

Guilt Study Guide

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Contents

Guilt Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part I, Chapters One through Six.....	4
Part I, Chapters Seven through Ten.....	7
Part II, Chapters Eleven through Twenty-one.....	9
Part III, Chapters Twenty-Two through Twenty-Nine.....	12
Part IV, Chapters Thirty through Thirty-Six.....	14
Part IV, Chapters Thirty-Seven through Forty-Three.....	16
Part V, Chapters Forty-Four through Forty-Nine.....	19
Part V, Chapters Fifty through Fifty-Four.....	22
Characters.....	25
Objects/Places.....	28
Themes.....	30
Style.....	32
Quotes.....	34
Topics for Discussion.....	36



Plot Summary

Mark Dooher is a successful lawyer at the head of an equally successful San Francisco law firm. He has a devoted wife, Sheila, and a devoted friend, Wes Farrell. Mark controls his life with an iron hand, taking what he wants but never making anyone realize his self-centered attitude. When Mark sees one of the junior lawyers, Joe Avery, with a beautiful woman, he immediately begins planning a way to have the woman for his own. The woman, Christina, believes Mark's cover of the successful businessman and devoted friend and husband. Christina begins confiding in Mark, trusting his friendship implicitly from their first meeting. Christina volunteers at the Rape Crisis Counseling Center and becomes friends with her boss, Samantha. Known as "Sam" to her friends, she meets—quite by chance—Wes Farrell. The two immediately connect but Sam is furious when she learns that Wes is the attorney successfully defending a man named Levon Copes, whom they all know to have raped and murdered a woman.

One of Mark's most influential clients is the archbishop of the Catholic Church, Jim Flaherty. When the Church is sued by a young attorney named Trang who claims his client loaned thousands of dollars to a priest while they were having a sexual relationship. Trang's lawsuit demands both the return of the money loaned and an additional amount. Hoping to avoid a public scandal, Mark tries to settle but Trang refuses, apparently sensing weakness and believing he can win. Mark then kills Trang in order to stop the lawsuit and protect his most important client. The case against Trang is stalled when Flaherty puts pressure on police to leave Mark alone. Mark soon after kills his wife, staging the scene to look like a burglary gone wrong but a dedicated detective, Abe Glitsky, refuses to believe Mark's cover stories and the case is brought to trial. Mark is represented by Wes who leads a brilliant defense though he comes to realize near the end of the trial that Mark is guilty. Meanwhile, Flaherty learns from a priest that Mark confessed to a crime to him, apparently the murder of Trang. Wes cuts his ties with Mark but Mark and Christina marry.

As the birth of Christina's first child draws near, she realizes that she needs to leave Mark, fearing for herself and for the child. She hides herself away in a motel but then goes into labor. When she tries to reach Sam through the Rape Crisis Counseling Center, a new volunteer—Diane Price—answers. Diane has claimed that Mark was the man who raped her in college though Mark denies it. Mark discovers from Christina's mother that Christina is in the hospital and arrives soon after the birth. He manages to get his hands on the child and then goes to Christina's room where Diane and Glitsky are with Christina. As Christina and the others try to talk Mark into handing over the child, he repeatedly squeezes and shakes the infant. Diane goes toward him though he warns her away, and pulls a gun from her handbag, shooting Mark and grabbing the infant before Mark falls to the ground. Glitsky notes that Diane will say that Mark was going to kill the baby, and that she had no choice but to shoot him. Glitsky says that he will back up her story though he seems to believe that Diane had finally seen an opportunity for revenge.



Part I, Chapters One through Six

Part I, Chapters One through Six Summary

Best friends Mark Dooher and Wes Farrell are having lunch together and discussing their lives. Wes and his wife, Lydia, are divorcing and Mark says that he could never divorce Sheila because of his role as attorney for the Catholic Archdiocese. After lunch, Mark sees a junior partner of the firm, Joe Avery, with a very attractive girl. Joe is later surprised to see Mark arrive in his office and issue an invitation to a party. In chapter two, Mark arrives home and finds the preparations for the party complete. Joe arrives with the girl, whom he introduces as Christina Carrera. Mark and Christina talk for awhile and he tells her that she should apply for a summer intern position with the firm, McCabe and Roth. She says Joe had told her not to as it might look like he had played favorites getting her hired, but Mark insists and she agrees.

In chapter three, Mark wakes early on Ash Wednesday and goes to St. Ignatius church where he believes he might encounter Christina. He does and acts as if it takes a moment to remember who she is. They go to a local diner and share a meal and she confides in him that she has had an abortion. Meanwhile, Abe Glitsky wakes at his home on Lake Street and mentally prepares himself to face his day, then gets his day started by packing lunches for his sons. From the beginning, Glitsky seems overwhelmed by the demands of his personal life on his time and energy.

In chapter four, Christina arrives late for her volunteer job at the Rape Crisis Counseling Center because her car will not start after leaving her meeting with Mark. She finds Abe Glitsky waiting to ask her questions about the death of woman who had used the services of the center, Tania Willows. Christina has little information and says that Willows had complained of being repeatedly raped though she had indicated the man was not a stranger, that she was forced but that she had not wanted anything more than for the man to leave her alone. Christina says Tania did not reveal the rapist's identity to her.

In chapter five, Mark is in the office of Archbishop Jim Flaherty about an ongoing lawsuit in which a priest named Slocum is accused of having taken fifty thousand dollars from a widow named Felicia Diep while carrying on a sexual relationship. The case becomes complicated when the priest is alleged to have also had a relationship with the woman's daughter, Veronica. Mark and Flaherty also talk about the fact that several small parishes have been closed. Flaherty expected that the parishioners would be absorbed into others, but Mark had predicted from the beginning that the upper scale parishes wouldn't readily accept those from the poor and ethnic-specific communities. Flaherty had been among those being considered for cardinal prior to these problems and Mark promises to help solve the problems to clear the way for Flaherty's promotion. Mark represents the Archbishop in various legal matters and Mark always takes control of these cases personally though he is a senior partner of the law firm where he works and there are others he could assign to the minor duties of the cases against the Church.



Wes's wife Lydia and Mark's wife Sheila are talking over lunch when Sheila says that she is worried about Mark. She cites his poor sleeping habits, his attending church early that morning, and his lack of interest in her, saying that she is worried that he might be suicidal. Sheila blames herself for Mark's moodiness. She is recently taking anti-depressants and is afraid to tell Mark, fearful that he will judge her for it. Lydia recalls a time Mark had come on to her but has never mentioned it to Sheila.

In chapter six, Christina arrives at the law firm with her resume, a fact that upsets Joe who says he had told her not to. They argue and Christina leaves him her resume as the person who hires summer interns and he tells her it will be a process handled by a committee. Christina drops into Mark's office before leaving the building. Meanwhile, Mark is in a meeting with Victor Trang, attorney for the woman suing the Catholic Church. Mark offers Trang fifteen thousand dollars though he has told the Archbishop that it could cost as much as six hundred thousand to settle the suit. Mark continues in this vein for some time, basically warning Trang that he is a small lawyer and that he cannot possibly win in a suit against Mark and his large firm. Trang is initially off balance and it seems he might cave in to Mark's intimidation but he comes to believe that he still has a case and says he will talk to his client about the offer. Mark is angry at Trang's lack of excitement about the offer and puts a deadline on the offer.

After leaving Mark's office, Christine goes to Abe Glitsky's office and tells him that she has remembered murder victim Tania Willows saying that her rapist had a tattoo on his penis. There is a moment of intense laughter between the two that brings Glitsky's supervisor to check on him. As the two talk, she tells Glitsky that he seems troubled and when he says his wife is sick, she suggests he call and check on her. Glitsky says it is cancer and that she will never be better.

