

# **Deal Breaker Study Guide**

## **Deal Breaker by Harlan Coben**

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# Plot Summary

Harlan Coben's novel *Deal Breaker* centers around Manhattan sports agent Myron Bolitar and his newest high-profile client, quarterback Christian Steele. Steele, fresh out of Reston University, stands to become the highest paid rookie in NFL history and is looking to sign a lucrative deal with the Titans, a New York City team. Negotiations are not going well, however, as Otto Burke, owner of the Titans, thinks the salary demand is too high. Christian Steele is new to the world of professional athletics, and he looks to Myron for guidance.

Several months ago, Christian Steele's college sweetheart, a beautiful girl named Kathy Culver, disappeared from the Reston University campus after being seen at a party. Christian Steele loved Kathy Culver, or so he claims. One day, Christian Steele receives a mysterious manila envelope containing information which leads Steele to believe Kathy may still be alive.

Tragically, medical examiner Adam Culver, Kathy's father, is murdered during what the police are calling a botched burglary attempt.

When Kathy's older sister Jessica, a successful novelist, returns to New York to teach at NYU for a semester, Myron Bolitar's world is turned upside down. Jessica, believing that her sister's disappearance and her father's murder are somehow connected, convinces Myron to help her investigate the unusual happenings.

Another of Myron's star clients, New York Jets player Ricky Lane, knows something about what happened to Kathy Culver the night she went missing but he refuses to discuss it with anyone. And basketball star Chaz Landreaux, who Myron has just taken on as a client, is up to his neck in trouble with Herman and Frank Ache, two brothers with ties to organized crime in New York City.

Myron Bolitar, for his part, is not what one would call a typical sports agent. First of all, he lives with his parents. Myron is, however, loyal to his two closest friends, Win and Esperanza. His unofficial partner and former college roommate, the very upper-crust Win Lockwood has a penchant for dispensing justice to those who refuse to listen to reason. Myron's secretary, Esperanza Diaz is a law student who was once a professional wrestler.

When other, seemingly unrelated, characters begin receiving manila envelopes similar to the one delivered to Christian Steele, the case becomes a tangled web of secrets and lies. At the center of all the confusion however, is Myron's hope that he and Jessica Culver can pick up where they left off four years ago.

In this first novel featuring Myron Bolitar and his unusual associates, no one is what they seem, particularly, Bolitar.



# Chapters 1 - 12

## Chapters 1 - 12 Summary

In the opening chapter of *Deal Breaker* by Harlan Coben, sports agent Myron Bolitar meets with Otto Burke and Larry Hanson. Burke is the owner of the Titans, an NFL team. Hanson is the team's general manager. Bolitar has come to discuss the signing of his newest client, quarterback Christian Steele. Negotiations are not going well. Burke and Hanson are unwilling to give Steele the starting salary that Bolitar is requesting.

Five months ago, a young woman named Kathy Culver mysteriously disappeared. Kathy Culver was Christian Steele's fiancée. Otto Burke hints that Steele may have been involved in Kathy's disappearance. Adam Culver, her father, was murdered three nights prior to Bolitar meeting with Burke and Hanson.

During the negotiations, Myron receives a call from Christian Steele. Myron agrees to meet Christian in his dorm room at Reston University. When Myron reaches his car, he discovers that one of his tires has been slashed. Two men, one of whom wears a fedora, accost Myron. Myron injures the larger of the two men, breaking his nose with a well-placed head butt. The two men warn Myron to stay away from Chaz Landreaux, another one of Myron's clients. Roy O'Connor, an unscrupulous sports agent, is behind the ominous visit.

In Chapter 2, Myron telephones football player Chaz Landreaux. Landreaux tells Myron that two of Roy O'Connor's thugs recently paid him a visit. It seems that while Chaz was still in college, O'Connor bamboozled Chaz into signing a professional contract agreeing that, upon graduation, Roy O'Connor would be Landreaux's agent. O'Connor paid Chaz Landreaux \$5,000 up front and had been paying Landreaux \$250 a month ever since. Roy O'Connor sent his goons to lean on Chaz because Chaz changed his mind about signing with Roy O'Connor.

After his conversation with Chaz Landreaux, Myron Bolitar meets Christian Steele in Steele's dorm room at Reston University. Steele talks about Kathy Culver's disappearance. Christian Steele then shows Myron *Nips*, a pornographic magazine, which was delivered to him that day in a manila envelope. The magazine features an advertisement for a telephone sex line. Kathy Culver's picture is in the advertisement. Christian Steele tells Myron that the handwriting on the manila envelope looks like Kathy Culver's.

In Chapter 3, Myron Bolitar runs into novelist Jessica Culver at a bar in Manhattan. Myron and Jessica were once lovers. Four years ago, Jessica left Myron for another man. Jessica is the older sister of Kathy Culver, the young woman who disappeared. Myron then visits his friend and business partner Windsor Howe Lockwood III, whom everyone calls Win.



Win suggests contacting a handwriting expert to find out if Kathy Culver was the person who addressed the envelope to Christian Steele. Win tells Myron to be careful about becoming involved with Jessica Culver again. Win thinks it is no coincidence that Jessica happened to be sitting in the bar located in the building where Myron's offices are.

In Chapter 4, Jessica Culver admits to herself that she still loves Myron. It is no accident that she chose to have a drink in that particular bar. Lieutenant Paul Duncan or Uncle Paul visits Jessica at her parents' home. Jessica tells Duncan that she believes Kathy's disappearance is somehow connected with her father's recent murder.

Christian Steele receives a phone call. When he answers the phone, the person on the other end of the line does not speak. After dialing \*69, Christian reaches the caller's answering machine. The voice is Kathy Culver's.

In Chapter 5, Christian tells Myron about the phone call from Kathy.

When Myron arrives at his office the following day, Jessica Culver is waiting for him. Jessica wants Myron to look into Adam Culver's murder. After Win arrives, he and Myron leave the office. Jessica wonders at the fact that although she and Myron have seen each other twice in the last two days, they have not touched nor exchange any handshakes or hugs.

In Chapter 6, Win and Myron pay a call on Fred Nickler. Nickler is the publisher of Nips and several other pornographic magazines. They ask Nickler about the telephone sex ad in which Kathy Culver's likeness appears. Nickler claims not to personally know the person who placed the advertisement. He knows the man only as Jerry. Nickler tells Myron and Win that Jerry rents a post office box in Hoboken, New Jersey.

In Chapter 7, Myron shows Jessica Culver the pornographic magazine that Christian Steele received in the mail. Jessica and Myron decide not to take the information to the police, fearing that it may only make matters worse.

In Chapter 8, Myron and Jessica go to Uptown Postal Station in Hoboken, New Jersey to wait for the man Fred Nickler calls Jerry. They see Jerry and Jessica tells Myron that there is something familiar about the man. Myron and Jessica follow Jerry to the suburb of Glen Rock. They park outside as Jerry enters the house at 78 Kenmore Road. Myron goes to the door and asks the tall, thin man if he recognizes the magazine. The man says no and slams the door. Shortly thereafter, Win goes to several newsstands, purchases several pornographic magazines and returns to the office in Manhattan.

In Chapter 9, Myron and Jessica arrive back at Myron's office. Myron's phone company contact informs him that the thin man's name is really Gary Grady. Grady is married, has no children, and pays his mortgage on time.

Jessica tells Myron that Kathy phoned her the night Kathy disappeared. The sisters had not been close for quite some time. The night Kathy called, Jessica was in a hurry and rushed Kathy off the telephone. Myron instructs Jessica to start at the beginning by



talking to all of Kathy's former friends. He tells Jessica to look back into Kathy's school records.

Christian Steele calls Myron. Christian is supposed to be attending training camp with the Titans but they refuse to let Christian enter the stadium. Myron then tries to contact Otto Burke and Larry Hanson of the Titans organization but neither man takes Myron's call.

Myron telephones his friend P.T. in Washington, D.C. to ask for a favor. P.T. works for the FBI. Although P.T. is unhappy to hear from Myron, he agrees to arrange a meeting between Myron and the local sheriff assigned to the Kathy Culver case.

Eventually, Myron and Christian find a way into the stadium and Myron has a brief conversation with Otto Burke. Burke says he wants Myron to reduce Christian's salary asking price by one third, based on the appearance of Kathy Culver's picture in Nips magazine. Burke claims that the picture could cause a scandal for the team. Otto Burke claims not to know how Kathy's picture found its way into a pornographic magazine. He gives Myron two days to make a decision.

In Chapter 10, Harrison Gordon, Dean of Students at Reston University, is in his office. He has been reviewing Kathy Culver's file. At one point in time, Kathy Culver worked in Dean Gordon's office. Jessica Culver visits Dean Gordon to ask for her sister's file. Gordon is obviously nervous about Kathy Culver. He is convinced that Kathy will somehow return from wherever she is to take her vengeance on him.

Myron goes to Wins office. It seems that Otto Burke might be responsible for planting Kathy Culver's photograph in Nips magazine. Win has a copy of each of Nickler's magazines. Nips is the only magazine with Kathy's picture in the telephone sex advertisement.

In Chapter 11, Myron runs into Ricky Lane in the hall. Ricky is one of Myron's star clients. A football player and former teammate of Christian Steele, Ricky tells Myron that their high school teammates thought Christian was too perfect. Myron tries to ask Ricky about Kathy Culver but Ricky refuses to discuss her.

In Chapter 12, Myron's high school arch-enemy Aaron pays him a visit. Aaron tells Myron that Chaz Landreaux will suffer the consequences if Landreaux refuses to honor the (illegal) contract Landreaux signed with Roy O'Connor. Aaron threatens to kill Chaz Landreaux unless Myron convinces Landreaux to honor the contract. After Aaron leaves the office, Chaz Landreaux telephones Myron and says that O'Connor's men visited his mother and made death threats against him. Myron sends Win to deal with Roy O'Connor.

