues to refuse to tell where Backman is. At the same time, Neal Backman takes out a loan at the local bank without telling his wife. Neal then buys a smartphone for his father's use and a laptop on which he can receive emails from the smartphone. Neal places the phone, instructions, and money in a package and mails it to Rudolph's office in Bologna.

In chapter nineteen, Backman wakes early and moves around his apartment, setting up several subtle intrusion alarms that will alert him whether anyone has been in his rooms. So far someone has searched Backman's apartment every day. Backman walks the city before his session with Ermanno and then again after lunch before he meets with Francesca. Backman complains to Luigi that Francesca frowns too much and learns that her husband is very ill. Backman tracks Francesca down to where she is showing a tour group the city. Backman follows, speaking to Francesca briefly. Afterward, Francesca makes Backman walk the long sidewalk up to Colle della Guardia to show him her favorite place to sit and look out over the city. During this quiet time they share some stories with one another, breaking Luigi's rules.

In chapter twenty, Teddy Maynard meets with his key people before going to the White House, where he believes he will be fired. Teddy advises his people to go ahead with the Backman plan even though it is a few months before schedule. Lowell tells Sandberg later that not only did Teddy get fired, but his replacement had been quickly fired for the same reasons, refusing to reveal where Backman is. In Italy, Backman wakes early, as usual, and walks through the streets, aware that Luigi is following him. Backman easily loses Luigi and goes to the café to meet Rudolph. Rudolph tells Backman that he has received a package for him. That afternoon, Backman retrieves the package and opens it in a bathroom stall, carefully reading through the instructions. Backman throws away the packaging and hides the phone in his pocket along with the instructions. Backman finds a bookstore that offers free wifi service and emails his son. Backman also checks the news and learns of the possible bribe for pardons.



Chapters 17-20 Analysis

The investigation into the possible bribe paid to Morgan for a pardon is heating up, causing Teddy to lose his job. However, instead of helping Backman, this situation causes Teddy to move up the time table by which the Backman plan is working. Backman's location will be released to multiple countries immediately, placing his life in serious danger. It appears the FBI investigation is going to be little help to Backman after all.

Backman has had a letter sent to his son asking for a method by which he can send email. Backman has no knowledge of modern technology, but Neal's instructions are clear and precise. In fact, Neal, who hesitated when he read his father's letter, has placed himself in personal jeopardy by taking out a loan behind his wife's back in order to help his father. This suggests to the reader that Neal still loves his father despite what his scandal did to Neal's career and will do anything Backman needs from him. This is good because the reader can see that Backman is going to need all the help he can get.



Chapters 21-24

Chapters 21-24 Summary

In chapter twenty-one, agents of the Mossad are working to not only find Backman, but to kill him. Just recently they have received information that Backman is in Italy. At the same time, the Chinese have recently learned from an American informant where Backman is. The Russians are approached with an offer of information, but they turn it down. The Saudis learn about Backman from a reluctant informant in Riyadh.

In chapter twenty-two, Backman is given a new tour of Colle della Guardia by Francesca, but she is distracted and keeps repeating herself. As they talk, Backman finds himself revealing some truth to Francesca, including his time in prison. They continue to walk and Francesca falls, injuring her ankle. Backman finds the caretaker and has him drive Francesca down the mountain to her apartment. Backman escorts her upstairs, where he meets her disapproving mother. However, Backman fails to see or hear Francesca's husband the whole time he is in her apartment.

In chapter twenty-three, the Chinese have a killer they frequently use named the Tin Man. This man is audacious, brave, and often successful. This man has been sent to find Backman. The Saudis have also arrived in Bologna, renting an apartment where they plan to set up their base of operations. At the same time, a new operative has been brought in to follow Backman. This man witnesses Backman stopping inside a hotel that has wireless internet service. This makes the CIA curious, especially since Backman has begun carrying a blue bag with him everywhere he goes.