Part I, Chapters One through Six Analysis

Mark says that he knows he cannot act on the fantasy of being with the woman he believes to be Joe's girlfriend, but invites Joe to the party with the expectation that he will bring her. Prior to the party, Joe is on edge but says that he feels he can relax as soon as Christina does arrive.

Abe Glitsky is a police officer and his wife is dying of cancer. Abe is struggling to survive the ordeal and the knowledge that he is going to be without his life's mate soon. Abe has a long drawn-out conversation with his son over how to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Abe is initially angry but then comes to realize that this could be his son's way of trying to cope with the approaching loss of his mother. Abe talks at length about the situation at home and how difficult it is for all of them. As a very minor point, he says that he does not have time to grind coffee but that his wife, Flo, likes it freshly ground and he seems intent on doing whatever little things he can for her during this difficult time. The appearance of being in a problematic situation is so prevalent that Christina realizes it as soon as she meets Abe for the first time. Christina herself is facing a crisis, having had an abortion years earlier. On the day after she meets Abe, she says that she is very tired and tries to tell herself that it has nothing to do with the

abortion, though it seems that she is trying to convince herself of this fact. She then says that she is going to have to "toughen up."

Mark's relationship with Archbishop Flaherty seems to be important to Mark, though he does not initially outline the reason for this importance. He says that he does not want to deal with the people involved in a lawsuit against the Catholics and so hands off the early motions and details to a junior attorney, but when it is time for someone to actually spend time with Flaherty, Mark handles that himself. It is noted that he does not give anyone else access to the Archbishop and this seems to indicate his importance. Mark also says that he could never divorce Sheila because of his relationship with the church. This does not seem to be a case of Mark having moral objections to divorce but more that he fears the possible repercussions of having had a divorce.



Part I, Chapters Seven through Ten

Part I, Chapters Seven through Ten Summary

In chapter seven, Joe is working late as is typical of all attorneys in the firm. Mark says that he has put in long hours himself, working as hard as he demands of his junior partners. Mark goes to Joe's office, picking up all the resumes for the summer intern positions and telling Joe that he will no longer be handling the process, hinting that there is to be a promotion in the works for him. Joe goes to Christina's, apologizes for a fight they had earlier in the day about her decision to leave her resume, and proposes. Christina accepts.

In chapter eight, Glitsky is in the prosecutor's office. Art Drysdale had been on vacation when Glitsky brought information leading to the arrest of Levon Copes on the murder of Tania Willows. Now Drysdale is angry at Amanda Jenkins for having gotten involved in the arrest, citing a lack of physical proof necessary to convict. Wes Farrell is representing Copes and has filed a motion for dismissal. Glitsky is being chastised for having gathered evidence—such as the tattoo—to support his idea that Copes is guilty rather than having followed the evidence to find the murderer. Wes goes out on the town and meets a woman. The two hit it off and they later discover their true identities—Wes Farrell, attorney defending Levon Copes and Samantha Duncan, director of the Rape Crisis Center. In chapter nine Wes tells Amanda Jenkins that Levon Copes will not take a plea at all because he believes they will win at trial and the prosecutor's office drops the charges. Glitsky is raked over the coals by his superiors because he has gone about the investigation wrong by having Levon Copes in mind as a suspect before he finding evidence to prove Copes' involvement. Trang tells Mark that he has additional people who will claim to have been victimized by the Catholic Church and Mark offers six hundred thousand dollars as a settlement. There is later a meeting at the law firm and Mark tells Joe Avery that he is being promoted in order to run the new office being opened in Los Angeles.

In chapter ten, Christina calls Mark, telling him that she has come to believe he is her friend and that she is in a quandary as to what to do about her relationship with Joe now that he is being transferred. Mark later tells Sheila about the conversation, saying that Christina seemed want advice and that he told her it would work out. Sam Duncan calls Wes after realizing that his job is the only real reason she was so angry at him.

Part I, Chapters Seven through Ten Analysis

Mark is very angry when Trang reveals that he has a list of people who will testify that they were victimized by priests. Trang is hoping to prove that there is a tendency for the officials from the Catholic Church to look the other way whenever the priests are doing something wrong. Mark believes he can win the case in court. The problem is that he knows that the bad publicity are going to be very expensive to the Catholic officials in

terms of goodwill, and that he will likely be fired as attorney for the Church just because he was unable to keep the situation out of the press. This is so very important to Mark that he will soon reveal his willingness to do anything necessary in order to remain the attorney in good standing for the Catholic Church.



Part II, Chapters Eleven through Twenty-one

Part II, Chapters Eleven through Twenty-one Summary

In chapter eleven, Glitsky is with Sergeant Paul Thieu as Glitsky is on his way to the scene of the murder of Victor Trang who has been stabbed. Thieu is the officer who took a missing person's report on Trang and he and Glitsky are the first to arrive after a cleaning crew discovered the body. Thieu waits outside the apartment at Glitsky's advice, having never been to a homicide scene before. Trang's body is dressed in an off-white suit and is on the floor by the desk. In chapter twelve, Christina is helping Joe prepare for his move and stops often by Mark's office to talk. Mark tells her that he greatly values her friendship. Glitsky stops in before Christina leaves. She has to introduce herself because he does not remember having met her earlier with regard to the Levon Copes case. Christina leaves and Glitsky questions Mark about Trang.

In chapter thirteen, Wes and Sam have been going out for several weeks and now are having a dinner at Sam's house with several of her friends, including Joe Avery and Christina. When the talk turns to Mark and his hard-nosed approach to business, Christina rushes to his defense which causes a fight later between Christina and Joe. Mark and Sheila attend Mass that night and Mark slips into a confessional, telling Sheila that he prefers the traditional one-on-one contact than simply participating in the service. In the confessional, the priest recognizes Mark immediately and Mark asks that the priest ensure that the confessional on his other side is empty before he begins to talk. The content of his confession is not revealed.

In chapter fourteen, San Francisco Coroner John Strout is telling Glitsky what he knows about Trang's murder, including that the weapon was likely a bayonet. Glitsky returns to his office and finds that he is assigned to a new homicide, a rampage killing at Taste Burger. Glitsky resents the killing because it is his seventh open case and he wants to focus on the Trang murder. He later gets back to talk to Trang's mother who says that her son had felt certain he was going to win the case against the Church but had feared he was in danger because of that fact. She says that Trang had told her on the night of the murder that Mark Doohar had called, instructing Trang to wait at his office and that Mark was going to come by. Glitsky and Thieu go back to Trang's office and find a calendar that makes Glitsky believe he had turned down some settlement offer from the Church. They find a notepad with information that Trang had felt "threatened" by Mark. The officers later interview Lily Martin who says that Trang had told her he had just talked to Mark and that they were to settle for 1.6 million dollars. While she does not come right out and say it, Lily insinuates that Trang had not initially expected to win at all and that the lawsuit was something akin to extortion. At home, Glitsky tells Flo about the case and tells her that it is not reasonable to suspect that Mark would have killed another lawyer over his desire to retain a client—one of many Mark's firm represents.



In chapter fifteen, Christina reviews the fight she had with Joe after she stood up for Mark and on the following Wednesday, stops by his office and leaves a letter and the engagement ring. She then goes to tell Sam about it. Glitsky worries that he is not doing his job well because of the stress of his home life, but his commanding officer tells him that it is results that matter and that Glitsky is still producing adequately. Mark and Wes play squash and Wes says he has talked to Christina and reveals that he is seeing Sam. In chapter sixteen, Glitsky questions Archbishop Flaherty who says that he and Mark did not have a meeting on the night of Trang's murder. Flaherty says that the Church is constantly embroiled in some level of litigation, that false accusations are as damning as real ones, and that he would never have agreed to settle for 1.6 million. Glitsky meets again with Mark, asks whether he still has the bayonet he had used in the military, and listens as Mark says that he had talked with Trang on the night of his murder about another case. Mark says that Trang's death does not mean the case goes away, but that it will be taken by someone else.