## Chapters 1 - 12 Analysis

In the opening chapters of Deal Breaker, major plot points are established while introducing the reader to several of the important protagonists. Myron Bolitar, Jessica



Culver, Christian Steele and Win Lockwood all prove to be integral to the unfolding narrative.

The dual mystery element of the narrative comes to the fore in these early chapters. The reader knows that (a) Christian Steele was engaged to a girl who disappeared; (b) someone planted a picture of the missing young woman in a pornographic magazine and, (c) there is some possibility that Kathy Culver is alive and well somewhere after all these months. The introduction of this major plot point also serves to set in motion the introduction of possible suspects. Otto Burke, Larry Hanson, Fred Nickler, Gary Grady, and Dean Harrison Gordon all come under suspicion at this point in the narrative. Secondly, Adam Culver's murder - which is originally thought to have been the result of a failed burglary attempt, broadens the scope of the novel in that both victims belong to the same family. In addition, Kathy Culver's disappearance and her father's killing make it necessary for Myron to re-visit his relationship with Jessica Culver.

Jessica Culver's appearance in the narrative serves to offset her sister's disappearance. In other words, one member of the family disappears and another resurfaces. In addition, the possibility of a rekindling of the relationship between Myron Bolitar and Jessica Culver provides a sub-plot, as does Win Lockwood's "visit" to Roy O'Connor. The seedy Roy O'Connor character provides contrast to Myron Bolitar in that O'Connor is a less-than-reputable sports agent whereas Myron is more concerned with solid personal relationships with his clients.

The nature of Win's visit to Roy O'Connor provides additional sub-plot and gives the character dimension without revealing too much too soon. In this way, Win also becomes a mystery of sorts.

Chaz Landreaux and Ricky Lane are minor characters who are introduced into the narrative in the beginning chapters as well. Myron's interactions with both Landreaux and Lane give the reader a firmer sense of the nature of Myron Bolitar's dealings with his clients. Also Ricky Lane's initial refusal to discuss Kathy Culver foreshadows the eventual revelation of the character's involvement in Kathy's disappearance.

The introduction of Aaron in Chapter 12 gives some insight into Myron Bolitar as something of an underdog. Unlike Aaron, Myron does not depend on his size to influence people or bring others around to his way of thinking. Aaron's introduction also paves the way for Bolitar's subsequent dealings with Herman Ache and his brother Frank. Myron and Aaron have history, which can also be said of Myron and Herman Ache. Aaron's association with Roy O'Connor represents the lower elements of the sports agent world.

Jessica Culver's assertion in Chapter 8 that Gary Grady is familiar to her foreshadows Grady's appearance in a later chapter.

Dean Gordon's apprehension about handing Kathy Culver's school files to Jessica is an indication that Gordon knows something he has yet to reveal. At this point, the reader

simply learns that Dean Gordon is closer to the mystery than he is willing to admit at this point.





# Chapters 13 - 24

## Chapters 13 - 24 Summary

In Chapter 13, Myron and Jessica review Kathy's file from Reston University over dinner. Myron tells Jessica that the handwriting on the manila envelope addressed to Christian Steele is either Kathy's or a brilliant example of forgery. Myron then informs Jessica that Otto Burke is aware of Kathy's picture in Nips magazine. It is possible that Burke is attempting to scare Christian Steele into lowering his salary demand. Still reviewing Kathy's file, Myron comes across a recommendation letter written by Gary Grady. Grady was Kathy Culver's English teacher when she was a senior in high school.

In Chapter 14, Myron is awakened at 7:00 the following morning by a phone call from a very nervous Roy O'Connor. Myron agrees to meet O'Connor for lunch at a pub later that afternoon. Myron then telephones Win and the two make arrangements to pay Gary Grady a visit at Ridgewood High School.

In Chapter 15, Myron pulls the fire alarm at Ridgewood High School to cause a disturbance. Myron then spots Gary Grady leaving the school after the alarm goes off. Initially, Grady denies having anything to do with the telephone sex advertisement in Nips magazine. After Win threatens to dunk Grady's head in a toilet in the teachers' bathroom, Grady admits to having an affair with Kathy Culver when she was his student. Grady also admits to running a telephone sex operation on the side.

In Chapter 16, Jessica Culver shows her mother and brother Edward the picture of Kathy in Nips magazine. She also tells them about Kathy's affair with Gary Grady.

Myron and Roy O'Connor meet for lunch. O'Connor tells Myron that he has gambling debts he is unable to pay. As a result, the Mafia has assumed control of TruPro, O'Connor's sports representation firm. Herman Ache heads up the criminal organization controlling O'Connor's business. Herman Ache's brother Frank wants to make an example of Chaz Landreaux because Landreaux refuses to honor the contract with O'Connor. Roy O'Connor also tells Myron that Frank Ache has put a contract out on Myron's life.

In Chapter 17, Jessica Culver sits in her father's office. Her mother, Carol, tells Jessica that Kathy changed during her senior year in high school. According to Carol Culver, Kathy's affair with Gary Grady was responsible for the change in her otherwise cheerful younger daughter.

At Titans Stadium, Myron and Win watch Christian Steele practice. Myron tells Win that Frank Ache wants to have him killed. Myron goes on to say that Gary Grady is probably not responsible for putting Kathy Culver's picture in the Nips advertisement. Myron believes that Fred Nickler, the publisher of Nips, is probably the one responsible for



putting Kathy's picture in Grady's advertisement. Myron and Win decide to pay Fred Nickler another visit.

In Chapter 18, Myron's friend P.T. tells Myron that Sheriff Jake Courter is willing to meet with him and discuss the Culver case. Myron then visits Reston University, Christian's Steele's alma mater. Steele's former football coach, Danny Clarke, tells Myron that Christian was disliked by his teammates. Clarke says that defensive lineman Junior (Horty) Horton had been supplying the Reston football team with steroids and other drugs. When Clarke kicked Horty off the team, Horty told everyone that it was Christian Steele's doing. Clarke then goes on to say that Kathy Culver may have dated Junior Horton before she dated Christian Steele.

Following a hunch, Myron stops at the campus post office after his meeting with Coach Clarke. The young man working in the post office tells Myron that he remembers seeing the manila envelope addressed to Christian Steele. He says that Harrison Gordon, Reston University's Dean of Students, received an identical envelope.

In Chapter 19, Nancy Serat, Kathy Culver's former college roommate, returns home from a brief vacation in Cancun. Nancy will return to Reston University on a graduate fellowship in just a few days. Nancy receives a message from her mother that Adam Culver, Kathy's father, was murdered. Nancy Serat remembers that Adam Culver visited her the day he died. Nancy also receives a message from Jessica Culver.

Myron stops at Dean Gordon's house. Madelaine Gordon, the dean's wife, answers the door and tells Myron that Dean Gordon is out. Myron finds that he is attracted to Mrs. Gordon. Madelaine Gordon recognizes Myron from his days as a high-profile basketball player at Duke University.

Later that afternoon, Myron meets with Sheriff Jake Courter. The sheriff reveals the details of Kathy Culver's case to Myron. Sheriff Courter tells Myron one surprising thing: the day Kathy Culver disappeared, she emptied her bank account of \$25,000 she inherited from her grandmother. Jake Courter believes that Kathy Culver simply ran away. According to Courter, someone on the Reston University campus saw a young woman fitting Kathy's description walking on campus in the direction of faculty housing. Because it was dark, though, the witness could not swear that it was Kathy Culver. Myron suggests that Sheriff Courter pay a call on Dean Gordon.

In Chapter 20, Myron is on his way back to New York when he receives a call from his secretary Esperanza. Chaz Landreaux is waiting in his office.

Landreaux tells Myron that he has decided to let Roy O'Connor and TruPro represent him. Landreaux wants out of his contract with Myron. Myron is unsuccessful in his attempt to convince Landreaux that Landreaux is getting in over his head. Chaz Landreaux tells Myron to stay out of his affairs and leaves the office, contract in hand. Win informs Myron that Frank Ache has put a \$30,000 price on his head.

Win gives Myron a Smith and Wesson .38 caliber revolver. Myron asks Win to follow Chaz Landreaux. He wants to know where Chaz Landreaux is taking the contract.



In Chapter 21, Myron decides to stay at Win's apartment in New York City for a few days. Myron is convinced that since there is a contract on his life his parents may be in jeopardy. Myron lives with his parents.

Myron then telephones Fred Nickler, who denies putting Kathy Culver's picture in Gary Grady's advertisement. Myron tells Nickler that Kathy Culver's picture does not appear in any of Nickler's other magazines. Nickler becomes agitated and cuts the conversation short. After disconnecting from Myron, Fred Nickler phones Lieutenant Paul Duncan, Adam Culver's best friend.

In Chapter 22, Myron calls Jessica Culver and the two compare notes. Myron does not think Kathy was having an affair with Dean Gordon, but Jessica is not willing to rule out the possibility that Gordon and Kathy were involved. Jessica tells Myron that her father visited Nancy Serat the day he was killed. Jessica believes her father's visit to Nancy Serat was anything but a coincidence.

Esperanza tells Myron that Gary Grady telephoned Global Globes Photography. Esperanza (who is studying law at NYU) believes the studio specializes in pornographic pictures. Myron agrees to take Esperanza with him to find Global Globes.

Global Globes is located in an especially seedy area of town. There are prostitutes of all shapes, sizes and colors walking the streets as well as junkies and transients.

While Esperanza waits in the hall, Myron enters the Global Globes Photography Studio and sees a naked woman in boots sitting on a motorcycle reading a magazine. The models screams when she sees Myron and a young man pulls a knife on Myron. Shortly thereafter, a young woman comes out of the darkroom and tells Myron to leave. Myron hears a minor commotion coming from the hall. Myron looks into the hall only to see Esperanza signing autographs. Esperanza wrestled professionally for a time under the name "Pocahontas." Esperanza and the woman from Global Globes recognize one another as former competitors. The woman's name is Lucy.

