

Mistress Study Guide

Mistress by James Patterson

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Plot Summary

In *Mistress* by James Patterson, newspaper editor Benjamin Casper gets caught up in the danger of political blackmail. He tries to prove that his friend, Diana Hotchkiss, did not kill herself. As Ben delves deeper into her death, he learns Diana is not dead at all. Instead, she is part of a scheme to rebuild the old Soviet Union. Along with his friend's true identity, Ben also learns the truth about the death of his mother, the role his father played in this murder, and why his father set him up as the killer.

As the story begins, Benjamin has just left Diana's apartment when he sees her fall from her balcony. Ben does not believe that his friend killed herself and decides to find out the truth. He attends Diana's visitation in her hometown of Madison, Wisconsin. On his way home, his plane crashes, an act that he believes was meant to look like an accident but was instead an attempt to kill him. He tries to hide out at his cabin on Lake Anna only to have armed men try to kill him there as well. His friend, Ellis Burk, shows Ben crime scene photos of Diana's murder, which help Ben know that it was not Diana who was killed. Ellis tries to help Ben in his investigation but is shot and killed.

With the expertise of a professor of Russian descent, Ben begins to piece together the plans the Russians have to blackmail the President of the United States into allowing them to invade the Republic of Georgia, the first step to rebuilding the old Soviet Union. Ben realizes that Diana was not killed. A friend who had stayed at her apartment was killed in Diana's place. It was Diana who filmed the blackmail tape, a sexual encounter between herself and the First Lady, that the Russians hope to use against the President.

It is not until after he is arrested that Benjamin realizes that the deputy director of the CIA has not told the President what is going on with the Russians. After Benjamin tells the President what has happened, the deputy director is forced to hand in his resignation. Ben is absolved of any responsibility in any of the crimes.



Chapters 1-8

Summary

In Chapter 1, Benjamin searches through Diana's apartment. He discovers that she is on anti-anxiety medicine and birth control. A search through the closet uncovers a hoard of shoes and sex toys. The man, who appears to be dating Diana, plants two bugs, one in the form of an AC adapter and one in the form of a smoke detector, in her apartment. He leaves her apartment and slips out the fire escape just as he hears her key in the door.

In Chapter 2, Benjamin walks to the front of Diana's apartment and chats with a couple of guys about his bike before leaving. He looks up at Diana's balcony one last time to wish her a good night and sees a body falling from the balcony.

In Chapter 3, Benjamin realizes that Diana is dead, that she has killed herself. He vomits on the street and wonders why he didn't see the signs. Some others notice that he is freaking out and try to help him but he gets on his bike and rides away.

In Chapter 4, Benjamin drives recklessly trying to get home for his medicine. He is finally ordered by a cop to pull over.

In Chapter 5, the cop recognizes Benjamin from his job with the Capital Beat. Benjamin tells him that he's upset from a fight with his girlfriend. The cop cites him for reckless driving and lets him go. Benjamin, however, realizes he's been seen near Diana's home less than an hour after her death.

In Chapter 6, Benjamin gets up from dreaming all night. He still hasn't taken his medicine. He showers and tries to concentrate because he knows that he has to go back to Diana's apartment that morning.

In Chapter 7, Benjamin arrives at Diana's apartment building to find a cop looking up at her balcony. He brings his bike to a dead stop, catching the officer's attention. Instead of responding to the officer's questions, Benjamin acts as if he is pulling something from behind his back, causing the cop to reach for his revolver.

In Chapter 8, Benjamin pulls out his press pass, and the cop relaxes. He will not give out any information, but Benjamin gets the impression that Diana's death is being treated as a homicide. He also notices two men watching him and the cop as they talk.

Analysis

Bizarre is one word that comes to mind after completing these first few chapters of the novel *Mistress*. Benjamin, the narrator of the novel, appears to have a relationship with Diana but also has some sort of job requiring him to help out someone who wants to



spy on her. When he first appears, Benjamin is snooping in Diana's apartment and installing surveillance devices. He's been told to be out of the apartment before 10 p.m. What is most significant is the high tech equipment that he has for his job and the amount of thought that he puts into the devices that he installs in her apartment.

Benjamin seems terribly disturbed when a body, presumably Diana's since he doesn't actually see her face, falls from Diana's balcony. He's disturbed enough that he nearly causes a traffic accident on his way home. He keeps mentioning a need to take his medication as well as some instances in his past that would have made it difficult for him to grow up a normal adult. He indicates something that happened with his mother that should have left him damaged but the details are not discussed. Benjamin is apparently a reporter, as he has a press pass. He indicates that his wealthy grandfather owns the company of which his paper is a part.

Other unusual aspects of Benjamin's personality are the movie tidbits and presidential – that are constantly on his mind. He indicates that his mind has a tendency to wander but in reality it just seems full of interesting but useless information. Along with the trivia, however, Benjamin's mind does seem to have a paranoid tilt as he is suspicious of the panel van outside his house, the Lexus sedan across from Diana's apartment and the cop who repeats his name several times as if committing it to memory. He also seems obsessed with crime as one of the first things he thinks about when he is stopped by the cop on his way home is that he has placed himself near Diana's home within an hour after her death. This is an unusual thought for an innocent man to be worried about his alibi on the night that a friend kills herself.

Discussion Question 1

What is Benjamin doing in Diana's apartment at the beginning of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think the body that fell from Diana's balcony is actually hers? Explain your reasoning.

Discussion Question 3

It is clear that there is something wrong with Benjamin. What do you think it is? Explain your reasoning.

Vocabulary

enigma, meticulously, secluded, proactive, perpetrator, concede, duplicative, impotence, brandish, ambidextrous



Chapters 9-16

Summary

In Chapter 9, Benjamin and Diana were only friends, not lovers. She had asked him to put the surveillance equipment in her apartment. Although he believes the footage on the video will tell the story, he is afraid to go to the police as he had left her apartment just minutes before she fell. He believes this will make him the prime suspect.

In Chapter 10, Benjamin wakes from a dream where he is being forced to shoot himself. He hasn't slept well since Diana's death. He is afraid that he is being set up as a suspect for her murder. Despite his fear, Benjamin decides to attend her visitation in Madison, Wisconsin.

In Chapter 11, Benjamin prepares his plane for the flight to Wisconsin. He is thinking about President Kennedy's fascination with the poem "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" when he almost hits another plane. He forces himself to concentrate.

In Chapter 12, at the visitation, Ben talks to a former friend of Diana's who has her background all wrong as far as Ben knows.

In Chapter 13, Ben meets Diana's parents and her brother. She has never mentioned him to them. He continues to notice the woman in the black suit. In his mind, he compares her to the detective that attended his mother's funeral. Only the detective at his mother's funeral only paid attention to him.