In chapter seventeen, there is an earthquake and there is damage around the city. Mark's house is barely damaged but Wes's house is damaged greatly. Those accustomed to the earthquakes endure well but others are afraid. In chapter eighteen, Christina is visiting her parents and Mark tracks her down, saying he had been worried after the quake. Christina and her mother spend a day together, "catching up." Christina's mother is worried about Christina, especially considering her recent breakup of yet another relationship. Christina's mother knows about Christina's abortion and seems also to be afraid that Christina is not going to form a more solid, permanent relationship.

In chapter nineteen, Wes says that it is no surprise that Mark had no damage from the earthquake, and that Mark is always fortunate in all aspects of life. Mark then tells Wes that he needs to hire him as an attorney and relates the questions posed by Glitsky and Mark's realization that he is being investigated. Glitsky calls Mark's secretary and says he wants to verify information Mark had given him. With this lead-in, she confirms that Trang had called about the settlement, indicating to Glitsky that Mark's story that Trang had called for advice on another case was a lie. Glitsky next goes to visit Sheila to confirm what Mark said about having not brought his own bayonet home from Vietnam. Glitsky tells Sheila that he needs to confirm the murder weapon was a bayonet and that the only way he can think to do that is to compare it to the one Mark brought home from Vietnam. Sheila says it is in the garage and asks Glitsky to help her get it. In chapter twenty, Wes finds that Sam's building was destroyed in the quake. She is in the hospital and her dog was killed. Glitsky fails to get a search warrant signed but does check Mark's car phone records and learns that he was near Trang's office when he made the call to Trang.

In chapter twenty-one, Flaherty calls the district attorney who passes the word down to the prosecutor and to Glitsky that Mark is not to be harassed or arrested without real evidence. Meanwhile, Flo's health is failing rapidly.



Part II, Chapters Eleven through Twenty-one Analysis

Glitsky is a seasoned homicide police officer but says he never fully becomes accustomed to the sight of murder scenes. As he looks over the Trang scene, he says that this seems to be the most up-close, sadistic murder he has ever seen.

At one point, when Christina is often stopping by Mark's office to talk, he tells her that he is happily married and that he will not tolerate anyone talking about her in a negative way because of their friendship, and encourages that she stand up for herself if that situation arises. This, along with Mark going out of his way to tell Sheila about his conversation with Christina, seems to be his way of setting a scene in which no one would possibly suspect him of anything with regard to his relationship with Christina. An interesting point with regard to Mark's attitude here is his over-confidence. For example, the reader will learn that Mark was one of three people who call the police to report that Trang seems to be missing. Trang's girlfriend and his mother also make the report about the same time. Mark may believe that he is diverting attention from himself by appearing to have nothing to hide, but the opposite is actually true.

Mark says that he served in Vietnam and that he had been surprised to find that he liked Trang because of Trang's Vietnamese heritage. Mark presents the scenario to Glitsky as an awakening, saying that until he had to be in contact with Trang, he simply lumped all Vietnamese people into one category as people he does not like. It is a good story but Glitsky, the seasoned police officer, does not fall for it and will continue to follow his hunch that Mark has something to do with Trang's death.

Christina relates the story of having wanted to spend evenings outside though there had always been a threat from the yellowjackets that swarmed at that time of day. She says that the threat had been enough to keep her inside until her father pointed out that there was no certainty that she would be stung, but there was a certainty that she could not have a good time outside unless she faced the risk of being stung. Christina seems to take this lesson with her now, on this visit to her parents' home, and says that she has to put herself in a position where she might get hurt in order to achieve a final goal. She does not really say what this goal is, but it seems to be referring to happiness with a man and she seems to have set her sights on Mark.



Part III, Chapters Twenty-Two through Twenty-Nine

Part III, Chapters Twenty-Two through Twenty-Nine Summary

In chapter twenty-two, six weeks have passed and Flo has died. Glitsky is still on leave when he is asked to return to investigate a nine-one-one call from Mark saying that Sheila has been stabbed. One of the first things Glitsky notes is that the blade of the knife used to kill Sheila was wiped on her clothes—only the second time he'd ever seen that action with the first being Trang. Glitsky notes that there is not enough blood for the wound evident on Sheila's body and Mark agrees to make a taped statement with Wes Farrell present. In chapter twenty-three, there is a wake and Mark is credited by some as holding up well while others—including his children—say he is cold. After everyone leaves, Mark and Lydia are alone and Lydia initiates sex. Wes and Sam later talk and Sam says that Christina is in love with Mark.

In chapter twenty-four, Glitsky takes his three sons to an aquarium for the weekend, and Glitsky later looks at the autopsy report and learns that Sheila's death is listed as poisoning. In chapter twenty-five, Sam arrives at the Rape Crisis Center to find a woman, Diane Price, waiting to get inside. Diane says that Mark raped her more than twenty years earlier, and that the term now is "date rape." Sam confronts Wes about the fact that Mark raped the woman and Wes refuses to believe that Mark might be guilty. Wes believes that Diane Price saw Mark's name in the paper with regard to the death of his wife and decided to accuse Mark in order to find fame from the situation. Wes knows that he is absolutely going to defend Mark.

In chapter twenty-six, Thieu is looking for anything he can find out about Mark's background. He has located Chas Brown, one of the two survivors of the platoon Mark was leading in Vietnam. Thieu learns from Brown that Mark had supplied members of his platoon with heroin and that it was a bad shipment of the drug that had caused the deaths of the entire platoon except for Brown, Mark and one other. Brown says that Mark had then gone back and killed his supplier with a bayonet. Brown also says that he and the other survivor had initially been fearful that Mark would kill them as the only witnesses of his role in the deaths. Thieu returns to the office where he learns from Glitsky that the extra blood on Sheila's bed had not been pure blood, but had contained an anti-coagulant typically used in blood testing, prompting the theory that Mark had stolen the blood from somewhere and staged the scene. In chapter twenty-seven, Glitsky presents his information and the prosecutors agree to go forward with the case based on the information that Mark will inherit a 1.6 million dollar life insurance policy, though the prosecutor who will try the case is instructed to ask for only a quarter-million-dollar bond, meaning Mark can bond out without spending any time in jail.



In chapter twenty-eight, Mark's doctor confirms that Mark had undergone a physical and that a vial of blood had gone missing about that same time. In chapter twenty-nine, Mark meets with all the members of his law firm after a newspaper breaks the story that he is being considered for indictment for the murder of his wife. Mark says that there is no truth to the story, that he will fight it, and is then arrested by Glitsky and Thieu who arrive during the meeting. Christina is visibly upset at Mark's arrest and Glitsky suddenly realizes that this attraction between the two is the motive for the murder.

Part III, Chapters Twenty-Two through Twenty-Nine Analysis

Wes notes that he has not really prospered for most of his life because he has given whatever time and energy he felt he could spare to the various disparate aspects of his life. Now he suddenly finds that he has a very important client in Mark and that he wants to dedicate himself to Mark's defense. However, Wes has begun to have some doubts himself. He notes that Mark's two children who come for the funeral say that Wes should wait to see what happens in six months and that Sam later predicts that Mark and Christina will be together within six months.

Wes goes to Mark's house one evening and asks outright if Mark raped Diane Price while they were students in college. Mark denies knowing her but then says that he did go out with a woman named Diane Taylor in college, that the woman had been "unbalanced" because of excessive drug use, and had engaged in sex with many of his fellow students at the time. Mark seems only vaguely upset that Wes is questioning him, a point that seems interesting because a normal reaction might have been more intense anger that a best friend seems to be doubting his honesty. Mark goes so far as to tell Wes that he will find a new lawyer, one that will not be personally caught up in the situation, after Wes says that he and Sam have broken up over the Diane Price incident. Wes declines the offer, saying that he knows Mark is not guilty. It is not until Glitsky is in Mark's office overseeing his arrest that he realizes that the money Mark will inherit from Sheila is not the motive in this murder, but rather the blooming love between Mark and Christina.