It was Lucy who took the photograph of Kathy Culver. Lucy admits talking to Gary (Jerry) Grady the previous day. Lucy tells them that another man came into the studio asking questions about the photograph. The man paid Lucy a large sum of money (in cash) for the original photograph and the negatives. As Myron and Esperanza leave Global Globes, they are held at gunpoint by two men. Myron recognizes one of the men from the incident in the parking garage.

In Chapter 24, Jessica Culver visits Nancy Serat, her sister Kathy's former roommate at Reston University. Jessica rings the doorbell and knocks several times but no one answers. Jessica can hear movement coming from the small cottage and becomes suspicious. Jessica goes around to the rear of the cottage and notices that there are no lights on in the kitchen. Someone passes Jessica but she does not get a glimpse of them.



Finding the kitchen door, Jessica enters the cottage and discovers Nancy Serat's strangled corpse. Shortly after discovering the body, someone hits Jessica over the head.

## Chapters 13 - 24 Analysis

In these next twelve chapters, the narrative arc continues in an upward progression. Myron and Jessica discover a connection between Jessica's sister Kathy and Gary Grady, the high school English teacher. Grady is also the man who does business with pornography publisher Fred Nickler.

Pieces begin to fall into place when Jessica goes to Carol and Edward with the picture of Kathy that appears in Nips magazine. At this point, Kathy Culver is something of a mystery to her family. Since no one in Kathy's immediate family was aware of her involvement with Grady during her senior year in high school, Carol Culver's assertion that the affair with Grady was what "changed" Kathy is purely supposition. The actual reason behind Kathy's seemingly uncharacteristic behavior will be revealed in a later chapter.

Roy O'Connor's admission to Myron and Win about his gambling debts explains the intimidation of Chaz Landreaux. This also means that O'Connor may have been willing to allow Landreaux to rescind the contract. The plot is further complicated by the fact that organized crime has taken over O'Connor's sports representation firm, TruPro.

Sheriff Jake Courter enters the narrative and provides Myron with information on Kathy Culver's disappearance that Myron could not have gathered on his own. Courter is connected to Myron by way of Gerard, Courter's son, who is a former college competitor of Myron's. It is clear that Courter would like nothing better than to close the case. Since Courter has come to the end of his investigative road, so to speak, connecting with Myron enables Courter another chance to solve the mystery of Kathy's disappearance. Also, Courter benefits from Myron's expertise and the fact that Myron is not a member of law enforcement. In other words, Myron is at liberty to do things and interact with people that Courter would not have access to in his capacity as sheriff.

The Nancy Serat character does not interact with any of the main protagonists. What the reader learns about Serat is relayed via the narrator. The author manages to convey information about Nancy Serat to the reader without having to write the character into specific episodes. And although Nancy Serat does not actually participate in the action which takes place, it is important to remember that (a) Nancy Serat and Kathy Culver were roommates at Reston University; (b) Adam Culver met with Serat the night he was killed; and (c) Jessica Culver will also have contact with Nancy Serat. These three points foreshadow Nancy Serat's pivotal role in the eventual resolution of Kathy's disappearance.

Myron's visit with Coach Clarke at Reston University introduces Junior (Horty) Horton into the narrative. Horton's possible involvement with Kathy Culver establishes him as



another possible suspect in Kathy's disappearance. In addition, Clarke's claim that Horton had a grudge against Christian Steele means that Horton is someone likely to seek revenge. At this point, however, Clarke's statements are simply hearsay.

The visit to the Reston University campus post office pays off for Myron. When he learns that others received manila envelopes similar to Christian Steele's, Myron learns that the person who mailed the envelopes is trying to convey some type of message. This information also sheds additional suspicion on Dean Gordon as a possible suspect in Kathy Culver's disappearance.

Fred Nickler's phone call to Lieutenant Duncan is rather suspicious and foreshadows Duncan's participation in matters surround Kathy Culver's disappearance. Duncan is a family friend. It is unclear at this point exactly what Duncan knows or does not know about the case.

Nancy Serat's mysterious death and the attack on Jessica Culver prove that Myron and his associates are closing in on the truth about what really happened to Kathy Culver. If Serat posed no threat, she would not have been strangled. At this point, one must assume that whoever killed Nancy Serat also had ample opportunity to kill Jessica Culver, but s/he deliberately chose not to. Nancy Serat's murder means that Adam Culver's visit with her must have been more than a simple social call.

Myron and Esperanza's experience with Lucy at Global Globes Photography Studios proves to be a dead end for the time being.



# Chapters 25 - 36

## Chapters 25 - 36 Summary

In Chapter 25, the man in the fedora and his partner hold Myron and Esperanza at gunpoint in an abandoned alley. Just as the man wearing the fedora is about to shoot Myron, a shot blows off the top half of the man's head. A few seconds later, the man with the mustache is also killed. Win steps out of the shadows holding a .44 caliber pistol in his hand and "just the hint of a smile on his face" (pg. 183.)

In Chapter 26, Paul Duncan hears a call over his police scanner calling nearby units to the scene of a crime. Duncan wonders how Myron came to be in possession of the picture of Kathy Culver. Duncan is familiar with Myron and Win's past involvement with the FBI. Duncan also knows about the messages exchanged by Jessica Culver and Nancy Serat.

Fred Nickler telephoned Paul Duncan earlier that day. It becomes clear that Duncan is somehow involved with the disappearance of Kathy Culver. Duncan considers his murdered best friend, Adam Culver and remembers "how Adam had spent the last precious hours of his life" (186).

Win and Myron take Esperanza home then the two of them stop at an all-night diner for something to eat. Win tells Myron where Chaz Landreaux went after leaving Myron's office with the contract. Win then suggests that Myron leave Chaz Landreaux to Roy O'Connor and the Ache brothers at TruPro. Myron still wants to help Chaz find his way out of a very difficult situation. Win agrees to attend the meeting Myron has scheduled with Herman Ache, brother of Frank Ache (the man who has a contract out on Myron).

Myron informs Win that he believes Adam Culver, Kathy's father, is the one who bought the photos and negatives from Lucy at Global Globes Photography.

As the two men head toward Win's luxury apartment overlooking Central Park, Myron receives a phone call from Sheriff Jake Courter. Courter tells Myron to meet him at St. Barnabas Hospital in Livingston, New Jersey right away.

In Chapter 27, Myron and Jake visit Jessica Culver in her room at St. Barnabas. Over coffee, Myron and Jake Courter discuss the details of the case. Myron tells Sheriff Courter that Adam Culver was supposed to be at a medical convention in Denver the day he was murdered.

Carol Culver tells Courter that Adam had not been feeling well that day and had decided against attending the convention in Denver.

Myron then tells Courter that Adam Culver met with Nancy Serat on the day he was killed. Myron is convinced that Adam Culver knew something about Kathy's



disappearance and that Nancy Serat must have given Adam Culver some kind of valuable information, which led to her murder.

Courter then tells Myron that he did, indeed visit Dean Harrison Gordon and that Gordon was extremely nervous about the sheriff's visit. Jake then tells Myron that he believes Christian Steele's Reston University teammates are hiding something. It also happens that Steele cannot provide an alibi for the time of Kathy Culver's disappearance.

In Chapter 28, Myron meets once again with Otto Burke to discuss Christian Steele's contract. Larry Hanson attends the meeting as well.

Otto Burke attempts to bully Myron into signing a contract for one-third of the initial asking price. If Myron does not sign the new contract, Burke threatens to leak the nude picture of Kathy Culver to the media. Myron surprises Otto Burke by showing Burke that he is wearing a wire and that he has Burke on tape threatening to ruin Christian Steele's career. Burke signs the contract and he and Myron hold a press conference before Myron heads back to New York for his lunch meeting with Herman Ache.

In Chapter 29, Jessica Culver returns home from the hospital after being attack at Nancy Serat's cottage. Jessica searches her father's office for clues and finds Adam Culver's financial records. She begins by contacting her father's primary financial institution to find out about account activity since Adam Culver's death. Two suspicious transactions fuel Jessica's curiosity about just how much Adam Culver knew about Kathy's disappearance.

Jessica and Edward talk about their missing sister and what it was that made Kathy change during her senior year at Ridgewood High.

At one time, Kathy Culver dated Edward's Columbia University roommate, a young man named Matt. One day, Kathy broke off her relationship with Matt without offering any explanation. Shortly after the break-up, Edward began hearing rumors about Kathy being promiscuous. Jessica and Edward both agree that Kathy turned herself around when she began dating Christian Steele at Reston University.

As they speed across town in Win's Jaguar with the top down, Myron's friend P.T. telephones him in Chapter 30 to say that the contract on his life has not yet been revoked.

At the meeting, Myron tells Herman Ache that he wants to help Chaz Landreaux before Chaz gets in too deep with Herman's brother Frank. Herman Ache is unsympathetic to Myron's request. Frank Ache enters the room. Myron and Win learn that Frank Ache's men have kidnapped Chaz Landreaux's twin sister in an effort to intimidate Chaz.

Myron asks Herman Ache what he has to do in order to secure Chaz Landreaux's twin sister's freedom. At this point, Win introduces himself to Herman Ache and the two of them begin discussing golf. Myron does not see the appeal of the game. It so happens that Win holds membership at two very prestigious golf courses - Merion and Pine



Valley. Win offers Herman Ache the opportunity to join him for a weekend of golf at the two exclusive clubs.

Herman Ache accepts Win's invitation, orders the release of Chaz Landreaux's twin sister, and calls off Frank's contract on Myron's life.