In Chapter 14, Ben attends the after party at Jack's Pub. Diana's brother continues to push him until he admits that he knows Diana didn't work at a PR firm but that was what she told everyone so he wasn't going to make a fuss. He also tells Randy he knows about the summer that Diana sent him to a rehab program. At this, the brother cries. He tells Ben if he wants information he needs to talk to Jonathan Liu, the man with whom she was sleeping.

In Chapter 15, Ben flies out of the Dane County Regional Airport but his engine stalls and won't restart.

In Chapter 16, after making an emergency landing in a pasture, Ben realizes that someone has put jet fuel in his plane. He believes that someone is trying to kill him. He believes that Liu knows who it might be.

Analysis

Although Ben is still rattled in this portion of the novel, his thought patterns don't seem as bizarre as in the first section. He firmly believes that Diana has been murdered and that whoever murdered her is also trying to kill him. This theory seems plausible as



Ben's plane is filled with jet fuel which causes the engines to shut down on his way home. Luckily, Ben is able to land the plane in a pasture. The poem "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" and the saying murder can be made to look like suicide and suicide to look like murder, continue to run through his head.

As Ben attends Diana's wake, he relates more information about his mother's death. He knows the lady in the corner is a detective by the way she continues to watch all of the people entering the funeral parlor. He remembers a detective acting similarly at his mother's wake. The difference is that at this mother's wake, the detective seemed to have a distinct interest in Ben's role in his mother's death. It even appears that it might have been suspected that Ben, who was still a young child at the time, was responsible for her death.

The plot thickens, so to speak, when Ben realizes that Diana has told her friends in Wisconsin a different story about her life in Washington than what she was actually living. He lies, trying to go along with Diana's girlfriend, until Diana's brother calls him on the lie. When Ben assumes correctly and tells the brother that he knows Diana's real story, the brother lightens up. He gives Ben a name, Jonathan Liu, to ask about the cause of Diana's death.

Discussion Question 1

How does Ben know so much about the process for a funeral when murder is suspected as the cause of death? In what ways is Diana's death similar to his mother's?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Benjamin's plane crash? Who does he think is responsible?

Discussion Question 3

Why might someone be trying to set Ben up as a suspect in Diana's murder?

Vocabulary

submission, amnesia, anonymously, pigment, dour, cognizant, loitering, premise, espionage, diminutive, furtive



Chapters 17-24

Summary

In Chapter 17, the time after Benjamin's crash is confusing for him. He remembers a nurse that he thinks looks like Demi Moore and a representative from the National Transportation Safety Board who asks him if he was suicidal. The following morning, Benjamin is more alert, remembering that someone killed Diana and is now trying to kill him. He tells the nurse he is leaving.

In Chapter 18, Benjamin decides it would be safer for him to stay at his lake cabin but forgets to get his keys. He has to break in a kitchen window but feels safe once he is inside. He wonders how long he will be safe there.

In Chapter 19, Benjamin settles in to research Liu on his computer. Although it's storming outside, he believes he hears noises like furniture being moved. He sneaks downstairs and sees that the patio door is open.

In Chapter 20, two men have broken into the house. They shoot automatic rifles into the bathroom, believing that Benjamin is there. They hear him leave down the staircase. Once on the deck, he vaults over the deck railing to the ground.

In Chapter 21, using skills he learned as a triathlete, Benjamin swims to his neighbor's dock. All the while, he's thinking about the police trying to question him about his mother's death. He insinuates that the police will try to blame Benjamin.

In Chapter 22, Benjamin takes his friend's Jeep but meets his intended killers on the road, they follow him in what he guesses is an SUV shooting at the Jeep until he makes an unexpected left turn. The SUV goes off the road.

In Chapter 23, instead of trying to get away that night, Benjamin gathers some clothes and stays in a motel. He arranges a booby trap in case anyone tries to come in his room. He tries to sleep but doesn't until several hours later. He is having a strange dream about movies when he realizes his booby trap has been tripped.

In Chapter 24, Benjamin can see no one standing outside his door. He decides he has to get the surveillance tapes from Diana's apartment to learn who pushed her off the balcony. His phone signals that he has a text message. It is from an unknown sender but has a photo of Diana's brother who is dead of a gunshot. The text says that Randy could not stop asking questions and asks if Benjamin can.

Analysis

Another death has apparently taken place in this section of the novel as Benjamin receives a text message showing a picture of Diana's brother dead of a gunshot wound.



As these people seem intent on covering their tracks, it appears that Benjamin might be correct in believing that Diana's death was a murder. Benjamin has already survived two attempts on his life, first the plane crash and second the shooting at his lake cabin. As Benjamin has mentioned several times in his novel, the plane crash might have been set up to look like a suicide as even the people from the NISTB ask Benjamin if he was trying to kill himself. Hence his saying murder can be made to look like suicide and suicide made to look like murder.

Note also in the section that Benjamin moves away from just thinking about movie clips and quips into actually doing the actions he has seen in the movies. The booby trap with the keys and the mirrors, for instance, is something that he picked up from a movie.

Finally, in this section it is learned that Benjamin did not like his father, who was a drunk and a history professor. His mother used to retreat to the bathroom to cry. He remembers times that his father would scare him so badly that he would lie and say he was going for a bike ride when he was actually going to a friend's house to hide out. As Benjamin is trying to escape the men trying to shoot him, he thinks about his mother's death. Apparently he was the one who found his mother as the detective asks him if she was breathing when he found her. He also remembers his father telling him not to talk to the cops as they would try to pin his mother's death on him.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Benjamin go to his lake house instead of his own apartment after the plane crash?

Discussion Question 2

At this point, who does Benjamin believe killed Diana and is now trying to kill him? Who do you think is responsible?

Discussion Question 3

What does Benjamin believe that he will find if he is able to get the surveillance video from Diana's house?

Vocabulary

sentimental, ergo, ferocity, plaintive, emanating, breach, negotiated, centrifugal, strategically, algorithm



Chapters 25-32

Summary

In Chapter 25, Benjamin goes to Diana's apartment for his surveillance equipment but discovers the camera and recorder have been taken from the smoke detector and the AC adapter in her bedroom is gone.

In Chapter 26, Benjamin attends a scheduled press conference. He is surprised to hear the president mention his sadness at Diana's death. He wonders what Diana did that warranted a mention in a nationally televised press conference.

In Chapter 27, after the press conference, Benjamin goes to Liu's office. He gives the receptionist a variety of reasons why he wants to see the man before finally telling her that he's planning to go to press with a story about how Liu killed a senior White House staffer. He is allowed inside.

In Chapter 28, two large Chinese men escort Benjamin down a back elevator to a parking garage where he is put into a limousine. Even though the driver takes a circumambulatory route, Benjamin realizes they are going to the Chinese embassy.