In chapter twenty-four, Sandberg learns another paper has scooped his story and named Backman as the source of the bribe. Later that day, the new president of the United States interviews Susan Penn, the new head of the CIA. She tells the president all about the scheme to allow Backman to be killed to learn who owned the satellites or who he was selling them to. In Italy, Backman spends the afternoon in a restaurant with Francesca, learning all he can about her relationship with her husband, a relationship that has been strained for the past few years and is ending with her husband's fatal brain cancer. At the same time, Backman is being watched by the same woman who lured Jacy Hubbard to his death six years previously.

Chapters 21-24 Analysis

Word spreads about Backman's whereabouts and almost immediately people begin showing up in Bologna. Backman appears oblivious to this, as he is to the fact that Luigi has become suspicious of his blue bag and the phone he hides inside it. In fact the only thing Backman seems concerned with at this point is his budding relationship with soon to be widow, Francesca. The reader finds themselves wondering if Backman's

relationship with Francesca will lead to a distraction so great that Backman allows himself to be caught by the enemies coming after him.



Chapters 25-28

Chapters 25-28 Summary

In chapter twenty-five, Backman walks out of his apartment and is approached by two men who know his real name. Backman learns they are from the FBI and are there investigating a possible bribe for his pardon. Backman walks away from them, aware they cannot arrest him without cause. Backman spends the day walking around, refusing to attend his morning tutoring session. When Backman meets Luigi for lunch, a possible fire causes an evacuation of the restaurant. Backman realizes that his backpack was left inside, but when they are allowed back in, it is missing. Backman knows that some of the operatives watching him must have taken it.

In chapter twenty-six, Backman meets Francesca at the same restaurant where they met the day before. Afterward, Backman realizes it would be dangerous to return to his apartment. Backman decides it is time to escape. However, when Backman attempts to get a hotel room for the night he realizes he cannot do that without a passport. Back in Bologna, Luigi hears movement in Backman's apartment and realizes that someone is inside looking for Backman.

In chapter twenty-seven, Backman goes to Francesca's apartment and tells her the truth about his situation. Francesca allows Backman to spend the night on her couch. Shortly after falling asleep, Backman is awakened when Francesca tells him she has an idea how to help him. Francesca cuts and dyes Backman's hair and shaves his face. Francesca then gives him her husband's passport.

In chapter twenty-eight, Luigi listens to the people in Backman's apartment until everyone realizes Backman has split town. At the same time, Backman hangs out near the bus station until there is a large enough crowd to get lost within. Backman buys a ticket and hides in the bathroom until it is near time to board the bus. An agent sees Backman and suspects his identity, so he buys a ticket on the same bus. Backman spots this agent and manages to escape the bus in such a way that the agent cannot follow. From there, Backman takes a taxi to Milano with Luigi in close pursuit.

Chapters 25-28 Analysis

Backman finds himself on the run after first running into two FBI agents and then having his phone stolen by Luigi and his operatives. Backman knows that he is in danger, so he decides now is the best time to escape. The way Backman approaches his escape, the reader begins to think he has been planning this all along. However, Backman's escape is not quick and easy because he does not have a passport. In this, Francesca proves to be an asset when she gives Backman her husband's passport. This seems like something Luigi might have suspected, but it quickly appears that Luigi, who has been a

little lazy in this assignment, has not thought about the connection Backman has with Francesca. The reader hopes this continues.



Chapters 29-32

Chapters 29-32 Summary

In chapter twenty-nine, Backman arrives in Milano and quickly finds a way to email his son in fear that the discovery of the phone could have led to him in some way. Neal is on the internet when Backman emails so they are able to speak live through their emails. Backman asks Neal to locate Senator Ira Clayburn, someone Backman appears to think will help him. Then Backman boards a train with a newly bought disguise, unaware that Luigi and a group of CIA agents are hot on his trail.

In chapter thirty, Julia Javier checks Backman's file and sends the operatives to Switzerland, convinced this is where Backman is headed. Backman is on a train and is joined in his compartment by an eccentric woman who scares away other possible passengers with her luggage and booze. Backman finds himself falling asleep several times. His fellow traveler tells Backman that some man was looking at him through the window of the compartment's door. Backman gathers his things and slips off the train at the next stop. Backman takes a hotel room for the night.