Upon Myron's return to the office in Chapter 31, Esperanza tells him that a woman named Madelaine phoned. Myron knows that Madelaine is Dean Gordon's very attractive wife.

Myron visits the Gordon home of the campus of Reston University. Madelaine Gordon attempts to seduce Myron but he turns her down. Madelaine Gordon tells Myron that she does not believe her husband was having an affair with Kathy Culver.

In Chapter 32, Jessica Culver drives to Getaway Realty in New Jersey. At Getaway Realty, Jessica meets Tom Corbett, the president of the company. Tom Corbett tells Jessica that Adam Culver rented a rent cabin some weeks back because Culver wanted to "get away from it all" (241). Tom Corbett agrees to drive Jessica to the cabin her father rented before he died.

It seems strange to Jessica Culver that her father would want to stay in such an out-of-the-way location. Ordinarily, Culver would have chosen a place with lots of people and activity like Las Vegas or Atlantic City. Upon entering the cabin, Jessica Culver and Tom Corbett make a startling discovery.

In Chapter 33, Myron pays another call on Dean Harrison Gordon. Gordon tells Myron that shortly after Kathy Culver disappeared, he saw Junior (Horty) Horton driving a brand new BMW automobile. Myron thinks this might somehow be connected to Kathy's withdrawal of her inheritance. Dean Gordon then tells Myron that Kathy Culver visited him the night she disappeared. Kathy Culver claimed to have been raped by six or seven members of the Reston football team in the locker room that same evening.

Gordon claims that Kathy Culver wanted to press charges against her alleged attackers. Gordon had done his best to convince Kathy that pressing charges would result in a huge scandal, not only for her family but for Reston University.

Dean Gordon also tells Myron that the day after the disappearance, he received a phone call from a young woman who he believed to be Kathy Culver.

Sheriff Courter catches up with Myron as he is about to leave the Reston campus. Courter informs Myron that Christian Steele is a prime suspect in the murder of Nancy Serat. Steele's fingerprints were found all over Serat's rented cottage.

In Chapter 34, Sheriff Courter and Myron arrive at the sheriff's department where Christian Steele is being held for questioning in the matter of Nancy Serat's strangulation.





Courter tells Myron that Cary Roland, the new District Attorney, is also at the station. Myron has known Cary Roland for years and he is not at all pleased to hear that Roland is involved in the Serat murder case.

Courter questions Christian Steele about Nancy Serat. Steele admits to visiting Nancy Serat the night before. According to Steele, Nancy Serat had invited him to her home at 118 Acre Street to talk to Christian about something important.

Christian Steele tells Myron and Sheriff Courter that as soon as he arrived on the doorstep, Nancy Serat told him that he would have to leave. Nancy Serat said something to Christian Steele about "sisters reuniting" (261). Steele says he left Nancy Serat's house, arriving back at his condominium around 10:15pm.

District Attorney Roland wants to arrest Christian for Nancy Serat's murder, but Courter tells Roland that the authorities do not have enough evidence against Steele to detain him and Christian is released.

Myron tells Sheriff Courter about his meeting with Dean Gordon.

In Chapter 35, Myron drives Christian Steele home. On the way, Christian reveals to Myron that his mother had been a prostitute. Christian was raised by his maternal grandparents. Christian admits to Myron that he views Myron as more than his agent. Christian never knew his real father.

Just as Myron drops Christian Steele off at home, Jessica Culver calls Myron on the car phone and tells him that she must see him immediately.

When Myron meets Jessica Culver a few minutes later, Jessica tells Myron about the cabin her father rented just before he died. Jessica and Myron go to the rented cabin.

Once inside, they see that the living room is filled with electronic equipment: VCRs, video cameras, small television monitors. Also in the front room are a rifle and a pair of handcuffs. Myron tells Jessica about Kathy's rape in the locker room the night she disappeared. Myron and Jessica then search the bedroom for clues. Under the bed, they find a bag from the Bergen County Medical Examiner's Office containing a pair of sweatpants and a yellow sweater.

Jessica recognizes the sweater as her father's college varsity sweater. She tells Myron that Kathy had used the sweater to wear around the house. Both Jessica and Myron become more curious about what Adam Culver knew about his daughter's disappearance and what he might have been doing at the out-of-the-way cabin.

## Chapters 25 - 36 Analysis

Myron and Esperanza narrowly escape being killed in the alley by the man in the fedora and his mustached accomplice.



Paul Duncan's knowledge of the phone messages between Jessica Culver and Nancy Serat is somewhat suspicious. It is clear that Duncan is obtaining inside information from someone. The cryptic assertion referring to how Adam Culver spent his last hours foreshadows events which occur in subsequent chapters. The plot becomes more complicated at this point and Duncan's involvement is key. This means that, by virtue of Duncan's role in the mystery (which is still undetermined at this point), Kathy Culver's disappearance and her father's murder are most certainly connected.

Myron does not yet know that his hunch about Adam Culver purchasing the photos and negatives from Lucy at Global Globes Photography is more accurate than he knows.

When Myron learns that Jessica Culver has been hospitalized after being attacked at Nancy Serat's cottage, his level of personal involvement in both cases involving the family deepens.

Sheriff Courter's assertion that the members of Reston University's football may be hiding something foreshadows Myron's discovery of the root of Dean Gordon's anxiety surrounding Kathy Culver.

Christian Steele's inability to provide an alibi for the time of his former fiancée's disappearance is a red flag which goes unnoticed for the next several chapters.

Otto Burke's threat to ruin Christian Steele's career in Chapter 28 places Burke under suspicion once more. However, Myron ends Burke's attempt to intimidate him by wearing a microphone. Even though Burke signs the contract, he remains an integral part of the narrative. Larry Hanson's true loyalties are exposed in a subsequent chapter. At this point, though, the assumption is that Hanson is in agreement with whatever Otto Burke chooses to do.

Jessica Culver's investigation into her father's financial records progresses the plot significantly. It is interesting that neither her mother nor her brother thought to do the same thing. Jessica's discovery of the charge from Getaway Realty solidifies her hypothesis that Kathy's disappearance and Adam Culver's murder are connected.

Herman Ache and his younger brother, Frank, enter the narrative and provide Myron with an opportunity to plead Chaz Landreaux's case. Win's invitation to Herman to play golf at two exclusive clubs is a stroke of genius. And although their fervor for the game seems somewhat silly to Myron, he is nonetheless grateful that Win is able to help him out of an almost untenable situation. In reality, Herman Ache would have done nothing to save Chaz Landreaux from his brother and Myron probably realizes this.

The Ache brothers appear in only one portion of the narrative. Herman's significance in Myron's life is based on the fact that Myron's father once owed Herman Ache more money than he could repay. Myron saw to it that his college basketball team only won by a certain number of points in order to prevent Ache from harming his father. This singular event in Myron's life still affects him in his adult life. It is interesting that Myron does not hold the incident against his father.



Myron's next conversation with Dean Harrison Gordon provides extremely important information about what happened to Kathy Culver before she disappeared. Gordon admits to trying to convince Kathy not to press charges after she tells Gordon she was raped. Gordon betrayed Kathy Culver by not encouraging the young woman to stand up for herself. When he received the manila envelope, Gordon believed it was because he had not given Kathy Culver adequate support when she needed it the most.

The presence of Christian Steele's fingerprints in Nancy Serat's cottage foreshadows Steele's eventual undoing. While it is not unusual that Steele's fingerprints should be in Serat's cottage, the story Steele tells authorities is a sure sign that he is being less than honest.

Christian's personal revelations to Myron about his background may or may not be true. At this point, Myron accepts the things Christian Steele tells him without question.

District Attorney Cary Roland is a peripheral character. Roland does not re-appear for the remainder of the novel, although he is mentioned by name in Chapter 49.

Jessica and Myron's visit to the isolated cabin in the woods solidly confirm that Adam Culver did, in fact, have information concerning what happened to Kathy. The yellow varsity sweater that Myron and Jessica find is the same yellow sweater Adam Culver had mentioned to Nancy Serat the day Culver was murdered.

The varsity sweater proves to be the final clue in Kathy Culver's mysterious disappearance.



# Chapters 37 - 49

## Chapters 37 - 49 Summary

After leaving the cabin, Myron and Jessica check into a room at the Hilton in Mahwah, New Jersey in Chapter 37. Win arrives after tracing Myron's credit card and informs them that he has interesting news.

Win tells Myron and Jessica that Fred Nickler (alias Nick Fredericks) was at one time involved in child pornography. Rather than arrest and incarcerate Nickler, however, the authorities convinced Nickler to incriminate someone further up the proverbial food chain. The deal with Fred Nickler was negotiated by Paul Duncan.

In Chapter 38, Myron and Win catch up with Junior (Horty) Horton as he completes a drug deal. Myron asks Horton about his involvement with Kathy Culver. Horton refuses to cooperate and Win breaks his right tibia. Horton finally tells Myron that he and Kathy met at a party at Reston University and that the two had had sex. Horton also admitted that during at least two of the encounters with Kathy he had taken nude photographs of Kathy.

Horton further admits arranging the gang-rape of Kathy Culver. Horton says that he set up Kathy's rape as a way to retaliate against Christian Steele for getting Horton kicked off the Reston football team. When Myron tells Horton that Christian had nothing to do with Horton being removed from the team, Horton remains remorseless.

Horton continues, admitting that he blackmailed Kathy Culver with the photographs he took of the two of them having sex. Myron asks Horton for the names of the other Reston University players who participated in Kathy Culver's rape. At first Horton gives Myron and Win all but one name. Myron guesses that the sixth rapist is his high-profile client, Ricky Lane, who plays for the New York Giants. Myron then leaves Win in the alley with Horton to finish what Win started.