In Chapter 29, Benjamin is taken into an interview room in the embassy. Two Chinese men try to determine what he knows, then tell him that they have copies of the files concerning his mother's death even though these files are sealed. Benjamin knows these files could be incriminating since his fingerprints were found on the gun that killed his mother.

In Chapter 30, Benjamin goes to visit a friend of his in the MPD's Second District. He learns the case had originally been in that department but had been confiscated by the CIA. Ellis suggests that if Benjamin is connected with the case, he should lie low for awhile but Benjamin says that he will go nowhere. When Benjamin asks, Ellis admits that the CIA didn't take everything associated with the case.

In Chapter 31, when Benjamin sees the crime scene photos, he realizes that it is not Diana who was killed that night. Diana had a butterfly tattoo on her ankle. The woman in the photo does not.

In Chapter 32, as Benjamin leaves, he thinks about the two women in the blue compact car who left before the ambulance arrived to care for Diana. He suddenly knows where he must go. He books a flight for Madison, Wisconsin.

Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Benjamin learns that Diana is not really dead. He doesn't share his information with the police officer who has shown him the crime scene



photos, but he knows that Diana had a butterfly tattoo on her ankle, something that the dead person does not have. He leaves and immediately books a flight back to Diana's hometown. It is assumed that something that the officer said about the witness statements connected with something that Benjamin saw or heard in Madison.

Although the Chinese senator might not have been responsible for having Diana murdered, or having it appear that Diana was murdered, it seems that they might have some interest in what happened. They threaten Benjamin when he tells them that he plans to write a story about the death. Although his mother's death records have been sealed. These Chinese men tell him that they've arranged to have the records re-opened. Since Ben's fingerprints were found on his mother's gun, it appears that the re-opening of these records could be incriminating for Benjamin. When he asks the Chinese men why he has been brought to the embassy for questioning if they are not connected with Diana's death. The men tell him only that he has not been to the embassy. This means that if he tries to use their interview as proof of wrong doing, they will deny he was ever there, making it his word against theirs.

The story of the murder of a woman, intended to appear like Diana's murder, deepens. More clues are also given about Ben's mother's death. It appears that his mother died of a gunshot wound in her bathroom. The detectives questioned Benjamin, even arrested him for his mother's murder because his fingerprints were discovered on the gun that killed his mother.

Discussion Question 1

How is Benjamin incriminating himself by returning to Diana's house?

Discussion Question 2

Did you doubt that it was really Diana that was killed? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think that Benjamin decided to go back to Diana's hometown? What do you think he hopes to find there?

Vocabulary

vestige, diversion, coiffed, disheveled, presumptive, tenuous, bombastic, recoil, incoherent, antidote



Chapters 33-40

Summary

In Chapter 33, Benjamin visits Diana's parents. He tells them that he does not believe Diana is dead and that the two women who got there first were planted to make sure the dead woman's face was covered. He tells them they can find out for sure if the dead woman is Diana or not by demanding that the federal government release her body.

In Chapter 34, two men attack Benjamin in the men's restroom at the airport. They warn him that if he doesn't call Diana's parents and tell them he made a mistake, they will be killed. Benjamin tries to tell the men that he doesn't plan to stop but they have already left the room.

In Chapter 35, Benjamin convinces Hotchkiss to hold off on his request for Diana's body, telling him that he's just gotten threats that the Hotchkisses will be killed if they persist. As he is trying to leave the airport terminal, he is blocked in by Liu who is a passenger in a limousine.

In Chapter 36, Liu gives Benjamin a clue, indicating he should be doing his digging at the White House. He also tells Benjamin he knew nothing of the trouble he'd had until now, but that he wants away from Benjamin even more knowing how much trouble he's had as he is afraid he will wind up dead.

In Chapter 37, Benjamin stops by his newspaper office to pick up fresh clothes he's had his secretary buy for him. He showers and is getting ready to leave when the receptionist tells him that Anne Brennan (whom Benjamin recognizes as Diana's best friend) wants to see him.

In Chapter 38, Anne tells Benjamin the CIA has been hounding her wanting information about Diana. When Benjamin asks if she held anything back, she says that she didn't tell them about the Russian.

In Chapter 39, Anne tells Benjamin about Diana's Russian boyfriend Alex Kutuzov. She had once promised Diana she would not mention him and intended to keep her promise. However, she told Benjamin because Diana said he was trustworthy. Benjamin tries to calm Anne by telling her that everything will be all right. He makes a vow to himself to make sure that nothing happens to her.

In Chapter 40, Benjamin walks up to Liu's home. He plans a question and answer session for the man, on Benjamin's terms this time.



Analysis

The further Benjamin goes in uncovering the secrets of his friend's suspected murder, the more questions he actually raises. He discovers that Diana actually had more than one love interest, information that makes him feel devalued. Benjamin also gets the sense that there are two different sets of people who are trying to threaten him into silence. He interprets Liu's fear as they talk to one another but he comes away with the feeling that it was not Liu who tried to have him killed. He believes that Liu has the armed man in his car only to ensure that Benjamin will leave when Liu wants him to. Benjamin feels the men who beat him up in the bathroom at the airport also did not intend to kill him, only scare him. Still, he does take any chances, he calls Mr. Hotchkiss and warns him about the threats on his life and his wife's life. Benjamin, however, does believe that the men who came to his lake cabin did intend to kill him. He wants to know who it was who sent the men who attempted to kill him.

Also in this section of the novel, Benjamin learns that Diana had more than one love interest. Not only was she involved with Liu, she was also involved with a Russian named Alex. Benjamin is unsure what to think of Diana's lascivious behavior, but he wonders now if she saw him only as a puppy who followed her about. It is Diana's best friend who tells Benjamin about Diana's second love interest, saying that Diana had told her that Benjamin was the only man whom she felt she could trust.

Notice how Benjamin has become much more lucid and rational as the novel progresses. While he seemed very strange and disconnected in the first chapters, Benjamin seems to have pulled himself together and is better handling the stress that he is under. His plane has crashed; he's learned his friend (whom he thought he saw commit suicide) is still alive; he's been beaten up, threatened and briefly kidnapped; but, he seems to be more together than he did before all of the stressful events took place.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that the CIA is hammering Diana's best friend?

Discussion Question 2

How is Benjamin handling the stress that he is under? Has his demeanor changed since the beginning of the novel?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think that Benjamin will achieve by going to Liu's house? Do you think that his visit will be productive? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

ghoulish, concession, formidable, nattily, retort, paramours



Chapters 41-48

Summary

In Chapter 41, Benjamin breaks into Liu's house. When he walks upstairs, he smells gunpowder, a smell that brings back memories of his childhood. He had come home early to find his mother dead of a gunshot wound. He father is taking something out of the bathroom in a garbage bag. He takes Benjamin, who has come into the room, to his bedroom and locks him up until he can stage the murder to look like a suicide by putting the gun in Ben's mother's hand. He finds Liu with half his head blown off. Ben knows there will be a faked suicide note somewhere.