Part IV, Chapters Thirty through Thirty-Six

Part IV, Chapters Thirty through Thirty-Six Summary

Wes objects when Mark insists that Christina be included in his defense team but Mark says that he wants her because she, like Wes, believes in him. The pretrial motions turn into a fiasco with political factions coming into the mix. Mark's character is also going to be an issue though the judge rules that Chas Brown will not be allowed to testify about Mark's murder of the Vietnamese man because Brown did not see the actual crime. Wes is told by the judge that if he produces character witnesses on Mark's behalf, the prosecution may call Price to testify against Mark's character. When Wes is called away from the room they are using for defense, he returns to find that there is a high level of tension in the room. Actually, Mark and Christina have hugged during Wes's absence and the sexual tension was high in Wes's absence. Glitsky talks to Brown who is upset at not having the opportunity to testify. It then comes out that he had unsuccessfully tried to blackmail Mark some ten years earlier.

In chapter thirty-one, Christina comes to Mark's house and they talk about the emerging sexual tension between them. As Christina leaves, a reporter takes a photo of the two of them kissing on Mark's front porch. In chapter thirty-two, the story with the photo of Christina and Mark kissing on his porch runs in the paper. Christina pretends to ignore it while Wes is furious at the situation. Opening arguments begin with the prosecutor, Amanda Jenkins, telling the story of what she believed happened on the night of Sheila's death. At one point, Mark jumps from his seat, screaming that it is a lie. Later, Mark tells Wes that it had been an act, calculated to arouse sympathy from the jury. Wes is later called to the judge's chambers and told to control Wes or face contempt charges. The judge says that he wants to revoke Mark's bail on the assumption that Mark is seeking to cause a mistrial. Wes hopes to avoid that and the prosecutor, Jenkins, upon instructions from her superiors, says that she also does not want a mistrial or to have Mark remanded to custody.

In chapter thirty-three, the trial is delayed for an afternoon with the judge advising Wes to use the time to make sure Mark understands that another outburst will result in his being sent back to jail. With an afternoon off, Glitsky—who has now been promoted to head up the homicide division and who has hired a woman named Rita as the family's housekeeper—goes home early and takes his three sons to get a Christmas tree. Wes continues to work on trial preparation and Sam calls Christina, trying to make her understand that Mark is guilty of raping Diane Price but Christina refuses to listen. In chapter thirty-four, Wes begins his own statement, saying that Mark did not murder his wife, that he had sufficient money so that he did not need the insurance money and that he cannot explain some aspects of the case because he is innocent and does not know what happened. Later, Mark takes Wes and Christina out for lunch but it is obvious that Wes is very angry. Glitsky arrives and asks Christina to come to his office where he tells



her that he is following the information that there has been some connection between Christina and Mark and that it is his job to follow leads such as this. Christina is angry and refuses to talk to him about the case other than to say that she had no personal involvement with Mark until after Sheila's death.

In chapter thirty-five, Wes spends the afternoon picking apart prosecution witnesses, including George Crandall, a member of the crime scene investigation unit who has to admit that he did not find anything to directly connect Mark to the murder of his wife. Wes makes a point that Mark also did not make it look as if someone had tried to break into the house as might have been expected had Mark been trying to stage the scene. In chapter thirty-six, the blood expert is questioned, reveals that the blood found at the scene of Sheila's murder was obviously from a vial such as had been collected for some sort of blood test and that Mark's blood was not anywhere at the scene. The doctor says that there was a vial of blood missing from his office the day Mark had his physical. Wes wants to ask a couple of final questions so that the jury does not leave with that "coincidence" as the last thing they heard, but the judge declines the request and the court is adjourned for the weekend.

Part IV, Chapters Thirty through Thirty-Six Analysis

Mark and Christina talk at length at his house on the night they are photographed. Mark says that he knows he has feelings for her but that he does not feel he could start a relationship with her because the trial is hanging over his head. Christina says that there is no way he can be convicted but Mark says that he had also thought he could not be brought to trial on the flimsy evidence against him. Mark is playing the role of the man who is just discovering his attraction for this woman though he has felt it and lived toward it all along.

The prosecutor's case as she presents it to the jury is that Mark drugged Sheila with the intention of returning later to kill her, but that Sheila had already been taking an anti-depressant and had taken an antihistamine that day for an allergic reaction and that she had died from what Mark had given her. The prosecutor says that Mark then went to the golf course, but came home, stabbed Sheila and arranged the scene to look like a break-in, returned to the course and came home later to "discover" the body. Mark's outburst, carefully orchestrated, almost prompts the judge to order Mark remanded to jail without bond. The prosecutor's office, mindful of the fact that Mark has influential friends, comes up with a story as to why they do not want this to happen. The attorney in charge of the case, Amanda Jenkins, says that she has never brought a murder case to trial until this and that she does not want it delayed by having Mark returned to jail and facing a mistrial.



Part IV, Chapters Thirty-Seven through Forty-Three

Part IV, Chapters Thirty-Seven through Forty-Three Summary

In chapter thirty-seven, Christina admits that she is not certain she believes in Mark's innocence. Wes expects pizza delivery but has a visit from Sam who gives him some paperwork, including copies of Diane Price's diary which is damning though not admissible in court. In chapter thirty-eight, Wes questions Mark's doctor who says that he never discovered the vial of blood was missing, only that the test results were never returned, so that it was impossible to know where it went missing from. He also says that the man from whom the blood had been taken had died and was cremated, so there is no way to compare the blood to be certain it was from his office. Glitsky takes the stand and Wes makes him admit to several points, including that there is no physical evidence to point to Mark, and that the case is built on witness statements. Wes points out that Glitsky had spent a great deal of time at the hospital when his wife was ill, intimating that he could have taken both the blood and a surgical glove found at the scene. Wes interviews Emil Balian, the neighbor who says he saw Mark's car parked at the end of the street on the night of Sheila's murder. During the interview, Emil admits that he does not know what he had for dinner that night and that Glitsky had pointed out Mark's car the following day. Emil then says that he is "pretty sure" the two were the same car.

In chapter thirty-nine, Mark and Christina attend a charity party and she tells him that she does not believe she is cut out for criminal law after all. Glitsky's sons are catching grief at school over the publicity of the trial, especially after Glitsky is all but accused by Wes of having planted the blood and the surgical glove at the scene of Sheila's murder. Mark and Christina leave the party early but Wes remains and is the star of the event, taking names of many who say they will need his services. Wes is gaining in popularity based on the fact that he is doing so well in the trial. Among those talking to Wes is Flaherty who says that he will be ready to be a character witness for Mark whenever the time comes.

In chapter forty, Mark takes the stand and explains several points, including that he had been at the driving range for a long time, that he had not locked the door because he considered himself in a safe neighborhood and did not think there was a need to lock the door during the middle of the day, and that he had not killed Sheila. There is a golf pro who claims to remember a conversation with Mark about a new set of golf clubs. In chapter forty-one, Flaherty is alone in his bedroom when Eugene Gorman, a parish priest, arrives. Gorman was the priest who heard Mark's confession of murdering Trang those months earlier and without saying names, tells Flaherty about the confession. Flaherty immediately calls Wes and says he cannot testify for Mark but refuses to say



why. Alone later, Flaherty notes that Gorman had left no doubt as to the person he was referring to and that there is equally no doubt as to whether the confession of murder was true.

In chapter forty-two, the prosecution then calls a rebuttal witness named Michael Ross who says there is no one on the spot Mark claims to have occupied. Wes picks away at the man's story, pointing out that he had been very engrossed in hitting his balls and may not have noticed even if Mark had been there. Wes's one score with Ross is that Ross says he was a criminal justice major and that he had followed the media coverage of the trial, meaning that he understood that his testimony was important to the prosecution.