In Chapter 39, Ricky Lane admits being in the locker room the night Kathy Culver was raped. However, Lane maintains that he did not participate in the rape. After the rape, Ricky says, he went to look for Kathy Culver and found her walking across the Reston University campus in the direction of faculty housing. Lane says he returned Kathy Culver's panties to her and offered to testify if Kathy decided to press charges. Ricky Lane also says that when he last saw Kathy she was wearing blue.

In Chapter 40, Sheriff Jake Courter tells Myron that Christian Steele is no longer a suspect in the Nancy Serat murder. Courter goes on to say that on the night Adam Culver was murdered, a neighbor heard Culver arguing loudly with his wife Carol.

Finally, Sheriff Courter tells Myron that strands of Kathy Culver's hair were found clutched in Nancy Serat's hand. Courter and Myron then brainstorm about Kathy



Culver's motive for wanting to kill Nancy Serat when the two young women were supposedly good friends.

Myron decides to pay Carol Culver a visit.

In Chapter 41, Carol Culver tells Myron that on the night her husband was murdered they were arguing about the affair she was having with Adam's best friend, Lieutenant Paul Duncan.

Kathy had walked in on her mother while Carol was making love to Paul Duncan. After Kathy discovered the affair, she began sleeping around. To punish her mother for her hypocrisy, Kathy began sending her mother pornographic pictures of herself with different men. Carol then tells Myron that she kept the pictures of Kathy hidden in a box in the attic. Carol Culver says that her husband found the pictures but she does not know what he did with them.

In Chapter 42, Myron begins connecting the threads of the Kathy Culver case in his mind. The only person Myron is not certain of is Otto Burke, the owner of the Titans. Myron wonders how Otto Burke was able to get a copy of the pornographic magazine with Kathy Culver's photograph.

Later, Myron decides to visit Larry Hanson, the Titans' general manager. Hanson tells Myron that Otto Burke has a security division in his employ. Hanson says that Otto Burke pays people to keep an eye out for possible scandals involving Titans players. Burke pays people to keep the team scandals quiet. Hanson says that a man named Brian Sanford is responsible for giving Otto Burke a copy of Nips magazine featuring Kathy Culver in the telephone sex advertisement.

In Chapter 43 Myron telephones Brian Sanford and leaves a message. In the message, Myron tells Sanford that he has an important case for him and that Sanford will be paid \$10,000 for his work.

Myron then telephones Esperanza, who tells him that Lucy identified the man who purchased the photographs and negatives of Kathy Culver. Myron then goes to the Bergen County Medical Examiner's office to speak with one Adam Culver's former colleagues, Dr. Sally Li.

Myron learns that Dr. Li worked with Adam Culver for ten years. She and Myron had met several times at Culver family functions when Myron was dating Jessica Culver. Dr. Li tells Myron that she and Adam Culver had had a week-long affair four years ago.

Li then tells Myron that Adam Culver had been very distracted and that he had been behaving very strangely some weeks prior to his murder. Li admits that Culver was not allowing her to assist him with high-profile cases.

Myron surmises that Dr. Li is referring to an ongoing investigation into the possible murder of several young women in Upstate New York. The latest victim had yet to be



identified. Dr. Li says that Adam Culver had been working on the most recent victim; a young woman who had been buried alive.

Dr. Li goes on to confide to Myron that the most recent victim's clothing had gone missing from the medical examiner's office.

In Chapter 44, Myron goes to Atlantic City to find Brian Sanford, the private investigator who works for Otto Burke. Sanford's office is located upstairs from a strip club called the Eager Beaver, located in a sleazy neighborhood not far from the big casinos.

Brian Sanford explains to Myron how he came to be in possession of the pornographic pictures of Kathy Culver. Sanford also says that he does not know the identity of the person who contacted him in reference to the photographs. He tells Myron that he received specific instructions in the mail. The manila envelopes containing copies of Nips magazine had arrived already sealed and addressed.

Sanford confirms mailing the envelopes to Christian Steele, Carol Culver, Gary (Jerry) Grady, Junior (Horty) Horton and Dean Harrison Gordon. Sanford also admits that it was he who made the phone call to Dean Gordon, using a mechanical device to make his voice sound like a woman's.

In Chapter 45, Myron arrives at Lieutenant Paul Duncan's home at 10:30pm. Duncan lives alone.

Duncan admits having a long-term affair with Carol Culver. He also admits to working with Fred Nickler on a couple of cases. Nickler, Myron learns, is Duncan's informant.

Paul Duncan tells Myron that about a month after Kathy Culver discovered his affair with Carol Culver, Kathy made sexual advances toward him. Duncan assures Myron that he ignored Kathy's attempts to seduce him. Duncan then explains to Myron that it was Fred Nickler who led him and Adam Culver to Global Globes Photography Studio before Adam learned of Duncan's affair with Carol. It was Duncan who purchased the photographs of Kathy Culver from Lucy. Duncan says that he bought the photographs in order to save Kathy Culver's reputation.

When Myron asks Duncan how Kathy Culver's photograph ended up in Nips magazine, Duncan says that it was Adam Culver's idea. Duncan continues, saying that it was Adam Culver who instructed Nickler to give Gary Grady's information to anyone making inquiries about the photograph of Kathy in Nips magazine.

In Chapter 46, Myron drops in on Win at around midnight to go over the major details of the case. Neither Myron nor Win can quite determine the nature of Nancy Serat's role in the mystery. Nor do they know why there were strands of Kathy Culver's hair in Nancy Serat's dead hand.

Myron and Win agree that Adam Culver may have sent Brian Sanford the envelopes to mail from Atlantic City.



Myron points out that Adam Culver was murdered two days before Sanford mailed out the manila envelopes.

At Adam Culver's memorial service in Chapter 47, Myron drops a bombshell.

He tells the Culver family and Lieutenant Duncan that he has found Kathy and that he is bringing her home.

Myron claims that Kathy had been hiding out on the Caribbean island of Curacao after someone tried to kill her. According to Myron, Kathy's assailant had buried her alive in the woods but Kathy had been able to dig herself out and make it to a nearby hospital. Myron tells the mourners that he will meet Kathy Culver alone.

In Chapter 48, Myron arrives at a secluded spot in the woods later that evening. He climbs out of the car carrying a flashlight. Myron then plays out a scene with Kathy Culver. He calls out to her, assuring her that she will not be harmed. Behind him, he hears Christian Steele's voice, threatening to shoot them both. Suddenly, Win appears behind Christian and Christian drops the gun.

Myron then tells the entire story.

It is true that Adam Culver had Kathy's picture put in the pornographic magazine in order to draw out his daughter's killer. The most recently discovered body had been Kathy Culver's, but her father did not tell anyone in hopes of catching the killer himself. Adam Culver knew where Kathy's body had been found and he rented the cabin in order to capture the killer on video if/when s/he should return to the scene of the crime, looking for Kathy.

Christian Steele killed Kathy after Kathy told Christian about her past and revealed to Christian that his teammates had raped her. Christian became afraid that if Kathy pressed charges, the Reston University team would not play in the national championships. Christian could not forgive Kathy for her past promiscuity. It had been Christian who had put Kathy's underwear on top of the dumpster.

Christian killed Adam Culver the night he Culver and his wife had argued about her affair with Paul Duncan. Steele murdered Adam Culver because Steele knew that Culver was close to solving the riddle of Kathy's disappearance.

Christian Steele killed Nancy Serat because Nancy had told Christian about Adam Culver's visit. During his visit, Culver had told Nancy about the yellow varsity sweater. When Nancy told Christian about this, he knew he had to get rid of her as well. The woman Christian thinks is Kathy is actually Jessica wearing a blond wig.

Myron set Christian Steele up at Adam Culver's memorial service. It turns out that the Culver family was already aware of Myron's plan.

In Chapter 49, Myron takes Jessica Culver to the airport. Jessica is going on tour to promote her latest book. Myron does not want to let Jessica go, but Jessica assures



him that she will return in a month or two. They tell one another they love each other and Jessica departs. Myron drives back to his office alone.

## Chapters 37 - 49 Analysis

In the final chapters, the loose ends of the Kathy Culver disappearance case are resolved.

Paul Duncan's connection to pornography publisher Fred Nickler is explained.

Junior (Horty) Horton's admission that he arranged Kathy Culver's attack at the hands of the Reston University football team strengthens Horton's status as one of the prime suspects in Kathy's disappearance. When Horton refuses to name the sixth man involved in the attack on Kathy, Myron correctly guesses that the man is Ricky Lane.

And although the matter is far from over, Ricky Lane's admission to being the last one to see Kathy Culver on campus means that Dean Gordon was telling the truth. The matter of what Kathy Culver was wearing becomes more important. The fact that Lane returned Kathy's panties to her does not explain how the panties came to be sitting atop the dumpster. And although Lane did offer to corroborate Kathy's story to the authorities, he is nonetheless painted as something of a coward for not stopping his teammates from attacking her when he had ample opportunity to do so. Ricky Lane and Dean Gordon both failed to do anything substantial to help Kathy Culver the night she was raped.

The fact that Nancy Serat was found with strands of Kathy Culver's hair in her hand reinforces the supposition that Kathy Culver ran away and is still alive somewhere.

Adam and Carol Culver's argument the night Adam Culver was murdered adds another thread to the plot. The neighbor who heard the Culvers arguing is unable to say exactly what they were arguing about. However, when Carol Culver admits her infidelity with Paul Duncan, Duncan becomes a suspect in the death of Adam Culver.

When Myron visits Larry Hanson, he learns something valuable which may give him more insight into Otto Burke's knowledge of the photographs of Kathy Culver that were mailed in manila envelopes. In addition, it becomes clear that Larry Hanson is no fan of Otto Burke. When Myron visits Brian (Blackjack) Sanford, however, Sanford is able to tell him nothing about who actually arranged to have the envelopes sent out. It is interesting that Sanford admits to phoning Dean Gordon, but he does not admit to telephoning Christian Steele.