In Chapter 42, Benjamin pokes around Liu's room, finding the suicide note typed on Liu's laptop computer. Before leaving, he takes the computer with him.

In Chapter 43, it begins raining after Benjamin leaves Liu's home. As Ben drives, his mind replays the questions he asked his father about his mother's death. Although evidence makes it seem like Ben killed her, his father says that it was suicide. He takes a turn too quickly and lays his bike down on the road. Although the bike isn't damaged, the screen on Liu's computer is shattered.

In Chapter 44, Benjamin meets with Anne again to ask if she has neglected to tell him anything. He even prompts her by asking about Operation Delano. She says she heard Diana mention the name once. Benjamin doesn't tell Anne that he believes Diana is a spy for the US government.

In Chapter 45, Ellis goes with Benjamin to AK Collectibles. The man who sees them says that Mr. Kutuzov is not there but gives them a card for a lawyer. Ellis asks to hear from Mr. Kutuzov or his lawyer. The man agrees to pass the message along.

In Chapter 46, Benjamin calls Ashley Brook. She asks if he wants her to search for information on Operation Delano yet but he tells her to continue to hold off. He also says that he and Ellis have a meeting with Kutuzov's attorney.

In Chapter 47, as they are driving to Kutuzov's attorney's office, Ellis and Benjamin are attacked by gunfire. Ellis is killed.

In Chapter 48, after paramedics in an ambulance pronounce that Benjamin is going to be okay, a police officer who introduces herself as Detective Liz Larkin puts handcuffs on Benjamin. She tells him that he's under arrest. When he asks the charges, she tells him that she will come up with something.



Analysis

Two more murders have taken place. First, Liu has been killed and his death made to look like a suicide. After looking at the house, however, Benjamin seems to doubt that his death was self-inflicted. The bullet wound came from below his head and the tone of the suicide note doesn't fit what Benjamin believes that Liu was feeling after Diana's death. The note implies regret while Benjamin knows that Liu was just scared. Also killed in this section of chapters is Ellis, the detective who was trying to help Benjamin in figuring out the crime. Since the shooter kept the two of them from going to see Kutuzov's attorney, it is assumed that whomever had Ellis killed did not want them getting any information from the attorney.

Additionally, the reader finally learns more about what happened to Benjamin's mother. Ben comes home to find his mother dead in the bathroom. His father is carrying something out of the bathroom in trash bags. It is assumed that Ben's father killed his mother and is trying to make it appear as a suicide. What is strange is that Ben's father allows his son to hug his mother, instructing him to take the gun from her hand, then put it back. This explains how Ben's fingerprints got on the gun. While on the stand, however, Ben's father testifies that he believes his wife's death was a suicide. He says that he doesn't think that Ben had anything to do with it.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Ben's father have him touch the gun that killed his mother?

Discussion Question 2

Why are Ellis and Benjamin targeted on their way to Kutuzov's office?

Discussion Question 3

In your opinion, what is Operation Delano?

Vocabulary

premise, prone, penance, ballistics, decedent, antagonistic



Chapters 49-56

Summary

In Chapter 49, Detective Larkin questions Benjamin about his story. He has to concentrate to keep his mind from wandering to cop movies. At the end of their interview, Larkin offers to give Benjamin her theory of his story. He believes that he needs a lawyer.

In Chapter 50, as Larkin describes her take of Benjamin's actions, he realizes that he has been set up. Whoever killed Diana made sure he was in the apartment before hand and that he hung around until the murder took place. They even knew that he would visit Liu at his house. Benjamin realizes he's been playing into their hands all along.

In Chapter 51, hanging out at a bar, Benjamin gets a phone call from Ashley Brook telling him that the techies at the newspaper think they can pull the information off Liu's computer.

In Chapter 52, when Benjamin goes to check on his townhouse, he discovers the MPD have a car parked outside. Larkins comes out the home's front door and down the stairs as he watches.

In Chapter 53, as Benjamin watches the cops move things out of his house, he calls Ashley Brook and asks for Fast Eddie's number. He's decided it's time to call a lawyer.

In Chapter 54, Benjamin has a meeting with Craig Carney, CIA Deputy Director. He asks Carney if Diana is alive and Carney avoids the question. Ben believes Carney knows something because he made time for an appointment at the last minute. At the end of the chapter he tells Carney he is about to tell him why Carney will help him.

In Chapter 55, Benjamin reveals that he knows that Carney had an affair with Diana. He insinuates that it would look bad if it were made public that Carney had an affair with a woman who killed herself. Benjamin believes that he has shaken Carney. He leaves, telling Carney he has 24 hours to give him answers before the story goes to press.

In Chapter 56, Ben writes a draft of the story he promised Carney he'd print and sends it to him. He also puts his battery back in his phone long enough to check his messages. One from Anne sounds upset. Someone has threatened to kill her. Benjamin hurries to meet her.

Analysis

Even after he is arrested and interviewed in connection with Diana and Liu's deaths, Benjamin continues to dig for information about Diana. He has turned his attention to Carney, who is the deputy director of the CIA. Benjamin believes the man had an affair



with Diana and might give him information about her if he is afraid his reputation would be ruined.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ben believe that it is Carney who might have had an affair with Diana?

Discussion Question 2

Who do you think has threatened Anne?

Discussion Question 3

What makes Ben decide he needs to get a lawyer?

Vocabulary

sabotages, subsidizing, insular, philanthropy, idiom, provocative, bated, stoic, nomadic



Chapters 57-63

Summary

In Chapter 57, Benjamin goes to Anne's apartment. She tells him the two men forced their way in and threatened to rape and kill her if Ben didn't stop. Ben is furious. Anne says she knows she has no right to ask him to stop asking questions. He tells her that he will think of something.

In Chapter 58, Benjamin talks to George Hotchkiss on the phone. George asks him to stop pursuing Diana's killer. He says that he still have a wife and wants to keep it that way. Benjamin knows that someone has gotten to him.

In Chapter 59, Benjamin sees his lawyer for the first time. Eddie tells Ben that it doesn't look good for them. The police found traces of carpet fiber from Diana's apartment as well as Liu's apartment in Benjamin's house. The police are saying Ben killed Liu the same way Ben killed his mother. They also found Liu's wallet in Ben's house, and Liu's credit card had been used that evening to buy a plane ticket, meaning it was taken to Ben's house after the murder. Ben knows that he's been set up. Eddie tells him the police have said that he doesn't turn himself in by the end of the day, they will issue warrants for his arrest. Eddie begs with Ben to turn himself in the same way Diana's father and Anne begged him to give up his hunt for whoever killed Diana.