In chapter forty-three, Diana Price and Sam go to the courthouse, believing Diane is to testify although Mark has decided not to bring up character witnesses after Flaherty's announcement, which means the prosecution also will not be allowed to present rebuttal character witnesses. So Diane will not testify after all. As they enter the courthouse, Diane sets off the metal detectors and police discover a small handgun in her bag. Though the gun is registered, she does not have a concealed weapon permit and is arrested. This produces a maelstrom of speculation within the courtroom, that Diane had either planned to kill Mark or herself. Wes tells Mark that he does not plan to call Flaherty but does not say why, preferring that Mark not know. Wes's final comments to the jury are to recap the information and the holes in the prosecution's story, and to say that Mark is innocent.

Part IV, Chapters Thirty-Seven through Forty-Three Analysis

Christina comes to realize that things have changed between Wes and Mark following the infamous kiss shared by Christina and Mark on his porch. Christina also comes to understand that the case has taken on greater dimensions for them with Wes somehow believing less in his friendship with Mark because of the kiss.

Glitsky is torn by his need to continue his work and the needs of his sons to have him near. He cannot get past his own grief either, seeming to believe that it is unfair that he is stuck raising his sons without his wife's help. There is a great deal of time devoted to the ongoing affair's of Glitsky's family life, including the fact that his sons are not handling their mother's death well and that the family is floundering because of Flo's death, even these months later.

There is a legal battle over the question of allowing the man named Michael Ross to testify. Glitsky knows that Jenkins has "sandbagged" the situation in her favor, hiding Ross's name among the myriad stacks of information handed over to the defense as part of the discovery. It is noted that the discovery is used as a way of ensuring that the prosecution tells the defense all the cards they will play during the trial, enabling the defense to adequately prepare. In this case, Jenkins did not want Ross's presence advertised and effectively evaded that.



An interesting point is made as Wes is wrapping up the trial. He is talking to the jury and says that he has spent the previous couple of weeks building trust and making these people believe that he is an honorable man, only to be faced with the need to lie to them at the last minute. It is then that he tells them that Mark is innocent. Wes has come to believe that Mark is not innocent but does not say anything to that effect, as would be necessary for a good lawyer. What is interesting is that Wes will almost pay the ultimate price for his trouble—his life.



Part V, Chapters Forty-Four through Forty-Nine

Part V, Chapters Forty-Four through Forty-Nine Summary

In chapter forty-four, Mark is angry that his acquittal does not seem to exonerate him. In the months following the trial, the Archbishop moves his legal business elsewhere and the law firm is in trouble. Layoffs occur and several partners break out on their own to get away from Mark. Mark and Christina marry and there is tension between them as Christina's pregnancy advances. The tension reaches a peak one night and Christina says that she has found out that Mark lied, that Joe Avery had been transferred to Los Angeles on the spur of a moment rather than there having been a process in the works for months as Mark had initially said. Christina says that with that knowledge, it looks as if Mark intentionally worked to break up Joe and Christina and that casts doubt on other aspects of their lives as well. Mark says that it would not matter if that were the truth, that two years have passed, he has gotten away with it, and that it does not change anything. Christina says that it changes who Mark is as a person and that he is scaring her. Mark says that he cannot keep trying to reassure Christina because there will always be things she can doubt. He then accuses her of preparing to leave him, just as Flaherty and Wes have done. Christina admits to herself that she will never believe in him now and notes a "darkness" that had never been visible before, though she realizes that it was probably present all along.

In chapter forty-five, Wes takes some time away from law before being pulled back into it. He then makes up with Sam and they move in together. One day she tells him that Christina has come to the Rape Crisis Center, that she is pregnant and that she had seemed afraid. Wes asks if Sam had told her she was smart to be afraid, but Sam says she did not. Sam then says that Christina wants to talk to Wes and he initially declines but then agrees. Prior to his meeting, he calls Glitsky and asks the detective to meet with them, saying that he hopes Glitsky might be able to provide information that Christina will believe. Glitsky points out that Christina had access to all the information in the prosecution's case against Mark for the murder of Sheila and Wes requests the information in the Trang case, hoping that will provide something that will convince Christina. Glitsky agrees, though he says it will take him some time to get access to the file which has now officially been put away. In chapter forty-six, Glitsky arrives with the lengthy police file on the case while Christina and Wes are meeting. Prior to Glitsky's arrival, Wes gives Christina the diary of Diane Price which he says was the turning point for him, the moment he no longer believed in Mark's innocence. Christina also believes the words of the diary. Wes then tells Christina that his ex-wife, Lydia, confided that she and Mark had sex on the living room floor of Mark's house on the day of Sheila's funeral. Christina hears from Wes and Glitsky the common factors of the murders, including that the murder weapon had been wiped on the clothing of the victims and



inconsistencies between Mark's statements about his phone calls to Victor Trang and the phone records. Christina thanks the two men and leaves the office, though Wes encourages her to let one of them know if she decides to leave Mark. As Glitsky prepares to leave, he and Wes talk about the fact that they are concerned for Christina's safety but that neither feel they can do anything as a preventative measure.

In chapter forty-seven, Mark arrives home with the news that he has potentially landed a new client. He feels that the trial is finally moving into the background of his life, where he believes it belongs. As soon as he goes inside, he feels something is wrong but has a beer and talks to Christina's mother before realizing that the house is simply too quiet and empty. It is not until he goes upstairs that he realizes that Christina is gone and has taken a great deal of her possessions. Mark sees a note pad with a phone number on it and calls, discovering it is Wes's phone number. He talks to Christina's mother who says she does not know where Christina is. He calls Wes and leaves a message on the machine, saying that he is "worried sick" about Christina. Christina has checked into the Golden Gate Park, a motel fairly near the hospital, and is having irregular contractions. She feels it is too far to go to her parents' house, that she does not know what else to do, and simply collapses into a bed with the television on.

In chapter forty-eight, Glitsky goes through the channels and talks to the new district attorney, Alan Reston, with a run-down of all the information gathered in the Trang murder case. Glitsky points out what he has just realized after talking to Wes—that Flaherty pulled his support of Mark Doohar following the trial and refused to be a character witness, indicating to Glitsky that Flaherty may know something about Mark's involvement. Reston calls Flaherty who says he does not have personal knowledge that Mark committed any crime, but Reston seems to believe that the wording of Flaherty's statement may mean that someone else does. He tells Glitsky to go forward with the investigation if he can find any basis for it. Sam and Wes are at home in Buena Vista when Mark arrives, screaming questions about Christina's whereabouts. Sam slams the door and Mark leaves though she tells Wes that his mere presence is a threat. Wes does not agree but Sam persists, pointing out that Wes has been taken in by Mark's lies before. When Mark arrives home, Glitsky is waiting for him. He lets Mark get inside and then knocks on the door. When Mark answers, Glitsky says that he is investigating the Trang murder again and that he is here to give Mark an opportunity to confess. The two begin a verbal sparring match and Mark says that he hopes Wes gives it a better effort than he gave to the case against Mark for Sheila's death. As a parting shot, Glitsky tells Mark that he cannot help but wonder why Christina left and that it might have something to do with Mark's "performance." Mark spends the night wandering around naked, reminding himself that he is invincible, and begins forming an idea for revenge against Wes whom he sees as the one who remains a problem and the one who has renewed the Trang investigation.