Myron's encounter with Dr. Sally Li is pivotal to the mystery. Li informs Myron that Adam Culver purposely left her in the dark on the recent high-profile case involving the identification of the remains of several young women believed to have been murdered by the same person. The fact that Adam Culver had been working on the case of a young woman who was buried alive foreshadows what eventually happens at the site of





Culver's rented cabin in the woods. It also ties in with the clothes that Myron and Jessica Culver found at the cabin — most notably, the yellow varsity sweatshirt.

It finally becomes clear that the change Kathy Culver's family noticed in during her senior year was due to her discovery of her mother's affair and not her involvement with English teacher Gary Grady. The discovery of an affair between her mother and Paul Duncan also explains Kathy's subsequent promiscuity, and, by extension, her involvement with Junior "Horty" Horton.

Myron also learns the truth about who purchased the photographs and negatives from Lisa at Global Globes Photography. Adam Culver and Paul Duncan were working together to explain Kathy's disappearance. Another question is answered when Duncan tells Myron that it was, in fact, Adam Culver who placed Kathy's picture in the pornographic magazine.

By the time of Adam Culver's memorial service, Myron Bolitar has solved the mystery. What the reader does not yet know, however, is that Myron devised the plan to expose a murderer behind the scenes. Christian Steele is exposed as a triple murderer. His reasons for killing Kathy Culver were based solely on his inability to forgive and his selfish desire to play in a national championship. Steele subsequently killed Adam Culver and Nancy Serat in order to deflect suspicion away from himself.



# Characters

## Myron Bolitar

Myron Bolitar is a former Duke University basketball star who has worked as a sports agent for the past two years. While he did achieve some fame at Duke, an injury left him unable to pursue his dream of playing in the NBA. Bolitar also worked for the FBI for a period of time, although the narrative does not specify exactly what duties he performed in service to the federal government. Myron Bolitar is an attorney as well. He lives in the basement of his parents' house and his offices are located in an exclusive building in Manhattan. At one time, Myron was romantically involved with novelist Jessica Culver. Culver left him four years ago for another man and Myron was devastated.

Myron is quite tall, with blue eyes and dark curly hair. Women find him very attractive. Myron has a sarcastic sense of humor and a solid sense of what is right and what is wrong. He is something of an underdog in his professional life, but ethically he is above reproach. Myron's closest friend is his business partner Win Lockwood. Myron and Win met in college and have been friends ever since. Myron is loyal to those in his life and they reciprocate his loyalty. Myron Bolitar is very personable and deceptively charming when he needs to be. It is clear that Myron does not take himself too seriously. After the crushing blow of being left by Jessica Culver, Myron is hesitant to become involved with other women.

## Windsor Horne Lockwood III

Known to his friends and associates as Win, Lockwood is a walking paradox. Born into an extremely wealthy family, Lockwood is well aware of how he appears to the rest of society. In fact, Win almost revels in the knowledge that most people's first impression of him is that he is an arrogant, elitist man of privilege. Win does not allow this to bother him, however. His clothing style is decidedly preppy. Win plays golf and is a member of two of the East Coast's most prestigious golf clubs. Physically, Win looks every inch the aristocrat. Win is tall, blond, and has porcelain features.

Myron and those who know Win well know that there is much more to Win than meets the eye. Win Lockwood does not have lasting relationships with women, preferring instead the company of high-priced prostitutes. The most important thing to remember about Windsor Horne Lockwood III, is that he has no qualms about doing violence to people who do violence to others. Win holds a black belt in Tae Kwon Do and he never loses a fight.

## Jessica Culver

Jessica Culver is a successful novelist and the oldest child of Carol and Adam Culver. Jessica is Kathy and Edward's older sister. Jessica Culver has returned to New York to



teach at NYU for a term and she accidentally re-connects with her ex-lover Myron Bolitar four years after their breakup. Jessica admits to being self-destructive and to making less than wise choices. Jessica realizes that leaving Myron for another man was a mistake. Jessica is stunningly beautiful but refuses to let others objectify her based on her looks.

## **Kathy Culver**

Kathy Culver was the second of three children. Her father, Adam, worked as the Medical Examiner in Bergen County, New Jersey. Her mother, Carol, is a devout Catholic and small business owner. Kathy's sister Jessica is a novelist and Myron Bolitar's ex-lover. Edward, Kathy's younger brother is the owner of a successful software development company. Kathy was blond and very pretty and was known to be perpetually cheerful. When Kathy discovered that her mother was involved in a long-term affair with her father's best friend, Paul Duncan, Kathy changed dramatically. During her senior year at Ridgeview High School, however, Kathy had an affair with English teacher Gary Grady. After a period of promiscuity and reckless behavior, Kathy enrolled in college and began dating Christian Steele, Reston University's star quarterback. Dating Steele seemed to help Kathy turn her life around. One evening, Kathy Culver simply disappeared. When a compromising photograph of Kathy Culver appears in a pornographic magazine, everyone wonders whether she might still be alive.

## **Christian Steele**

Christian Steele is Reston University's star quarterback. A good-looking young man, Christian seems to have it all. He is intelligent, polite, and rather unassuming. Christian was raised by his maternal grandparents because his mother was a prostitute and a drug addict. Christian Steele never knew his father. After graduating from Reston, Christian is drafted by the Titans organization and he signs with Myron Bolitar's agency for representation. Christian stands to be the highest paid NFL rookie in history. During his time at Reston, Christian became involved with Kathy Culver. And while their relationship went smoothly at first, when Kathy revealed the secrets of her past to Christian, things definitely took a turn for the worst.

## **Esperanza Diaz**

Esperanza Diaz works as Myron and Win's secretary. Esperanza is quite beautiful and very opinionated. Esperanza is studying to become an attorney at NYU. For a time, Esperanza wrestled professionally under the name Little Pocahontas. Esperanza has dark hair and eyes and is petite. Esperanza hates Jessica Culver for breaking Myron's heart. Deep down inside, she does care for Myron, although she is not quick to demonstrate her feelings.



## Otto Burke

Otto Burke is a record mogul and the owner of the Titans, an NFL franchise. Burke is the youngest owner in the National Football League. Otto is described as "a small, fragile-looking man" with tiny fingers (pg. 3.) Otto Burke has a baby face and dark, shoulder-length hair. He wears a "goatee that [looks] as if it'd been sketched on with a pencil" (pg. 3.) Otto is manipulative and sneaky, albeit it extremely successful and very wealthy.

## Larry Hanson

Larry Hanson is the general manager of the Titans football organization. Hanson is an ex-football star who retired after a successful NFL career. Hanson is a large, powerful man who is somewhere in his fifties. Myron notices that Hanson is in very good shape for an ex-athlete and that Hanson "hadn't gone to flab" (pg. 303.)

## Herman Ache

Herman Ache is a gangster and the brother of Frank Ache. Herman is in his early sixties and has capped teeth. Ache wears a toupee (gray) and looks as though he has had plastic surgery done on his face. Herman Ache is a fanatic about the game of golf. He is tan and appears to be very physically fit. When Myron meets Herman Ache, Ache is wearing white golf pants and a yellow polo shirt. Herman Ache wears golf cleats inside. Herman Ache sees himself as a man of refined tastes. His brother Frank serves as Herman's constant reminder that he is a gangster from the streets and nothing more than that. Frank Ache is comfortable with this information, whereas Herman is not.

## Frank Ache

Frank is Herman Ache's younger brother. The Ache brothers are like two sides of the same coin. Frank is shaped like a pear and has small shoulders. Facially, the two brothers look alike, but this is where the similarities end. Frank is bald and does not bother with toupees. His teeth are "black with spaces between them" (pg. 220.) When Myron meets with Frank and his brother, Frank wears a "powder blue sweat suit with neon yellow trim" and wears no shirt. His pants, the narrator remarks, are "a few sizes too small" (pg. 221.)

## Aaron

Aaron and Myron Bolitar have known each other since high school. The two men dislike one another vehemently. Aaron is an extremely large man who works as a paid thug for Roy O'Connor and the Ache brothers. Aaron fancies himself as a man of style and good fashion sense. This is not the case. Aaron wears suits but no shirt under the jacket. He



does not wear socks either. His hair is dark and slicked back, in the style of NBA coach Pat Riley. Aaron wears designer cologne, but Myron likens its smell to insect repellent. The narrator points out that, "Aaron was the definition of 'super smooth' - just ask him, he'd tell you" (pg. 95.)

## **Nancy Serat**

Nancy Serat is Kathy Culver's former college roommate. Serat is murdered on the night that Jessica Culver goes to visit her.

## **Adam Culver**

Adam Culver is the former Bergen County Medical Examiner. Culver is murdered under suspicious circumstances a few months after his youngest daughter, Kathy, disappears from the Reston University campus. Because his profession centered around death and dying, Adam Culver preferred to spend his free time in busy, crowded places such as Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

## **Lieutenant Paul Duncan**

Paul Duncan is a former homicide investigator and was Adam Culver's best friend. Duncan has been a friend of the family for years, and Culver's children refer to him as "Uncle Paul." Prior to Adam Culver's death, Culver learned that Duncan and his wife Carol had been having an affair for six years. Physically, Duncan is described as short and stocky with salt-and-pepper hair. Duncan is probably around sixty years old.

## **Carol Culver**

Carol Culver is the wife of Adam Culver and the mother of Jessica, Kathy, and Edward Culver. Carol Culver is a staunch Catholic and proved to be a stern disciplinarian with her children, especially Kathy. The night her husband was murdered, Carol and Adam Culver argued about her six-year affair with Culver's best friend, Paul Duncan. Carol Culver was wracked with guilt over her involvement with Duncan but chose not to end it. In addition, Carol Culver was reminded of her hypocrisy and infidelity by the nude and pornographic photographs Kathy would take with herself and then mail to her mother.