In chapter thirty-one, Backman arrives in Zurich, where he quickly makes his way to a local bank. Backman arranges to meet with a bank official who he knows from a previous visit to the bank. Despite his poor appearance, Backman is treated with the respect a man of power deserves. Backman arranges to open his safe deposit box from which he removes four computer disks. It turns out that these disks contain JAM, the program the three Pakistani scientists created to control Neptune. Back in the bank official's office, Backman asks for a hundred thousand dollars to be transferred to a Washington DC bank and to be given a sum in cash. Backman then arranges to fly to New York or Philadelphia from Munich and for the bank to provide a car to Munich. Backman then emails Neal and asks him to meet him in Washington with Senator Clayburn.

In chapter thirty-two, Neal Backman is unhappy with his father's requests. Neal knows it is time to tell his wife what has been going on. Instead of becoming angry, Neal's wife is supportive and insists that they help Neal's father. However, they are both unaware that there are bugs in their house and they are being overheard by the Mossad, who are awaiting permission from their government to kill Backman on American soil. A short time later, Backman lands in New York and takes a train to Washington. Once there, Backman takes a taxi to Carl Pratt's house and asks his help in arranging a meeting with Clayburn.

Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Backman manages to escape his pursuers in Italy and makes his way to Switzerland. When he arrives, the reader discovers that not only did Backman hide away some



money, just as the government suspected, but he also has the JAM program. This is Backman's bargaining chip, and the reader suddenly understands why he is trying to get to Washington and speak with Senator Clayburn. However, the reader cannot see how Backman might get his way out of this mess unless he is finally able to reveal his secrets to someone with the power to call off three powerful countries intent on killing him.

Neal Backman turns to his wife in this final push to help his father. Neal makes it clear to the reader that he has reservations about his father and his actions, but that he loves him and intends to help him no matter what it does to his personal life. This is an unselfish love that Backman did not show to his children when they were growing up, but perhaps his new mellow personality might be able to share with Neal and his family if he survives the next few days.



Chapters 33-36

Chapters 33-36 Summary

In chapter thirty-three, Neal calls his father and arranges to meet with him. A short time later, Carl Pratt arrives at Backman's hotel room with Ira Clayburn. Backman tells Clayburn that he has JAM and that he would like to give it to someone in the government. Clayburn suggests that Backman give it to Major Wes Roland, the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Clayburn calls the Pentagon and arranges the meeting. At the Pentagon, Backman tells Roland all he knows about the Neptune project and JAM. Backman admits that he tried to sell the program to Iraq, but the sale was interrupted by his indictment. Backman also tells them China is the owner of the satellites and even explains how they launched the satellites without anyone being aware. Roland makes a deal with Backman, agreeing to call of the Iraqis and the Saudis as well as give Backman two passports for Canada and Australia in exchange for the disks.

In chapter thirty-four, Backman has lunch with Clayburn and Neal. Afterward, Roland comes to Backman's hotel room and delivers the passports personally. Backman hands over the disks. That night Backman has his hair whitened and then arranges to meet Sandberg in a luxury hotel room near the White House. Whitaker is on a flight to Washington, preparing to take the blame for the loss of Backman while the Mossad gets orders to leave Backman alone.

In chapter thirty-five, Backman meets with Sandberg and tells him a bunch of lies about his pardon and his life in Italy. Backman also tells Sandberg he plans to start a new firm in Washington with the main focus on lobbying. During the meeting, Backman has Neal call every few minutes to make it appear that Backman is incredibly busy. At the end of the meeting, Sandberg confesses that he does not believe most of what Backman has said, but Backman tells him all that matters is that he publish the story about the new firm.

In chapter thirty-six, Backman has lunch with Neal, his wife, and their daughter. Backman enjoys being close to his grandchild, the only one he has ever met. Backman tells Neal about the bank account he opened in Washington and invites him to spend as much money as necessary to cover all the expenses he incurred while helping his father. Backman then tells Neal that he plans to return to Bologna using the passport Francesca gave him in order to be close to her.