In Chapter 60, Ben calls Craig Carney. He requests that the man meet him at the Washington Monument to give him any information he might have decided to share. Carney is to be wearing a Nationals baseball cap and waving a pennant.

In Chapter 61, Ben checks out Carney at the Washington Monument. He tests him to see if there are people with him. He realizes there are. When he asks Carney about these people though Carney tells him the truth so Ben gives him his real location.

In Chapter 62, Carney tells Ben that he never had an affair with Diana but Ben doesn't believe him. He tells Ben that he could explain why the things that are happening are happening and that Ben would understand everything. For reasons of national security, he can't tell Ben these things, but he is going to make him "an offer he can't refuse."

In Chapter 63, Carney promises Ben that if he stops asking questions, all of the charges against him will go away. Although he knows he'll be an idiot for saying no, Ben tells Carney he wants twenty-four hours to think over the proposition.

Analysis

Although he's been set up for the murders of two people and is also charged with having a part in the death of a police officer, Ben is offered a deal by the assistant director of the CIA that will make all of these charges go away. Ben knows that he would



be a fool to not accept Carney's offer. However, at the same time, he wants to think about what the man has told him. Being a reporter, he has brought along a recording device and has recorded everything that Carney has said so that he can listen to it again later and try to digest better what he's being offered. This is the reason why he asks for the twenty-four hours to give an answer.

Notice the way that Carney compares himself to the same freedom fighters who made their stands for freedom in the National Mall. Although he doesn't believe his case is on the same level of that as Martin Luther King Jr., he does recognize that he is fighting the United States government. Carney tells Ben things are happening around him that deal with national security, and that if he were to tell Ben exactly what he has been involved with, it would breach this security. Ben has the choice to either take Carney's word or continue going down a path that will get him put in prison, possibly sentenced to death.

While the murder/suicide of his mother has been a significant thread in this story for Ben since the beginning, it is also becoming a significant part of the evidence against him as well. Although his mother's death was ultimately ruled a suicide, there are enough questions associated with it that it has been opened a re-examined. It has been re-examined by the government and police for sure and also, apparently, by the people who are trying to kill Ben and set him up for murder. Specifically, Liu's murder is staged to look just like his mother's death. For this reason investigators are being led to believe that it was Ben who committed both of these murders when, in reality, he did not commit either of them.

Discussion Question 1

In what ways is Ben going about his investigation in a more intelligent manner?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Ben believe that he has been set up for the murder of Diana and Liu?

Discussion Question 3

How do you think that Ben will respond to Carney's offer?

Vocabulary

circuitous, defamation, tenuous



Chapters 64-70

Summary

In Chapter 64, Ben decides during Ellis' memorial service that he owes it to his friend's family to uncover why the man died. He calls Carney and tells him that he is not taking the deal.

In Chapter 65, Ben goes to Anne's house and tells her that he wants her to go out of town, take a vacation, on him, so he will know that she is safe. Against his will, the two move closer together on the couch.

In Chapter 66, the two have sex. Afterward, Ben tells Anne that doesn't change anything. He still wants her to go someplace that she will be safe. Anne, however, tells him that the rules have changed. If he is in, she is in.

In Chapter 67, Ben calls Ashley Brook to see if there has been any progress made on Liu's computer. So far, it is still being worked on. She does tell him that a private investigator named Sean Patrick Riley came looking for him. The man said he was investigating a missing person. Ben gets his number.

In Chapter 68, the private investigator says he's investigating the death of Nina Jacobs, who Ben recognizes as a friend of Diana's. He realizes it must have been Nina who was killed instead of Diana. He doesn't immediately tell the private investigator this, however.

In Chapter 69, the private investigator tells Ben that for a week before she disappeared, Nina had her mail delivery and paper delivery stopped as if she was going on vacation but that she showed up for work every day. He suspects that she was staying at someone's house. Ben believes it was Diana's house but doesn't tell the private investigator this. The P-I wants Ben to run an article in his paper, hoping to stir up some information. Ben agrees to do so, but only if they work as a team on the investigation.

In Chapter 70, Ben instructs Ashley Brook about the article that he wants placed in the paper. She asks why he hasn't run the article about Carney yet and he tells her that it is because he has not yet been indicted. He believes the CIA is as scared of him as he is of them. He believes that he has stumbled close to an explanation of what is happening.

Analysis

In this section of the novel Ben rejects Carney's offer. While attending Ellis' memorial service, he decides since he is responsible for Ellis' death, it is also up to him to give the family a reason why Ellis was gunned down, to make his death matter. It is also in this section that Ben gets two people who come on board as "helpers." The first of these is the private investigator who is looking into the disappearance of Nina Jacobs. Ben feels



fairly certain that she was the body double who was killed instead of Diana but does not tell Riley this right away, hoping that any information Riley has gathered about Nina could help him find out what has happened to Diana.

Diana's friend Anne also tells Ben that she plans to stick with him instead of going away as he has asked her to do. At this point in the novel, Anne probably views Ben as a comrade, someone she can trust and who will protect her. Similarly, Ben feels he can trust Anne. It might be important to keep in mind, however, that Anne was the one who came to him about Diana's death, just happening to appear in the short time frame that he was in his office. She also uses a phrase similar to the one that Ben used with Carney, that he needed to buckle up for the wild ride. These inferences could mean nothing but they could also mean that Anne is somehow connected with the people who are trying to kill Ben.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ben decide not to take Carney's deal?

Discussion Question 2

What does Ben hope to learn from the private investigator who is looking into Nina's disappearance? Why does he not tell the man what he knows right away?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the significance of Ben's relationship with Anne. Does anything about this relationship seem strange?

Vocabulary

chauvinist, rogue



Chapters 71-77

Summary

In Chapter 71, Ben visits an old Russian professor at American University to see if he can tell him the story of Operation Delano.

In Chapter 72, what Andrei has heard about Operation Delano is that it was the Russians' attempt to blackmail President Roosevelt.

In Chapter 73, Andrei and Ben continue in their discussion of the possible implications of the mention of Operation Delano. It is suggested it may have something to do with the current president having an affair and that the Russians are getting some benefit from blackmailing him.

In Chapter 74, Andrei prompts Ben into realizing that land is the one thing that the Russians want badly enough to blackmail the President. Ben decides it is Georgia that the Russian might want, a country that would be easy for them to overcome with their military, but not so much diplomatically because the country is involved with NATO. Andrei tells Ben he feels the Russians are only going to begin with Georgia to see how other countries react. He believes the Russians plan to rebuild the old soviet bloc.

In Chapter 75, as Ben rides away from the university, his mind is full of thoughts. He thinks of all the time that Diana spent at the White House and her sudden faked death. He realizes that Diana might have been the President's mistress.