In chapter fifty, Diane Price—as a volunteer at the Rape Crisis Center—answers the phone when Christina calls. Christina calls the center because she does not have Sam's home phone number and her labor has begun. Diane, immediately recognizing Christina's name though Christina does not know Diana, promises to call Sam with Christina's message. Meanwhile, Mark has called Christina's parents, telling them that



he is worried. Christina's mother is upset as well, wondering why Christina would not have called home if she was in trouble. Christina had spent a great deal of time convincing her parents that Mark was innocent of the charges against him. Christina's mother says that she does not understand Christina and that it is time Christina learned to grow up. She goes so far as to say that Mark is not beating Christina and that Christina belongs with her husband. Meanwhile, Mark is making plans for his next murder, admitting that he has made some mistakes in the past. Diana tries to reach Sam but does not get an answer and so goes to the motel where she introduces herself to Christina.

Part V, Chapters Forty-Four through Forty-Nine Analysis

Wes, looking back on the trial, says that there developed a natural division, with him on one side and Mark and Christina on the other. It seems that he does not understand Christina's love for Mark when he himself has become completely disillusioned with his long-time friend. Wes goes so far as to try to warn Christina but to no avail. It is important to note that Wes's doubts as to Mark's innocence probably pushed Christina and Mark closer together because Christina is determined to stick up for the underdog.

Christina's biggest problem in her desire to believe that Mark could be a killer is her own past. She says that she had spent a great deal of her life breaking up relationships and she has come to believe that it is because she has no real ability to trust another person. This makes Christina doubt her own intuition and her knowledge that indicates that Mark is guilty and that he might be a danger to her and to her unborn child.

Mark's reaction to Christina leaving him is complex but is a good example of Mark's true personality. Mark says that he does not want the child Christina is carrying but that the child is his and he will not give up either the child or Christina. Mark's selfishness is immediately seen here. He has no desire to see Christina happy and healthy, but is concerned only for himself, though he does try to hide his anger behind a façade of concern. Another interesting point is that Christina has spent a great deal of time and energy convincing her parents that Mark is not guilty of the crimes he is accused of. The situation between Christina and her parents is such that her parents are concerned that Christina will not ever settle into a full-time relationship of her own. At one point, her mother says that if Christina continues to have the option to return home, she will never develop a happy relationship with her husband.



Part V, Chapters Fifty through Fifty-Four

Part V, Chapters Fifty through Fifty-Four Summary

In chapter fifty, Mark calls Wes and apologizes for their earlier encounter. Wes hangs up and Mark calls right back, saying that he needs to talk to Wes. When Wes says that Mark's only option is to talk over the phone, Mark responds that he needs Wes's legal services. He says that he wants to turn himself in, that he can no longer live with the guilt of his crimes, and that he wants Wes to negotiate the arrangement with the police. Wes and Sam go to the Little Shamrock where they talk about the situation. Sam urges Wes to simply refuse to see Mark but Wes says that Mark has come to realize that what he did was wrong. He says that he cannot walk away from their friendship when Mark needs Wes so badly. Sam, angry, leaves and when she gets home she finds that Diane Price has left a message on her answering machine about Christina being in labor, but that she does not say where Christina is. Back at the bar, Wes talks to the bartender who says that he does not know why they as men argue with the women, because the women are always right. Wes admits this is true and also admits that this means that Sam is also right about Mark's character and the fact that he is dangerous.

In chapter fifty-one, Wes gets into the car with Mark and the two drive around for a long time. Mark initially talks about old times, their friendship over the years of their acquaintance and tells Wes that he is wrong about Mark having killed anyone. Meanwhile, Christina is at St. Mary's Hospital and the labor is moving slowly. She calls her mother who is upset that Christina has not yet called Mark with her whereabouts. Christina elicits a promise that her mother will not tell Mark where she is. In chapter fifty-two, Glitsky, his father and his son are all at the movies when Sam pages him. He goes to a pay phone and calls her, initially arguing that Wes is bound to be okay before agreeing that he needs to go in search of him. He goes to Mark's house, paging Thieu several times on the way without getting a response, and finds no one at home at Mark's. He finally breaks in, intent only on finding out where Mark has gone. Standing at the phone, he punches the redial and Christina's mother answers. She identifies herself and tells Glitsky that she had given Mark the news that Christina is in the hospital giving birth, and that Mark had said he was going to be with her.

In chapter fifty-three, Christina holds her son and the nurse, just before taking the baby to the nursery, shows Christina the bracelet that says, "Baby Boy Dooher." Christina almost objects but does not think it will matter at this point, not considering that Mark might have found her. Glitsky arrives and insists on seeing Christina. Diane is still in the room with her and she assures Glitsky that she is alright, but is upset when she learns that her mother told Mark where to find her. Mark arrives at the hospital, produces his identification so that the nurses allow him to see the baby, then convinces one of them that he has just arrived on a flight from out of town, that he missed the birth, and that he wants to carry the baby to Christina's room. The nurse accompanies him and Mark imagines that the sight of him carrying their son will mean the end of their marital problems. He is surprised to find Glitsky in the room. Christina tells him that Diane is a



nurse practitioner and Mark dismisses her, which angers Diane because she would have recognized him anywhere as the man who raped her those many years earlier. Christina and Diane begin to plead with Mark to hand over the baby but he says that he believes Christina would say whatever it took to make him do that, and continues to refuse. Glitsky moves into a position so that he knows what is behind Mark if he has to shoot. Diane fully expects that Mark will kill the baby. She picks up her purse and walks toward Mark, refusing to stop when he orders her to. As she reaches him, she pulls the handgun from her purse and shoots Mark, grabbing the baby as Mark falls. Diane says that she had to kill Mark to keep him from hurting the child. Glitsky says it is a good story, but that he will still have to arrest her.

In chapter fifty-four, Glitsky and Thieu recap the events, including the fact that Thieu had been tailing Mark and Wes and had briefly lost sight of them in the fog, giving Mark time to shove Wes off a cliff, though Wes survived. Glitsky says that his testimony in the case against Diane Price will be that Mark was shaking the baby, that the baby was in danger, and that Diane had used necessary force in order to save the infant's life. Glitsky predicts Diane will be exonerated or get a minimal sentence, such as community service. Christina meanwhile is back at the home of her parents. Her father tells her that her mother is devastated over the mistake she made in telling Mark of Christina's whereabouts and Christina says she is not certain she can forgive, but then hands the baby to her mother while she goes for a swim.

Part V, Chapters Fifty through Fifty-Four Analysis

Mark, soon after picking up Wes, says, "The die is cast." It is a reference both men know and understand as meaning that there is no turning back from this point. However, for Mark this means that he is going to go ahead and kill Wes now with the goal of eliminating him as a problem. Wes still seems to cling to the hope that this means that Mark knows he cannot turn back from confessing and facing the punishment. It is interesting that Wes continues to believe in Mark and to hold out some hope that Mark has some goodness in him even when he has no real reason to believe so. This is evidence of the faith Wes has in his friendship though, in this situation, it is truly unfounded.

Mark's madness is fully evident in the final scene as he says that he knows Christina will put all their troubles away the moment she sees him holding their son. Mark says that she will know immediately that he was able to walk through the hospital security and the nurses charged with caring for the baby in order to take the child. He says that she will realize there is nothing she could have done to prevent it. He then says that he wants her to understand that he is never going to hurt her and that he is trustworthy. The two sides of his thinking here are obviously in conflict but seem to make perfect sense in his mind.

There are several references to "the pink moment" at the home of Christina's parents. It is that time of day nearing sunset when the sky turns pink but it seems to be an indication that at this time of day, things are good. Christina's mother uses this reference

as she is trying to decide whether to tell Mark that Christina is in the hospital about to give birth, and later when Christina is considering her life.

Glitsky knows who Diane is when he arrives at the hospital, and he knows that there could have been an additional motivation behind her shooting of Mark—that of revenge against the man who had raped her. He says that he will have to arrest her, but that she poses no threat at that moment and so puts off the arrest in the heat of the situation.