Chapters 33-36 Analysis

Backman returns to Washington DC to broker his final deal. Backman confesses all about Neptune and JAM to Major Roland, exchanging the disks for two passports he never intends to use. Backman only wants to have his freedom and the ability to live his

life as he pleases. This is what the exchange with Roland does for him. Backman then does an interview with the press that suggests he plans to be in Washington permanently in order to draw any remaining danger away from his true destination, Italy. It turns out that Backman is in love with Francesca and intends to return to her side now that he is a free man. This saddens Neal, who had hoped his father would remain nearby to get to know his grandchild, but simply reminds him of the man his father has always been. Some people can only change so much.

Characters

Joel Backman aka Marco Lazzeri

Joel Backman was once a very powerful lawyer in Washington DC, whose clients were often powerful companies and countries who sought to influence American policy. Backman was arrogant, a womanizer as famous for his many affairs as his business deals. However, six years ago Backman plead guilty to multiple counts of unauthorized possession of military documents. Backman was sentenced to twenty years in federal prison. As the novel begins, the current president is in his final hours of office and has been persuaded by the head of the CIA to offer Backman a pardon. Backman has no knowledge of this deal and is as surprised as everyone else when he learns he details.

Backman is quickly taken out of the United States and hidden in Italy, where he lives under an assumed name and is forced to spend his days learning Italian. Backman believes he is to be set free when he has learned enough of the language to get by. However, the plan is actually to leak Backman's whereabouts to countries that might have a grudge against Backman for representing three Pakistani men who discovered and stole multiple military satellites. The CIA wants to know who the satellites belong to and hope that the murder of Backman will point them to the guilty country. Backman remains blissfully unaware of this plot against his life, only becoming suspicious when his handler orchestrates the theft of a phone Backman had his son secretly send to him. When this occurs, Backman not only shows the readers and his family that he has changed in prison, that he is a good man at heart, but also that he is still the manipulator who once brokered major policy shifting deals in Washington.

Neal Backman

Neal Backman is the only one of Joel Backman's three children who will still take his father's calls. Neal is ashamed of his father, humiliated at the attention and notoriety his father's crimes brought on him. Neal has retired to a small town where he practices law in a small law firm that is far distant from the huge firm his father once ran, and Neal hoped it would cement his own future. Neal is now married and the father of a small child. Neal has no desire to be caught up in his father's drama any longer.

However, when Joel Backman contacts his son secretly and asks for help, Neal cannot stop from offering that help. Neal sends his father a phone on which they communicate for several weeks before the phone is stolen by Backman's CIA handlers. Later, when Joel Backman manages to make it back to Washington, Neal rushes to his side to help him broker one last deal that should result in Joel's freedom. Neal proves himself to be a loyal son who does not hold grudges despite all his father did to his own reputation.



Teddy Maynard

Teddy Maynard is the elderly head of the CIA. Teddy has possession of many powerful secrets that have secured his position for many years, through the administrations of four presidents, each of which swore to rid the country of the likes of Teddy Maynard. When President Morgan is badly defeated in his bid for a second term and he is hours from leaving office, Maynard visits him with the details of a scheme. Maynard wants Morgan to pardon the broker, Joel Backman. Maynard hopes to leak Backman's location to multiple countries who the CIA suspects were the owners of nine military satellites clients of Backman stole. Maynard hopes the identity of Backman's killer will reveal the true owners and answer questions Backman himself has refused to answer. However, Maynard is removed from office by the new president and does not learn the truth about the satellites.

Jacy Hubbard

Jacy Hubbard was a long-time member of the Senate who returned to Washington when his career finally ended in order to work with Backman's law firm. When Joel Backman took on the Pakistanis' case, he asked Hubbard to learn all he could about the nine satellites the Pakistanis found. Hubbard came to Backman with paperwork given to him by an informant in the Pentagon. Soon after this, Backman and his partners were indicted on multiple charges that included treason and illegal possession of military documents. As Backman was preparing for trial, Hubbard was found dead at the grave of his brother. This death prompted Backman to plead guilty in exchange for all charges being dropped against his son and partners.