## **Edward Culver**

Edward Culver is the younger brother of Jessica and Kathy Culver. Edward graduated from Columbia University and is an extremely intelligent and talented young man. Out of college for just one year, Edward is already the president of his own highly successful software development company, ICMS (Interactive Computer Management Systems). Edward has fine, porcelain features. His face is almost feminine. Edward Culver has



eyelashes that "women would kill for" (pg. 118.) He is fond of wearing retro-style tee shirts with slogans on them like COMPUTER WEENIES HAVE THE BEST HARDWARE.

## **Dr. Sally Li**

Dr. Li is a former colleague of Adam Culver at the Bergen County Medical Examiner's office. Li and Culver worked together for ten years. In addition, Li and Adam Culver had once had an affair that lasted for about a week. Myron and Li know each other from Culver family gatherings. Dr. Li is Chinese and Myron guesses that she is in her late thirties or early forties, although she appears much younger. Oddly, Dr. Li is a chain smoker: "Cigarettes with a surgeon's gown. Like bowling shoes with a tuxedo" (pg. 306.)

## **Dean Harrison Gordon**

Harrison Gordon is the Dean of Students at Reston University. When Kathy Culver was a student at Reston, she worked in Dean Gordon's office. Gordon has a "handsome face and clear brown eyes." He wears tortoiseshell glasses and his hair is cut conservatively. Dean Gordon has gentle facial features, "as though the bones had been rounded off to soften his appearance" (pg. 243.) Myron thinks Dean Gordon looks "kind and trustworthy" (243).

## **Brian (Blackjack) Sanford**

Brian Sanford is a sleazy private detective whose office is located above the Eager Beaver strip club in Atlantic City. Sanford is the person responsible for mailing out the envelopes containing Nips magazine to Christian Steele and others. Sanford claims connection to celebrities by giving them nicknames. For example, he refers to singer Frank Sinatra as "Frankie" and billionaire real estate developer Donald Trump as "Donny". Sanford is basically a bottom-feeder with delusions of grandeur.

## **Ricky Lane**

Ricky Lane is Myron Bolitar's most high-profile client. Lane plays professional football for the New York Jets franchise. Lane was a high school teammate of Christian Steele. In addition, Steele and Lane both played football for Reston University. Lane admits to witnessing the rape of Kathy Culver, but maintains that he did not participate in the rape. After Lane turns state's evidence against his former Reston teammates, Myron "dumps" him as a client (pg. 343.)



## Chaz Landreaux

Chaz Landreaux is a senior basketball player at Georgia State University. Originally from Philadelphia, Landreaux comes from a poor single-parent family. Chaz Landreaux has six brothers and three sisters; one of whom is his twin. Because it is so difficult for his family to make ends meet, Chaz signs an illegal contract with Roy O'Connor and TruPro when he is a freshman in order to generate some much-needed income for his family. The contract stipulates that Chaz will allow TruPro to represent him once Chaz enters the NBA. However, after Chaz changes his mind about signing with O'Connor, it is too late. Frank Ache has Landreaux's twin sister kidnapped and terrorizes Chaz's mother. Eventually, Chaz stays with TruPro. The narrative does not indicate whether this arrangement proves to be successful or not.

## Roy O'Connor

Roy O'Connor is a sports agent and one of Myron Bolitar's professional competitors. O'Connor is the owner of TruPro, a sports representation firm. O'Connor is a less than honest businessman who is known to employ underhanded tactics in order to get and keep clients. When O'Connor illegally signs Chaz Landreaux (a college athlete) to a professional contract, O'Connor ends up with more than he bargained for. Because of Roy O'Connor's penchant for gambling and his inability to pay his debts, TruPro is taken over by mobsters Herman and Frank Ache. Physically, O'Connor is between forty-five and fifty-five years of age. Myron notices that O'Connor wears several gold rings "that disappeared between under the folds of flesh in his chubby unstained hands" (pg. 120.) O'Connor is going bald but he wears his hair swept over the bald spot.

## Junior (Horty) Horton

Junior Horton is a former player on the Reston University football team. During a brief sexual involvement with Kathy Culver, Horton took incriminating photographs of Kathy which he later used to blackmail Kathy. Horton was thrown off the team after it was proved that he had been distributing steroids and other illegal drugs to his teammates. Horton blamed Christian Steele for his misfortune and in retaliation arranged the gang rape of Kathy Culver. After college, Horton continued to deal drugs for a man by the name of Terrell.

## Sheriff Jake Courter

Jake Courter is the sheriff in charge of the Kathy Culver investigation. Courter's son Gerard had attended Michigan State University and played basketball against Myron. Myron estimates that Jake Courter is somewhere in his mid-fifties. Courter is African-American. Physically, Courter sports a rather large beer belly but is nevertheless a very strong man. At one point, Myron notices that Jake's forearm is "the size of an oak trunk" (pg. 145.)



## Tom Corbett

Corbett is the owner and president of Getaway Realty. Corbett is around fifty-five years of age and bald. He wears a "long, scraggly beard, like a college professor's" (pg. 238.) When Jessica Culver meets Tom Corbett, he is dressed in jeans, a flannel shirt and a tie, and wears red Chuck Taylor Converse tennis shoes. Corbett is the man who rented the cabin in the woods to Adam Culver shortly before Culver was murdered.





# Objects/Places

## Manhattan

Manhattan is one of the five boroughs of New York City.

## Central Park

This is an urban park located in Manhattan in New York City.

## Curacao

Curacao is an island located in the Caribbean Sea, just off the coast of Venezuela.

## Atlantic City

Atlantic City is located in New Jersey. Tourists visit Atlantic City to gamble and enjoy the seaside.

## Pine Valley Golf Club

Located in New Jersey, Pine Valley Golf Club is an exclusive private club which does not permit women as members, but allows them to play golf on Sundays.

## Merion Golf Club

Located in Pennsylvania, Merion is also an exclusive golf club.

## Bergen County

Bergen County is located in New Jersey.

## The Trump Taj Mahal Hotel and Casino Resort

A large hotel and gambling casino located on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Taj Mahal Hotel and Casino Resort is owned by Trump Entertainment Resorts.



## **Le Cirque du Soleil**

This is a privately-owned contemporary circus that originated in Montreal, Canada in the 1980s.

## **New Jersey Turnpike**

This is a toll road in the state of New Jersey. The Turnpike is one of the most heavily traveled roads in the United States.



# Themes

## Appearances Can Be Deceiving

Not all of the characters in *Deal Breaker* are who or what they appear to be. For instance, Esperanza Diaz, Myron Bolitar's secretary, was at one time a professional wrestler. The fact that Esperanza is also studying to be a lawyer adds a bit of humor to this fact. However, there are other characters in the narrative whose hidden personalities prove to be quite deadly. For instance, Christian Steele is, for all intents and purposes, an intelligent, well-behaved young man who just happens to be a star athlete. Myron Bolitar has a soft spot for Steele. Bolitar believes his newest high-profile client is guileless and somewhat naive. Steele tells Myron that he thinks of Myron as more than just an agent; he considers Myron to be a friend and a mentor. Upon closer examination, however, Steele's veneer is somewhat tarnished by the fact that his Reston University teammates hold him in low regard. Initially, this seems odd to Myron and he overlooks this fact for much of the narrative. Eventually, Steele is revealed to be rigid, unforgiving and pathological in his pursuit of athletic accolades. Christian Steele murders his fiancée, Kathy Culver, after Culver tells Steele that she plans to press charges against Steele's teammates for raping her. Rather than supporting Culver, Steele chooses instead to kill Kathy, fearing that she will prevent the Reston football team from winning a national championship. Furthermore, Steele is unapologetic about murdering Adam Culver and Nancy Serat in order to cover his tracks.

Another example of the stated theme is Win Lockwood. To those who are not personally involved with him, Lockwood seems innocuous enough. A man of privilege, Lockwood is unaffected by others' impressions of him. On the outside, Win Lockwood is calm and self-assured. He is well-dressed, educated and very well-spoken. He seems unflappable to the point of nonchalance. However, what people do not realize about Win Lockwood is that he has no compunctions about doing violence to those who refuse to listen to reason or to cooperate with others, namely, Myron. Win delights in breaking bones and causing injuries. He is protective of those he is close to and will stop at nothing to see that they are not harmed.

Ridgeview High School English teacher Gary Grady is another character who proves that appearances can be deceiving. Until Myron and Win confront him with questions about Kathy Culver, no one knows or even suspects that Grady owns and operates a telephone sex line. In addition, no one finds out about Grady's illicit affair with Kathy Culver during her senior year.

## Athletes Gone Wrong

Myron Bolitar is no stranger to the world and ways of professional athletics. He is aware that athletes often behave less than admirably off the playing field. Junior (Horty) Horton is one such athlete. Horton, while talented as a football player, lacks character and



behaves in a manner that could best be described as remorseless and lacking social conscience. Horton takes compromising photographs of Kathy Culver and later blackmails her for a large sum of money. During the course of the novel, it is also revealed that Horton deals drugs in college and continues to do so after his college football career ends. Christian Steele is another example of a gifted athlete who chooses the wrong path. Steele is a murderer and deceiver, concerned only with himself and furthering his career. Ricky Lane, another of Myron Bolitar's high-profile clients, admits to being present during the rape of Kathy Culver. Lane simply stood by and watched while others on the Reston University football team assaulted the young woman in the locker room. Lane subsequently finds Kathy Culver walking across campus and offers to corroborate her story if she decides to press charges. And while Lane does not take part in the attack on Kathy Culver, his inaction is as egregious as the crime committed by his fellow team members. He does nothing to stop the attack, and chooses instead to allow a group of men overpower a defenseless woman. Lane's reaching out to Kathy Culver after she is raped attests to his cowardice and his inability to stand up to his peers. It is ironic that Lane goes on to become a successful NFL player.