In Chapter 76, Ben tries to make a withdrawal from his checking account and learns that his funds have been frozen by the Department of Homeland Security.

In Chapter 77, Ben calls Ashley Brook and learns that the CIA has taken all the computers from the Capital Beat office, including Jonathan Liu's computer. The feds have also put a block on the Capital Beat's accounts and have warned all employees that if they help Ben, they will be charged as co-conspirators.

Analysis

Things go from bad to worse for Ben as he learns that the Feds have shut off his supply of money. Although Carney has not had him arrested, he is putting pressure on him to surrender. Now, life is bad not only for Ben but also for the employees for whom he is responsible.

Ben does feel, however, that he may be getting closer to the truth about Diana's disappearance. He's pieced together, with the help of a professor who came from Russia, that Russia may be trying to put the old Soviet Union back together and is using knowledge of some affair the President might have had in order to blackmail him into



not taking action against them when they invade the neighboring Republic of Georgia. Ben suddenly wonders with Diana's strange disappearance and the hours that she spent working with the President if, perhaps, Diana might have been the President's mistress.

Discussion Question 1

Does it make sense that Diana might have been the President's mistress? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

For what is it that Andrei believes the leaders of Russia are trying to blackmail the President?

Discussion Question 3

What does it mean for Ben that the CIA has taken Liu's laptop from the Capital Beat office?

Vocabulary

permanence, rampant, permutations, cognizant, terminate, co-conspirators



Chapters 78-84

Summary

In Chapter 78, Ben meets Eddie in the parking garage of his law office. Eddie won't give him any money directly, but drops some for him to pick up. He tells Ben he's worked out a deal with the justice department to say that the Capital Beat is only down for repair and maintenance. After hearing what Ben has learned in the last few days, Eddie asks Ben why the government is still scared of him. Ben seems to know why this is, but doesn't tell Eddie.

In Chapter 79, Ben learns that Russia is already working its plans to take over Georgia as he reads a newspaper article stating that the leader of Russia had narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. The Russians are blaming the attempt on the Republic of Georgia.

In Chapter 80, Ben makes an appointment with Edgar Griffin on the premise that he is writing an article about him being one of the "movers and shakers" in the capital. Instead he questions Griffin about Alexander Kutuzov and his negotiations on an oil pipeline in Russia.

In Chapter 81, Griffin tells Ben that if there were to be war between Russia and Georgia, Kutuzov would no longer be required to supply oil to Georgia, in fact, he would be paid not to supply oil. When Ben suggests that Kutuzov had a side deal to help the Russian government blackmail the United States while Russia invaded Georgia Griffin becomes chilly. Ben becomes much less formal with Griffin when he writes down a time and place for Kutuzov to meet him. He also asks Griffin for a cell phone number for Kutuzov, telling him that he has a copy of the video.

In Chapter 82, outside the National's stadium, Ben gets a look at Kutuzov. He jumps in a cab and calls the man from his cell phone.

In Chapter 83, Ben calls Kutuzov instructing him to leave the baseball glove with one thousand dollars in the fingers at lost and found. He tells the man that he gets the glove, he will make arrangements to get Kutuzov the tape, a tape that Ben actually does not have. When he hangs up with Kutuzov, instead of feeling relieved, Ben feel more nervous as Kutuzov tells Ben to sleep with his eyes open until he gets the video.

In Chapter 84, at the National Mall, Benjamin calls Carney telling him about the video. The response he gets from Carney is not what he expected. Carney doesn't seem to know anything about a blackmail video and challenges Ben to have it made public if there is. Ben hangs up quickly.



Analysis

In this section of the novel, Ben tests out his theory that there is a blackmail video of the President and his mistress out floating around. While Kutuzov seems disturbed, comes to meet Ben and leaves a baseball glove as requested, Carney is less motivated by the idea that Ben could let the tape leak. After these differing reactions, Ben wonders if there is really a blackmail tape at all.

Ben has also learned that Kutuzov stands to profit through his pipeline if Russia and Georgia go to war. Kutuzov stands to profit even more if he is able to sell the oil that he would be selling to Georgia to the US at a higher price. It is for this reason that Ben believes there might be a tape of an encounter between the president and his mistress floating around somewhere. If the Russians thought Ben had a copy of this tape, it would explain why they are still trying to kill him even after they have faked Diana's death.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ben think there is a blackmail tape of the President and his mistress?

Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the reactions of Kutuzov and Carney when Ben threatens each with the tape. Why do you think these men act completely differently?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Kutuzov actually left the money in the glove as Ben requested? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

ilk, lucrative, attribute, regime, hypothetical, stoic, consistency, ceding, placate



Chapters 85-91

Summary

In Chapter 85, Ben calls Riley and learns that he has found something in Nina's emails. They arrange a place to meet. As Ben rides his bike to the meeting spot, there is a man who seems to recognize him, he hollers something in Russian into a radio.

In Chapter 86, the Russians chase Ben in a black SUV. Ben's knowledge of the streets and the fact he's riding a bicycle help to give him some time but he can't lose the Russians. They soon start shooting at him. Ben uses his cell phone to call a number and shout two words over and over. He heads down another one way street but this time the SUV doesn't follow him.

In Chapter 87, it turns out that Ben has told the Secret Service that the black SUV is headed toward the White House. They form a barricade on 22nd street, blocking the SUV. Instead of surrendering though, those in the SUV blow it up. Ben is blown off the car that he has climbed up on to watch. Bodies of uniformed officers land all around him because of the blast.

In Chapter 88, as Ben comes back to his senses, he realizes that whomever was in the SUV not only didn't want to be questioned, they didn't want their dead bodies to be recognized.

In Chapter 89, Ben pays another visit to Andrei. The older man once told Benjamin that if he ever felt he was in trouble to come to him. Ben now takes his friend up on that offer.

In Chapter 90, Andrei tells Ben that he was an American patriot before he ever lived in America. Ben asks what was on the video.

In Chapter 91, Andrei tells Ben that he believes the video contains something personal that could be embarrassing to the president but doesn't seem to know exactly what. He helps Ben to understand that the Russians killed Liu because they don't want the Chinese getting their hands on the tape because the Chinese would make it public, take away its power as a blackmail tool.

Analysis

While riding to meet Riley to get information from Nina's email, Ben is recognized by a Russian. This incident sparks off a chase which Ben finally ends by calling 911 and telling the operator that the shooters are headed toward the White House. Secret Service sets up a blockade with uniformed officers and helicopters. The Russians apparently fear being recognized at all as they blow up their SUV, leaving nothing to



identify. The powerful blast also kills many of the bystanders and officers giving Ben more deaths for which he feels responsible.

Discussion Question 1

How does Ben know that calling 911 and telling them the shooter is headed for the White House will make a barricade be set up?

Discussion Question 2

Why would the Russians who were trying to kill Ben not want to be recognized?