Carl Pratt

Carl Pratt was one of Backman's partners. Pratt was also indicted in the mess that surrounded Backman's downfall, but escaped prosecution when Backman plead guilty. Pratt now runs what is left of Backman's law practice. When Pratt learns that Backman has been pardoned, he becomes frightened that Backman will return to Washington and cause trouble for the fledgling law firm. Backman does come back and seek out Pratt, but only in help giving the disks containing the Pakistanis' computer program that controls the nine satellites to the Pentagon. Pratt is reluctant to help, but does set up a meeting for Backman before once again washing his hands of the entire situation.

Luigi

Luigi is Backman's handler in Italy. Luigi teaches Backman what it means to be Italian. It is Luigi's job to make sure Backman remains alive and learns how to survive in Italy. However, the reader later discovers that Luigi is also supposed to keep close tabs on Backman, making sure he does not escape or make contact with people from his previous life before the CIA can decide what to do with him. Luigi is not aware that



Backman is to be set up to be murdered until Backman's location has already been given to multiple countries who might have an interest in the information Backman might have about the nine military satellites the Pakistanis' stole.

Safi Mirza, Fazal Sharif, and Farooq Khan

Safi Mirza, Fazal Sharif, and Farooq Khan are three Pakistanis who attempt to create a program to locate satellites. These three stumble across nine satellites that are not supposed to be where they are found. The three men nickname these satellites Neptune. Fascinated with these satellites and their highly advanced capabilities, the three men create a program that allows them to hijack and take control of the satellites. When the three men realize that what they have is very valuable, they travel to Washington DC and employ Joel Backman to help them sell the computer program to the highest bidder. However, word of what they have gets out. Two of the Pakistanis disappear before Backman is sent to prison and a third disappears six years later when Backman is pardoned.

Francesca Ferro

Francesca Ferro is an Italian tour guide and language tutor living in Bologna. Francesca is hired to help Marco Lazzeri learn Italian. As they spend time together, Marco finds himself drawn to Francesca. Learning that Francesca's elderly husband is ill and dying only caused Marco to be drawn closer to her. They spend a great deal of time together in Marco's final weeks in Bologna. When Marco makes the decision to leave Italy, he turns to Francesca for help. Francesca gives Marco her husband's passport, enabling him to travel to Washington, where he parts with the one piece of evidence that could end his life.

Julia Javier

Julia Javier is a young woman who works for Teddy Maynard. It is Julia's job to gather information on Joel Backman and present this information to Teddy every day. Julia carefully presents this information truthfully, aware of Teddy's strange ability to know things that even Julia was not aware of. It is to Julia all the operatives involved in the case report.

Robert Critz

Robert Critz is a close friend of Arthur Morgan's and is at his side as the president spends his final moments as President of the United States. Unknown to Critz, Morgan blames Critz for the overwhelming loss of his second campaign for the presidency. Morgan no longer wants Critz's advice or friendship and is happy to go separate ways after his presidency is over. Critz looks forward to a future that is filled with hard work and the lecture circuit, something he would gladly give up but for a lack of money. When

Critz is approached by a stranger and offered a lot of money to reveal Backman's location, Critz quickly agrees. However, when the CIA gets wind of what Critz is doing, they quickly put an end to it by killing Critz in what looks like a drunken accident.



Objects/Places

Shoes

The CIA places tracking devices in the shoes provided to Backman soon after his release from prison in order to track his movements when he is not with his handlers.

Computer Bag

Backman buys himself a computer bag in which he carries his Smartphone and money. Unfortunately, this bag is stolen in an attempt by the CIA to find what Backman is hiding inside it.

Four Disks

Joel Backman has possession of the four computer disks on which is the program called JAM that his Pakistani clients created and wanted to sell.