Characters

Mark Dooher

The senior partner of the law firm and husband of Sheila. Mark is a self-confident lawyer who has begun having trouble sleeping, a problem his wife puts down to his life's current situation which includes the last of their three children having left home. In truth, Mark has everyone fooled about his personality and is, at heart, a selfish, cold-blooded killer. Mark is at the heart of the success of the law firm where he works. He has cultivated a professional relationship with the archbishop of the Catholic Church, a relationship that Mark guards jealously. Mark is demanding of others and it is his best friend, Wes Farrell, who says that the secret to retaining Mark's friendship is to never cross him. It is also Wes who comes to realize that Mark derives a great deal of pleasure from hurting others. Mark believes himself too smart to be caught and goes out of his way to insert himself into situations. For example, Mark is one of the first to report Victor Trang missing and seems to believe that taking this step will eliminate him as a suspect in the case. It does not work and Mark is suspected though police have trouble finding enough physical evidence in the situation to charge Mark with the murder.

Wes Farrells

An attorney and the man described as Mark's best friend. Wes is married to Lydia but the two divorce and Wes later begins a relationship with Samantha Duncan. Wes is retained by Mark as his attorney when Mark comes to realize that police may be focusing on him as a suspect in Victor Trang's murder. Wes is a staunch supporter of Mark, believing whole-heartedly in Mark's innocence until he comes across the diary of a woman who claims Mark raped her while the two were college students. Wes later says that it is when he realizes Mark had lied about this point that Wes knows that Mark is lying about his innocence in all the other crimes, including the deaths of Victor Trang and Sheila Dooher. Wes initially chooses his friendship with Mark over his budding love for Sam, but later comes to realize his folly and makes up with Sam. When faced with the decision of how to handle the end of Mark's trial, Wes follows through the momentum he has built of being on the brink of winning the case and Mark's acquittal. Wes goes on to win the case despite the fact that he now believes Mark is guilty. Wes encourages Christina to leave Mark, fearing that she will be Mark's next victim.

Christina Carrera

Joe Avery's fiancé and the woman Mark Dooher is attracted to the first time he sees her. Christina is an up-and-coming young attorney whom Mark hires for his firm. Mark manipulates the various aspects of his life with an eye toward having a relationship with Christina.



Sheila Dooher

Mark's wife, Sheila is battling depression and is fearful of letting Mark know her situation because she believes he will think she has failed as a wife and as a woman. Sheila becomes Mark's victim, dying as a result of poisoning with Mark trying to make it look like a burglary gone bad.

Lydia Farrell

Wes's ex-wife and Sheila's best friend. As Sheila and Mark seem to be having some problems, Lydia recalls a time when Mark had come on to her, but does not tell anyone about it. At Mark's house after Sheila's funeral, Lydia and Mark have sex and Lydia later reveals this to Wes.

Joe Avery

A junior member of Mark's law firm, he meets a young woman named Christina while teaching a contracts class that Christina is attending. Joe convinces Christina to marry him but the couple breaks up soon after. Joe is assigned to a Los Angeles branch office in an effort to get him out of Christina's life.

Abe Glitsky

The police officer who is trying to continue his job as a homicide cop while dealing with the fact that his wife, Flo, has cancer and is nearing death. Glitsky is a dedicated officer and has trouble balancing his life at home with his three sons and his life as police officer. Glitsky heads up the investigations into the murders of both Victor Trang and Sheila Dooher. In the case of Trang, he is unable to prove Mark's involvement and is unable to obtain a conviction in the case of Sheila's death.

Jim Flaherty

The Archbishop who hires Mark to handle a case in which a priest is alleged to have taken a widow for fifty thousand dollars. Flaherty is initially a strong supporter of Mark, swearing his allegiance to Mark and vowing to testify as a character witness in Mark's trial, but later rescinds that support when Flaherty learns that Mark had confided in another priest his role in a murder. Flaherty's decision to move his legal business to another firm effectively ends the life of Mark's firm.

Victor Trang

The attorney representing the widow who is suing the Catholic Church, alleging that a priest had a relationship with both her and her daughter and that the priest took fifty



thousand dollars from her. Trang confides to some that he is on the case though he does not believe that he is capable of handling the situation. Trang is found murdered at his office. However, his murderer, Mark Doohar, is not prosecuted for the murder.

Samantha Duncan

The director of the Rape Crisis Center where Christina volunteers and the woman who meets Wes Farrell by chance in a bar during the preliminaries of the trial against Levon Copes. When Sam learns Wes' true identity, she is angry that anyone would defend Levon Copes and orders him out of her apartment. Sam and Wes later connect and they move in together.



Objects/Places

Ojai, California

Where Christina is from.

San Francisco, California

Where Mark Doohar lives and operates his law practice.

McCabe and Roth

The law firm where Mark works as a senior partner.

St. Ignatius

Where Mark goes for Ash Wednesday service with the hope of meeting Christina.

Lake Street

Where the Glitskys live.

Rape Crisis Counseling Center

Where Christina works as a volunteer.

Mission Delores

Where the Archbishop's office is located.

Los Angeles

Where Mark sends Joe Avery to oversee a branch office.

Golden Gate Park

The hotel where Christina stays after leaving Mark.



Buena Vista

Where Mark and Sam live as the story draws to a close.

The Little Shamrock

Where Sam and Wes met and where they are when they argue about whether Wes should go help Mark make arrangements to turn himself in.



Themes

Lack of Conscience

Mark is the ultimate sociopath with no conscience, though he can put on a show of a conscience when it suits his purposes. For example, Wes relays the story of Mark's confession in college that he had had sex with another woman while engaged to Sheila and that Mark had said at that time that he should break off his engagement because he had wronged Sheila. In truth, this was part of Mark's act, though Wes clings to the idea that Mark is perfect. Later, Mark calls on Wes to defend him and tells Wes that he has nothing to hide. Wes believes this as do some others, though Glitsky realizes that Mark is guilty and sets out trying to prove it. Mark's lack of conscience is such that he plans the murders of his wife and best friend without any feelings of remorse. Mark believes only in the need to fulfill his own desires. He wants Christina but does not want to simply have an affair. Instead he sets into play a long-term plan that includes sending Christina's fiancé out of the region in order to have the way clear for his own relationship with Christina. While that manipulation is self-centered in and of itself, Mark goes much farther with the murder of his wife of many years, Sheila. As he faces prosecution, he stages an outburst in the courtroom with the sole purpose of making himself appear more human to the jurors. This manipulation is just another in the line of self-centered actions Mark takes in order to get whatever he wants without any signs of a conscience.

The Depths of Friendship

Wes and Mark are, in the eyes of everyone who knows them, best friends who would do anything for each other. Mark is actually a self-centered sociopath but Wes's friendship is true and he is ultimately loyal to Mark. This level of dedication is seen at several points. For example, when Wes is defending Mark at trial, he puts everything else aside to handle Mark's case. When Wes's relationship with his girlfriend Sam is at risk because of his involvement with Mark's defense, Wes chooses to stand by his friendship. When Wes comes to realize that Mark is actually guilty of the murder of his wife, Sheila, he continues with the defense. As Mark gives closing arguments, he notes that he has to lie to the jury and does so by saying that Mark's case is unusual for a lawyer because attorneys do not often have the chance to truthfully say their client is innocent as Wes has in this case. Later, Wes breaks ties with Mark but there comes a time when Mark calls Wes and says that he needs to give himself up and that he wants Wes to handle the negotiations. Wes agrees to meet Mark and puts his life at risk in a final belief that Mark is truly repentant and that he will finally do the right thing. This belief in their friendship ultimately costs Wes dearly and almost results in his death.