Discussion Question 3

What does Andrei help Ben realize about Liu and why he was killed?

Vocabulary

comrade, kamikaze, ricochet, concierge, pandemonium, epicenter, totalitarian



Chapters 92-98

Summary

In Chapter 92, Ben realizes that he made a major mistake when he assumed the video was a tape of the president with his mistress. By answering Carney's question incorrectly, Ben has basically admitted that he does not have the tape. He already knows that arrest warrants have been issued for him when he calls Eddie. Eddie warns him to turn himself in to the authorities.

In Chapter 93, Riley shows Ben an email from Diana to Nina making sure they are still on for Nina to house sit at her apartment.

In Chapter 94, Ben realizes it was Diana who set Nina up and confirms Sean's idea when he shares it. He begs Sean to go back to Chicago.

In Chapter 95, Ben calls Anne. He gets the feeling from her response that something is wrong. He goes back to Sean in the bar and asks his help.

In Chapter 96, Sean and Ben arrive at Anne's house and determine that she's waiting for someone. They set up and wait to see who shows up.

In Chapter 97, a black sedan pulls up in front of Anne's house and she runs out. She is frisked before getting into the car and giving the other passenger a passionate kiss. Sean asks if that is who he thinks it is.

In Chapter 98, Ben has a plan that he thinks will work, but again it depends on him correctly guessing what is on the videotape. He has set Sean up to make a phone call.

Analysis

Ben has determined that his possession of a videotape seems to be crucial to his arrest as well as the future of Russian. Just 15 minutes after he accidentally confirms to Carney that he doesn't have this tape, warrants are issued for his arrest as Ben no longer has a bargaining chip. Russian announces its plans to attack Georgia and, as Andrei had forecast, the President of the United States warns his NATO allies to be cautious in their decision to back Georgia. Ben knows that once Russia gets control of Georgia, it will be easier for them to attack the other countries they plan to overtake in order to rebuild their old regime.

On a more personal front, Ben is disturbed to learn that it might have been Diana who was responsible for setting Nina up to be killed. Ben gets another shocking revelation when he, with the help of private investigator Sean, learns that it is Anne who is the President's mistress.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Diana had Ben put surveillance equipment in her apartment?

Discussion Question 2

Are you surprised that it is Anne that is pegged as the president's mistress? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Diana knew that her friend, Nina, would be killed? Was Ben really that bad of a judge of character?

Vocabulary

keel, multilateral, provocation, conspicuous



Chapters 99-105

Summary

In Chapter 99, Ben calls Kutuzov to again make a deal about the video tape. This time he apparently guesses correctly when he says the tape is of the First Lady in a homosexual relationship. Kutuzov asks for Ben's account number.

In Chapter 100, a knock on Ben's door scares him but it is only Sean. Ben verifies that Sean has an untraceable cell phone to make the call, then tells him to be nowhere near the National Mall. The two are still surprised that they saw Diana Hotchkiss greeting Anne with a passionate kiss. Ben notes that Diana was in handcuffs and an orange prison jumpsuit. Putting the clues together he has determined that Diana was the one who videotaped that President's wife having a homosexual affair, planning to sell the tape to the Russians, but then got greedy and decided to include the Chinese.

In Chapter 101, Ben meets Mr. Kutuzov on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

In Chapter 102, Kutuzov insists, by having a friend shoot at Ben, on checking Ben for a recording device. He finds none.

In Chapter 103, Ben and Kutuzov make the agreement that if Ben gets killed by Kutuzov's men, the videos get released; similarly, if Ben chooses to release the videos, Kutuzov will track him down and kill him. At the end of the conversation, Ben announces to Kutuzov that he is under arrest.

In Chapter 104, Ben tells Kutuzov that the police have recorded Kutuzov's transmissions with his goons, but he is bluffing. Regardless, all of Kutuzov's goons disperse. Ben knows the police are coming for him because Sean has tipped them off. Just before the police arrive a bullet pierces that back of Kutuzov's head. Ben tells the corpse that is for Ellis, then he runs.

In Chapter 105, Ben runs from the cops on his motorcycle, determined to go out on his own terms.

Analysis

In this section the identity of the person that Sean and Ben saw Anne kissing is finally revealed. It was not the president, as one might have suspected, but Diana. Ben has finally put the pieces together and determined that Diana was working as a spy for the Russians. She set up a homosexual fling with the President's wife, which she taped, and has gotten the tape into the hands of the Russians. It is this tape that the Russians are using as blackmail against America. Diana is in custody as an American traitor.



Now, Benjamin faces Kutuzov, whom he believes was a part of the plan to blackmail the President. He has already correctly guessed the topic of the tape, which has caused Kutuzov to deposit a good deal of money into a bank account at Ben's request. He believes that he is meeting Ben at the National Mall to pick up the copy of the tape, but Ben has other plans. Sean stands in the shadows to shoot Kutuzov after Ben gets him to admit his part in the Russians' plan. Sean has also called the police telling them that Ben will be at the National Mall. Ben has put fear into Kutuzov making him believe that the police are coming for him. Ben knows that when the police arrive they will find Kutuzov's body with a recording device on it that has recorded Kutuzov and Ben's discussion. Ben runs again, apparently having other plans for his own capture.

Discussion Question 1

After Kutuzov has been killed, why does Ben whisper to his corpse that the murder was for Ellis?

Discussion Question 2

How does Ben use Kutuzov's guilt against him in order to get him to confess to his part in the blackmail scheme?

Discussion Question 3

What clues does Ben use to deduce that Diana was actually a Russian spy?

Vocabulary

leverage, moratorium, ruminating, reconcile, concede, humanitarian, melodious



Chapters 106-113

Summary

In Chapter 106, Ben reaches his target, a Boy Scout service where the President is speaking. Ben yells out that the Russians are blackmailing the President and that the people deserve to know. Although Ben knows his life is over, he hopes the press that are there will investigate and bring the information to light.

In Chapter 107, Ben is waiting his fate in an interview room. He thinks of what he has accomplished in trade for his freedom. The twenty million dollars that he received from Kutuzov for not releasing the tape was not wired into Ben's personal account. Instead, it was deposited into an account for the families of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. He also believes he has stopped the Russians from controlling foreign policy.

The top secret service man in charge of protecting the President comes into the room. He asks Ben if he has lost his mind. He tells the man he wants to talk to the President. Ben gives the man an ultimatum. He can either talk to the President, or he will talk to reporters. After an hour, Craig Carney enters the room, looking scared. Carney tries to strong-arm him into renouncing all that he has said by threatening everyone that he cares about, but the President walks into the room.