Neptune

The Pakistanis discovered nine satellites with highly advance capabilities that they nicknamed Neptune.

Passport

Backman requires a passport to travel in Italy, including renting hotel rooms. Backman goes to Francesca about this problem and she gives him her husband's passport.

Ankyo 850 PC Pocket Smartphone

Neal Backman sends his father, Joel, an Ankyo 850 PC Pocket Smartphone so that they might communicate via email in a way that cannot be traced.

KwyteMail

KwyteMail is the email service Neal Backman advises his father to use in order to sent untraceable, encrypted emails to him from Italy.



Backman, Pratt & Bolling

Backman, Pratt & Bolling is the name of the law firm Backman founded and ran during his hey days. Later the firm continues to exist, but under the name Pratt & Bolling.

Rudley Federal Correctional Facility

Rudley Federal Correctional Facility is the prison where Backman served six years of a twenty year prison sentence.

Zurich

Joel Backman travels to Zurich in order to visit a bank where he not only has an account that holds a good faith payment on the purchase of JAM, but the computer disks that contain JAM.

Washington, DC

Joel Backman was once a powerful broker in Washington DC and he returns there six years later to broker one last deal in order to protect himself from the people who want to kill him.

Bologna, Italy

Joel Backman is taken to Italy and eventually settles in Bologna, where he is expected to quickly learn Italian in order to survive on his own in his new adopted country.

Themes

Power

Joel Backman was once a very powerful man. As a lawyer, Backman brokered deals between companies and foreign countries and the American government. Backman was both respected and feared in Washington. Backman enjoyed his power and all the privileges it brought with it. However, with one client, Backman goes too far and the government hits back. Backman takes on a client who has discovered highly advanced satellites and is attempting to sell them to a foreign government. This sale leads to Backman finding himself, his partners, and his son under indictment for everything from unlawful possession of military documents to treason. Upon the death of an employee, Backman pleads guilty, brokering a deal that leaves his son and partners free to return to their normal lives.

Backman's downfall was brought on by not only his arrogance, but by powerful figures in the United States government who wanted to know who the original owner of these high tech satellites was. When Backman fails to confess all when he is placed in prison, the CIA sits back and waits for their chance to force his hand. When the United States President is badly beaten in his attempt at a second term and is about to leave office, the head of the CIA visits him and encourages him to pardon Backman. The plan is to hide Backman for a short time and then to leak his position to possible owners of the satellites. The CIA will sit back and watch who kills Backman, leading them to the possible owners.

This plan is as arrogant and outrageous as Backman's behavior. The CIA is playing games with people's lives in order to find out who owns these satellites and might want them back. However, the deal backfires when Backman becomes aware of the situation and brokers his own deal with the Pentagon to turn over all his information on the satellites in exchange for his life. It turns out that Backman has all the power because he has all the evidence. Although the CIA used their power to play with a man's life, Backman used his to turn the table and save that life.

Espionage

Espionage is basically the use of spies to gather secret information. In this novel, espionage becomes a theme because the entire novel is based on secrets and multiple groups of people attempting to find these secrets. Joel Backman has become the center of this espionage because he has information that will reveal who once owned nine high tech satellites, who stole those satellites, and where the program is that will control those satellites.

The CIA wants to watch Joel Backman murdered so that the identity of his killers will lead them to the true owners of the satellites. However, the CIA fails to take into account



that other countries might also be interested in killing Backman because of botched business deals or perceived injuries in these deals. Not only this, but the CIA underestimates Backman's ability to protect himself and broker a deal that will end the entire episode of espionage.

Backman has hidden away the information everyone seeks, information everyone believes was destroyed in the days before Backman was sent to prison for unlawful possession of military documents. Backman gives this information to the United States government in exchange for them calling off the people who want to kill him. Backman wins his final deal because he has the information, information everyone has wanted.