Greed

Greed is at the heart of the main story line though it is a secondary theme to the personalities of Mark and Wes. Trang and his client exhibit one example of greed in their quest for money. Trang's client seems to feel that the Catholic Church will pay up a great deal of money in order to keep the scandal of a priest who carried on an affair with a woman and her daughter quiet. Trang is offered a small settlement but declines, believing that he can get a much larger settlement. This results in Mark's anger which costs Trang his life. Mark himself is also greedy in his desire to have his own way in every aspect of his life. For example, he wants to retain his main client—the Catholic Church—so much that he is willing to commit murder in an attempt to do that. Mark's desire seems to be based not so much on his greed for money as for his greed to continue his current life and lifestyle. The possibility of losing this influential client drives Mark to extremes and he is unwilling to give up anything that he desires.

Style

Point of View

The story is written in third person from an omniscient point of view, though that perspective is sometimes limited as a part of the literary attempt to misdirect the reader. For example, there is a point at which Mark and Wes are together and then Mark is at a cliff beside the ocean and then at home without Wes. The author leaves this as an open scene without giving the reader closure until two chapters later when the story reverts back to explain what happened to Wes from a point of view other than Mark's. The omniscient point of view is the only option available to this writer because there are several characters that hold the stage for specific scenes. There is no one character that has a view of all the action all the time. An interesting aspect of the author's use of perspective is that the reader is sometimes left in the dark about the outcome of a particular scene. The author uses this method to build suspense. For example, Christina is in labor and telephones the Rape Crisis Center in search of Sam. When she is unable to reach Sam, Diane goes to Christina's side and then on to the hospital with her. However, the reader learns that Diane is headed for Christina's motel and then learns nothing more about that situation for some time.

Setting

The story is set in California, presumably around the time of the writing in 1997. The story does seem slightly dated for that time, mainly by the distinct lack of cellular telephones. When Sam is looking to tell Glitsky her fears about Wes's safety, she pages him. He receives the page and goes to a pay phone to return the call. With the exception of the cell phones, the story is written in terms that mean the time could be almost anything after the 1980s. There are no real discussions of technology that would further date the story. The physical setting is San Francisco, California. There are descriptions of several specific settings, including Mark's house, Wes's apartment and the Rape Crisis Center. These are described in such a way that they could very well be real, adding an element of believability to the story. The overall setting of San Francisco is real, as is a park that is the setting for several scenes—the Golden Gate Park. This fact also lends credibility to the story.

Language and Meaning

The storyline is convoluted and the pace of the story is incredibly slow. The author takes more than one hundred pages to fully introduce the characters to the point that the first murder occurs. The action unfolds very slowly and some readers may become bored before the storyline fully develops. The language is fairly straight forward and any reader with an average vocabulary will likely be able to keep track of the events. There are several points at which the language reverts to curse words but these are used in



dialogue or thought situations and are in keeping with the realism of the characters. The story is billed as a "legal thriller" but it should be noted that the reader interested in high-profile courtroom drama will likely be disappointed. There are only a few scenes within the courtroom. The majority of the story is actually centered around the main character, Mark Doohar, and his sociopathic tendencies. The court action, in comparison to the full length of the book, is a minor part of the storyline. The main plot—the sociopathic killer who gets away with murder though several people come to know of his guilt—is somewhat undermined by the subplots. There is a young woman who fears her inability to make a commitment and who deals with the fears of her parents because she has not developed a stable relationship. There is also a friend who fears the loss of friendship almost as much as he fears the fact that the man he has called "friend" for most of his life is actually a sociopathic and cold-blooded killer.

Structure

The story is divided into fifty-four chapters of greatly varying lengths with an average of six to eight pages. There are some chapters that range longer, up to about twelve or fourteen pages. The chapters are not named and are only identified by number. Within the chapters, there are subsections. These are split apart from other sections only by a blank line. These are generally used to divide specific events. For example, the scene in the hospital room after the birth of Christina's baby is the beginning of a chapter. Within that scene, there are subsections that generally divide the thoughts and actions of specific characters. A very notable point of this division happens when Diane thinks to herself that she believes Mark will kill the child. The important part of this and other points of the story is that she may or may not have truly believed this. Diane certainly wanted revenge, and this may have been her way of justifying her action at the moment. The story is presented in roughly chronological order though there are some specific exceptions. For example, the reader does not learn what happened to Wes during his encounter with Mark until later and his fate is described later during a conversation between Glitsky and Thieu.



Quotes

"She wasn't going to let herself think it was anything to do with the baby she'd lost, with her past. Not that again. That was behind her and she wasn't going to let it get to her anymore. It was the events of the morning, that was all. She'd just toughen up. That was it, that was what she'd do," Chapter 4, p. 39.

"The fucking chintzy little fifteen-hundred-dollar, quarter-carat trinket—he wanted to rip it off her finger, stomp it under his foot, slap her silly for accepting the stupid thing. But he wasn't going to do that. He was going to smile and say, 'It's really nice Christina. I'm happy for both of you,'" Chapter 8, p. 84.

"Dooher wasn't prepared to be a loser, however. Not to this little upstart gook. That wasn't going to happen. Not now. Not ever," Chapter 9, p. 110.

"The past twenty-five years of Wes's professional life had been spent in the mud and trenches of criminal law, taking on the causes and cases of seemingly endless process of people who'd been careless, negligent, drunk, stoned, or stupid—strangely, rarely malicious—and who found themselves called to answer for their mistakes and misdeeds. He didn't often torture himself with whether any of his clients had done what they'd been accused of," Chapter 23, p. 274.

"Dooher was white and male. Stories appeared where people who had known him (whom he'd fired) recounted his insensitive remarks about his own lesbian daughter. There were no gay attorneys in the firm he ran. He must be homophobic. No women had made partner in his firm, either. He was on record as being anti-abortion," Chapter 30, p. 342.

"How can I phrase my response so that it's both powerful and unambiguous and yet subtle and sensitive? Ahh, the words are coming to me: Are you out of your fucking mind?" Chapter 30, p. 345.

"You're telling me you've got Mark killing his wife, risking a murder trial and life in prison, all on the remote chance that he'll be free to have me, who has made to commitment to him? You flatter me, but please," Chapter 34, p. 402.

"Mark Dooher, in his tuxedo, was in his element, among friends. The room, like the people in it, was elegantly turned out," Chapter 39, p. 457.

"She did not factor in the insatiable maw of the media, the hot-button buzz of her story, the fact that she was attractive, articulate and intelligent," Chapter 43, p. 505.

"He had worked tirelessly to convince the good people of this jury that he was a man of honor, worthy of their trust. And now he was going to lie to them. God help him, he had to do it. 'This case is different,' he said. 'Once in a career, a guy like me gets a chance to tell a jury that his client isn't just not guilty, but that he's innocent,'" Chapter 43, p. 517.



"Maybe this darkness had always been there and it had taken these troubles to make it visible," Chapter 44, p. 530.

"Mark Doohar was a dangerous man who studied his prey. He knew Trang worked alone and would meet him alone. He'd known Sheila would never refuse a drink—even a mickey—that he put in her hand. He knew Farrell was an idealist who believed in the goodness of man, in confession's healing power, in forgiveness," Chapter 50, p. 588.



Topics for Discussion

Describe Mark Doohar's life. What is it about his personality that makes it obvious that he is a sociopath with no conscience?

What is the relationship between Mark and Wes? How does this relationship create problems for Wes? What is it about Wes's personality that makes this particularly problematic?

Who is Diane Price? How does her path originally cross with Mark's? How do they again come into contact? What is the significance of this situation? Describe the final scene between Diane and Mark. How does Diane justify her final actions toward Mark? What does Glitsky say?

Who is Levon Copes? How does the fact that Copes is released and not held responsible for his crime impact the case against Mark Doohar?

Who are Mark's victims? How do the characters come to be involved with Mark? Glitsky believes Christina will be Mark's next victim. Could this have been the case?

Describe the case against Mark for the murder of Trang. Describe the case against him for the murder of Sheila. Compare the two.

Who is Jim Flaherty? What is the role of Flaherty in Mark's life? How do the actions of Flaherty impact Mark's actions?