## Nice Guys Sometimes Finish First

For all his sarcasm and put-on bravado, Myron Bolitar is a truly nice guy. For example, it is clear from the outset that Bolitar is genuinely concerned for the welfare of his clients. He takes Christian Steele under his wing and attempts to shepherd the young man through the ins and outs of being a commodity in the world of professional sports. Myron negotiates fairly with Otto Burke and the Titans to secure a salary package for Christian Steele that will prove profitable for both agent and client. However, Bolitar's work on behalf of Steele has more to do with integrity than the financial bottom line. Myron knows how talented Christian Steele is and he is willing to work diligently in order to see that Steele is paid what his talent is worth. Conversely, it is Myron Bolitar who exposes the truth about Christian Steele to the Culver family. It is Myron who devises the plan to lure Christian Steele back to the location where Steele murdered Kathy. This is evidence of Myron Bolitar's unwavering sense of right and wrong. Bolitar would rather see that Steele is brought to justice for his crimes than sacrifice his own dignity just to profit from Steele's quarterbacking skills. Myron Bolitar stood to make large sums of money as Christian Steele's agent, but he sacrificed his future earnings for the sake of bringing closure to Kathy Culver's loved ones. Furthermore, by solving the mystery of Kathy's disappearance, Myron restores Kathy's reputation that had been previously tarnished.

In addition, Myron Bolitar loses Ricky Lake as a high-paying client because of Lane's involvement in Kathy Culver's rape. Bolitar did not have to lose Lane as a client, necessarily. Lane is successful enough and well-known enough to hire the best defense lawyers money could buy. Instead, Myron loses another big-name client by leaving Lane to the justice system, and rightly so.



Secondly, Myron Bolitar does everything in his power to protect Chaz Landreaux from Roy O'Connor and the Ache brothers. Bolitar knows that O'Connor signed Chaz Landreaux under false pretenses and he goes out of his way to keep Chaz from getting in over his head with the criminal element. While Chaz Landreaux decides to allow TruPro and the Ache brothers to represent him, Myron does everything in his power to prevent Chaz from being exploited and terrorized.

Finally, Myron Bolitar never stops loving Jessica Culver. Even when Jessica Culver leaves him for another man, Myron carries a torch for her for four years. He is powerless to deny his true feelings for Jessica even in the face of her betrayal. It is his long-suffering devotion that speaks to Bolitar's tenderheartedness and loyalty. In the end, Myron Bolitar does get the girl.



# Style

## Point of View

The entire novel is told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. The narrator, however, is non-neutral and offers many humorous editorial comments throughout the narrative. It could be said that the author is, in fact, narrating his own story, as the narrator's tone is conversational in nature and the narrator seems to "know" the characters. However, it can also be said that the narrator's demeanor could belie the author's adherence to the tenets of the detective genre. That is to say, there is a current underlying the narrator's voice which is similar to a sidekick. The narrator's comments suggest that the narrator follows the characters as the characters go from one situation to the other. This is especially true as it concerns Myron Bolitar, the main protagonist. There are times in the narrative when the narrator is entirely objective, such as in longer descriptive passages and episodes in which the Myron Bolitar character has no involvement. Overall, the narrative voice in Coben's novel is rather lighthearted. In other words, it is clear that the narrative has a sense of humor about the story being told. Furthermore, this lightheartedness offsets the violence presented in the novel. The result is that while there are violent moments, the author establishes that the violence is part of the storyline, rather than the storyline revolving around the violence being done.

## Setting

All of the action in *Deal Breaker* takes place in locations in and around New York City and the state of New Jersey. The inclusion of actual places in the narrative lends a more realistic feel to the novel as a whole. The author exhibits a thorough knowledge of the geographical area presented in the narrative. In addition, the author includes one or two locations outside the main areas that prove to be refreshing. One of the characters supposedly escapes to the island of Curacao in the Dutch Antilles, just off the coast of Venezuela. Curacao is exotic and tropical, which stands in direct opposition to New York City and the surrounding areas. The novel takes the reader to different areas in New York City including Central Park and some of the seedier neighborhoods in unnamed areas. This phenomenon paints New York City as an area encompassing all possible extremes. Win Lockwood's wealth and privilege are contrasted by the area in which Myron and Esperanza find Global Globes Photography Studio and the abandoned alley where Win and Myron confront Junior "Horty" Horton. The basement in which Myron lives provides a contrast with the office he occupies in Win's upscale Manhattan building. Several characters reside in the suburbs, which adds further contrast to the characters' comings and goings in the large city. The suburban areas in this novel prove to be just as perilous to the characters' safety as the more urban locations. For example, Gary "Jerry" Grady's pornography business operates in the suburbs and Adam Culver is murdered in the suburbs.



## Language and Meaning

Deal Breaker is written in standard English. Interestingly enough, the author does not give his characters an East Coast sensibility as applies to their usage.

An exception to this would be the narrator's use of the word "sneakers" in the description given of Ted Corbett on page 238. On the West Coast, the term "tennis shoes" is preferred.

The novel does, however, establish marked distinctions in language and usage between its middle and upper-class characters and those from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale. For example, when Myron speaks with Chaz Landreaux over the telephone in Chapter 2, Chaz asks, "What we going to do?" When one considers that Chaz has eight siblings, comes from a family headed by his single mother, and lives in a Philadelphia ghetto, the assumption would more than likely be that the character is African-American even though the author does not volunteer that information. Conversely, it also bears noting that the language Win Lockwood uses is very much keeping with his upper-crust background. At one point in Chapter 38, Junior "Horty" Horton threatens to do Win and Myron harm. Win smugly reminds Horton that the plural of "ass" is "asses."

Finally, Since Myron Bolitar is a sports agent, it is unsurprising that the narrative would include terms found in that particular milieu. Christian Steele is referred to as a "rookie," which is standard in most sports. Football terms such as "line of scrimmage," "huddle," and "defensive lineman" are also standard language for that particular sport.

## Structure

Deal Breaker is 348 pages long. There are forty-nine chapters in all and the chapters are all fairly brief. For the most part, each chapter begins where the previous one ends. The short length of the chapters provides for a smooth narrative flow as the author dispenses with information which does not directly affect the plot and its progression. In instances where some element of a particular character's past is discussed, the diversion from the here-and-now plot is relatively brief as well. The narrative progresses in linear fashion and follows a fairly standard trajectory where the mystery is introduced, clues are gathered, suspects are weeded out and the mystery is resolved fairly neatly. The only loose end left at the close of the novel is the fate of Myron's relationship with Jessica Culver. The assumption is that their relationship will continue, but it is not made absolutely clear. And since Deal Breaker is the first in a series of novels which feature Bolitar as the central protagonist, the expectation is that the core characters of Myron, Win, Esperanza and Myron's parents will also appear in Coben's subsequent novels.



## Quotes

"Otto Burke was the snake-infested high grass with buried land mines" (Chapter 1, pg. 4.)

"Acceptance of the inevitable, a sign of a wise man" (Chapter 1, pg. 8.)

"Not being what one would call mechanically inclined, it had taken Myron half an hour to change the tire" (Chapter 2, pg. 11.)

"Christian's room looked more like a 1950s sitcom set than a modern-day campus dorm room. Myron felt as if he'd just stepped into Wally Cleaver's dormitory" (Chapter 2, pg. 14.)

"Win was full-fledged white bread. He made star quarterback Christian Steele look like a Mediterranean houseboy" (Chapter 3, pg. 25.)

"The possibilities were endless. Even those lacking creativity can come up with a million different horrors when their loved one suddenly vanishes - or more painfully, a million different hopes" (Chapter 4, pg. 35.)

"[Myron] put on the television. Nick at Nite, the cultural equivalent of aerosol cheese" (Chapter 5, pg. 41.)

"Yellow stick-on messages swarmed Myron's phone like locusts" (Chapter 7, pg. 60.)

"Porno had become a staple of American life. Hardcore porn. The kind of porn that made Penthouse look like Highlights magazine" (Chapter 8, pg. 73.)

"Leather bookmarks in porno magazines. Like cigarettes in an aerobics class" (Chapter 10, pg. 89.)

"Modern art. It was a portrait of either Cher or Barbara Bush. Maybe both. Very esoteric" (Chapter 13, pg. 100.)

"Jessica's looks were like a Star Trek laser set on stun. Her smile, kill" (Chapter 13, pg. 101.)

"[Myron] had spent the night in Jessica's hospital room, trying to get comfortable in a chair that doubled as a medieval torture device" (Chapter 28, pg. 198.)

"There were several things Myron enjoyed more than visiting Herman Ache. Having his eyeball removed with a grapefruit spoon, for example" (Chapter 30, pg. 213.)

"Ethics are to a mobster what honesty is to a politician" (Chapter 30, pg. 215.)





## Topics for Discussion

Why does Frank Ache put a contract out on Myron Bolitar's life?

What does Otto Burke threaten to do if Christian Steele does not lower his starting salary asking price?

What is the extent of Paul Duncan's involvement in Kathy Culver's disappearance?

What surprises Myron when he and Esperanza encounter Lucy at Global Globes Photography Studio?

Why does Myron Bolitar live with his parents?

What prompts Herman Ache to demand the safe return of Chaz Landreaux's twin sister?

What makes Windsor Horne Lockwood III so dangerous?

What brought an end to Myron Bolitar's hopes of playing professional basketball?

Why is Nancy Serat murdered?

Discuss Myron Bolitar's history with Herman Ache.

Who killed Kathy Culver and why?

What is the basis of Esperanza's vehement dislike of Jessica Culver?

Why is suspicious about Adam Culver renting a cabin the woods?

Why does Myron Bolitar reject Madelaine Gordon's advances?

Why does Dean Gordon try to convince Kathy Culver not to press charges after she is raped?