Family

Backman has three children from three marriages. Two of Backman's children no longer speak to him because of his arrogance, his inability to focus on family, and his ambition for power over family. However, when it comes to the worst moments of his life, Backman discovers he can rely on one of his children, his son Neal. Neal followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a lawyer in the hopes of becoming as successful and powerful as his father. However, Joel Backman's downfall translates into Neal's as well, forcing Neal to settle for a middle class life in a small Virginia town.

Neal is hurt and angry with his father, but he maintains communication with him throughout his years in prison. When Neal learns his father has been pardoned, Neal expects to hear from him. However, Neal does not expect to be asked to mortgage his new life in order to help his father fight for his life. Neal does help his father out of a sense of loyalty and respect for the man who brought him into this world. Neal is conflicted the entire novel, but he never hesitates to help his father. Unfortunately, Neal is disappointed in the end when he learns that his father has decided to return to Italy, once again following a woman rather than remaining with his son and grandchild.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. The novel shifts from character to character, allowing the reader to see the thoughts and opinions of more than one character throughout the development of the plot. This shifting point of view has the potential to be confusing, but the author is careful to only shift points of view at the beginning of a chapter or after a paragraph break that alerts the reader to a new scene.

The point of view of this novel is a common third person omniscient point of view that is popular in modern bestselling novels. The author does not make one character his narrator, but instead moves from character to character in order to show multiple points of view of the plot. This allows to know both what the protagonist and antagonist are thinking as the plot develops. This changing view point makes it difficult for the author to fully develop his characters, but instead focuses on the events that propel the plot. In this novel, the reader feels somewhat distant from the characters, in the end finding it difficult to care what happens to the main characters.

Setting

The novel has multiple settings. The novel begins in Washington DC where Joel Backman was once a powerful lawyer who would broker deals between various companies, private citizens, and foreign countries with the government. However, when the novel opens, Backman has already been in jail for six years after a questionable business deal involving high tech satellites. Backman is moved to Italy, where he settles in the beautiful town of Bologna, where he often walks the streets and visits the many chapels and landmarks that make Bologna a historic site. Finally, the novel visits a small town in Virginia on multiple occasions that is the home of Backman's son, Neal.

The settings in this novel are diverse and important to the plot for multiple reasons. Washington DC is the epitome of power in America. Washington is where the country's policies and laws are made. Washington is a place that offers many opportunities to men who crave power, such as lawyers like Joel Backman. It is only appropriate that a story involving espionage and power should begin in Washington. The setting of Virginia is a stark contrast to Washington, giving the reader a visual comparison that shows how far Joel Backman and those close to him fell. Neal Backman lives in this small town, living a small life as compared to the large life his father lived. Finally, the setting of Bologna offers the reader a sense of history, a sense of survival that fits the themes of Joel Backman's life. These settings are highly appropriate to the subject of the novel and provide a backdrop that is both thematically accurate and fascinating to the reader.



Language and Meaning

The language of this novel begins with a simple English that is filled with the slang common to this type of novel filled with political and secretive themes. The language changes somewhat as the main character, Joel Backman, travels to Italy and begins attempting to learn the language quickly. Joel is placed in a situation where he has only a few months to become fluent in Italian. Due to this, Italian begins appearing in the narrative, with translation for the reader.

The language of this novel is simple enough for the youngest reader, but filled with some slang that might be unfamiliar to the inexperienced reader. As the novel continues, multiple words and phrases in Italian are introduced. These words and phrases are quickly explained within the text and do not present any kind of confusion on the part of the reader. In fact, the Italian lends some authenticity to the novel, allowing the reader to believe Joel Backman really went to Italy and was really forced to learn Italian quickly.

Structure

The novel is divided into thirty-six chapters. Each chapter is fairly long, consisting of more than ten pages each. The chapters include both passages of exposition as well as well constructed dialogue. During the sections in which Joel Backman is the narrator, there is often a great deal of internal dialogue as Joel Backman attempts to figure out his current situation and what he should do about it. In other sections of the novel, other characters take over the role of narrator, but these sections are often fairly short, only conveying to the reader what the reader needs to know to better understand Backman's situation.

The novel includes one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Joel Backman as he is released from prison and taken to Italy, where he believes he will be expected to live out the remainder of his life in hiding from people who might be interested in harming him. One of the subplots follows the desire of the CIA to have Backman killed in order to learn secrets the CIA has failed to force Backman to reveal. Another subplot follows the actions of Backman's son as he struggles with his own feelings for his father and his desire to help him despite a conviction that his father ruined his future. All these plots come together in the end to create something of an ending.



Quotes

"They were about pardons—desperate pleas from thieves and embezzlers and liars, some still in jail and some who'd never served time but who nonetheless wanted their good names cleared and their beloved rights restored."

Chap. 1, p. 1

"He'd never met the warden, which was not at all unusual. For many good reasons the warden didn't circulate."

Chap. 2, p. 15

"In a very nervous city, the day began with the pardon storming onto center stage and competing with a new President and his first full day in office."

Chap. 3, p. 25

"He was free, many years ahead of schedule, and sitting in a rustic little café in an Italian town he'd never heard of, drinking a nice local wine, and inhaling the smells of a delicious feast."

Chap. 6, . 64

"The killings soon followed, with no clues as to who was behind them."

Chap. 10, p. 102

"Amazing what six years in prison could do."

Chap. 13, p. 132

"There was simply no downside to the launching of a full federal blitz against an unsuspecting ex-president."

Chap. 17, p. 171

"Sitting almost one thousand feet above the city on the Colle della Guardia, one of the first foothills of the Apennines, the Santuario di San Luca has, for eight centuries, looked over Bologna as its protector and guardian."

Chap. 19, p. 201

"In a flash he thought of all the horrors the word 'Backman' brought with it. How sad to be so terrified of your own name."

Chap. 25, p. 261

"Then there was a cough from under the darkened porticoes across the street, and Giovanni Ferro was on the run."

Chap. 27, p. 282

"The cane was on the bed, nearby. Silly, but he couldn't help it."

Chap. 30, p. 306

"The bustle of activity made Joel anxious again; old habits would be hard to break."
Chap. 36, p. 356



Topics for Discussion

Who is Joel Backman? Why is he in prison? Why is Backman being forced to live in solitary confinement? Why is Backman's cell too cold? Why is Backman restricted from using the prison library? What is the goal of these measures? Was it necessary? What reasons might Backman have for remaining in prison? Why did Backman choose prison in the first place?

Why is Backman offered a pardon? Who pushed for this pardon? For what reason? Who gave the pardon? How did this person have the power to offer the pardon? How does the pardon change Backman's life? Is this a good or bad thing? What does Teddy Maynard have to do with all this? What is Maynard's job? Why is he eventually fired? What does this have to do with Backman?

Who is Neal Backman? What happened to change his ambitious look at his career? Why did Neal settle down in a small Virginia town? What does Neal want from his future? How has this changed over the past seven years? How does Neal react to the news that this father has been released from prison? What does this say about their relationship? How does Neal feel about his father? Why does Neal eventually decide to help his father?

What is JAM? How did JAM lead to Backman's downfall? Why did Backman take on the JAM case? How was it similar to his other cases? How was it different? Who did Backman attempt to sell JAM to? Why? Is this treason? What papers led to Backman's arrest? For what reason? How were they connected to JAM?

Who is Luigi? Why does Luigi become Backman's handler? What is Luigi's job where Backman is concerned? What does Backman know about Luigi? Why does Backman trust Luigi? What is Luigi's real job where Backman is concerned? How is this revealed to the reader? What does this say about Backman's chances for survival?

Who is Francesca? Why does she take on some of the duties of tutor for Backman? What is she not supposed to discuss with Backman? Does she follow these rules? Why or why not? What type of relationship do Backman and Francesca develop? How does it impact Backman's chances for survival? Why does Backman decide to return to Bologna after making his final deal?

Discuss technology in this novel. How does technology lead to Backman's downfall? How does technology help Backman survive the multiple attempts on his life? What role does Neal play in helping his father use technology? What might have been Backman's fate if he had not had technology to rely on?