In Chapter 108, as Carney tries to convince the President that he has Ben's situation under control, Ben realizes that Carney has not told the President anything about the blackmail. Instead, he has been trying to handle the situation himself. Ben begins talking, telling the President the truth about what has been happening. As the President realizes that Ben is telling things just as they have been happening, he orders Carney to leave the room.

Once they are alone, Ben tells the President that the Russians had probably thought Carney was the perfect choice to deliver a message to him but Carney did not deliver the message as planned. Knowing that Ben is a reporter, the President believes he is trying to make a deal with him. Ben convinces the man that he will not tell about his wife's sexual exploits unless he lets the affair affect his judgment about foreign policy.

In Chapter 110, the President announces that he is accepting Carney's resignation. He also announces that Kutuzov was acting alone in his attempt to blackmail America. Although Ben knows this is not the truth, he also knows that the President's and Russia's agreement on this point will make it difficult for Russia to use the blackmail tape against America. The President also announces that he does not approve of Russia's plan to invade Georgia. Before the conclusion of his speech, the President also acknowledges Ben's role in helping avert what might have been a political disaster. Although the press asks about a possible deal with Carney, the President will not comment.



In Chapter 111, Ben sees Anne again. Anne tells him that she was made to help keep tabs on him. Her work helped her get the visit with Diana. Ben tells her that he has no hard feelings.

In Chapter 112, Ben visits Diana, surprised to see how broken she is. Diana has asked Ben to come to apologize to him. She cries as he tells her that what she did to Nina was unforgivable. She tells him that she had him install the video equipment with the intention of catching the Russians in her house if they tried to kill her. She says that Ben was the only one she felt she could trust. Although he believes that she has done the worst that can be done with her life, Ben tells Diana that he believes there is still good in her life.

In Chapter 113, Ben goes to visit Andrei. He has gotten much sicker than the last time he saw them. Andrei tells Ben that he is a hero. Additionally, Andrei tells Ben that he must tell him about his mother's death. He tells Ben that his father did not kill his father. His father's employer did it while his father tried to prevent the murder. Andrei tells Ben that his father was a spy for the Chinese. Andrei had been hired by the University to keep an eye on the man. The Chinese killed Ben's mother because she learned that her husband was a spy and believed that she might blow his cover.

Ben begins to cry as he asks Andrei why his father framed him for the murder. The Chinese had given Andrei's father an ultimatum. Neither they, nor he, could be implicated in the murder or they would kill Ben. For this reason, his father was forced to make the police suspicious of his son. Andrei tells Ben that his father did everything that he could to keep Ben from being found guilty of the crime. He learns that his father kept him at home after that because he was afraid Ben would be killed. When his father is caught, he is placed on house arrest at the lake house. Ben is overloaded and runs from Andrei's house. As he runs, he begins thinking about Presidential trivia again.

Analysis

The most significant aspect of this section of the novel is Ben's reaction to the knowledge that his father did not set him up to be the fall man for his mother's murder. He had always thought that his father had ruined his life by implicating him in the murder. Here, he finally learns that his father did not kill his mother and then blame her death on him, actually having him touch the murder weapon so that his fingerprints would be on the gun. He learns that his father was not punishing him by keeping him in the house and giving him private tutors, but instead attempting to keep him safe. Ben's realization that his father actually did love him is shown by his willingness to begin quoting Presidential trivia again at the end of the novel.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the author's parody of the Edgar Allen Poe poem "The Raven" in the novel.



Discussion Question 2

What does Ben learn about his father in this section of the novel? How does it change his view of the man?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Ben starts quoting Presidential trivia again at the end of the novel?

Vocabulary

salvage, disavow, covertly, protocol, divulge, unconscionable, embroiling



Characters

Benjamin Casper

Benjamin Casper is the editor and owner of a small online newspaper Capital Beat. Even as he tries to determine the cause of his friend's murder, Benjamin is haunted with memories of his mother's questionable death. Benjamin believes that his father was responsible for his mother's death, but his father set it up to look like it was Benjamin's fault. After his mother's death, Benjamin is kept at home by his father until he is old enough to attend college. For this reason, Benjamin relies on the Presidential trivia (which he learned from his father) and his knowledge of movies (which he probably watched many during his time alone) to interpret the world around him. He later learns that it was actually the Chinese, for whom his father worked as a spy, who killed his mother. Ben was set up in the murder as an attempt to protect him.

In an attempt to discover the reasons for his friend, Diana Hotchkiss', death Ben begins to poke around the edges of a blackmail scheme concocted by the Russians in an attempt to bring together the old Soviet Union. Ben comes close to being killed several times as he has both the Russians and Americans trying to kill him because both groups believe that he has a tape of a sexual encounter between Diana and the First Lady. It is not until after he is arrested that Ben is finally able to tell the president exactly what is happening in the country. He tells the President that he does not want a reward or deal for uncovering the blackmail plan, he only wants the President to act in the best interests of the country.

Alexander Kutuzov

Alexander Kutuzov is a Russian with whom Anne Brennan reported to Ben that Diana looked very, very cozy. Kutuzov appears to be working a side deal with the Russians' attempt to blackmail the president of the United States into allowing them to invade the Republic of Georgia. Kutuzov owns a pipeline that feeds oil to Russia. Based on agreements made, Kutuzov is not required to supply Georgia with oil if war breaks out. Edgar Griffin, who is Kutuzov's lawyer, tells Benjamin that if there is a war, Kutuzov will make the same amount of money not supplying oil to the Georgians as he did to supply it. He could, in fact stand to make more profit because he could sell the same oil to someone else. At the conclusion of the novel, Benjamin has decided that it is because of Kutuzov that Detective Ellis Burk was killed. He arranges a meeting with Kutuzov by telling him that he has a copy of the blackmail videotape, then arranges for Kutuzov to admit to the crimes he has committed against the United States on a wire that Kutuzov is wearing. Sean Riley has called the police telling them that he has seen Ben at the National Mall but Ben tricks Kutuzov into thinking the police are coming for him. Just before the police arrive, Sean shoots Kutuzov. Ben tells Kutuzov his death was for Ellis.



Diana Marie Hotchkiss

Although she doesn't have a big role in the novel, Diana Marie Hotchkiss is the reason why Benjamin gets involved in the Russians' intent to blackmail the United States. At the beginning of the novel, it is believed that Diana either killed herself or was murdered by being pushed off the balcony of her apartment. When Ben sees crime scene photos, he realizes the body that fell from Diana's balcony did not have a tattoo like Diana's, leading him to realize that Diana did not kill herself and was not murdered. Instead Diana is in federal custody because she filmed a sexual encounter between herself and the First Lady intended to be used as a blackmail tape. Although Ben had hoped that she and Diana could have a relationship, he learned that she is actually gay and is in a relationship with Anne Brennan. After she has been convicted, Diana calls for Benjamin to visit him so she can apologize. She tells him that she never meant for Nina to be hurt, just wanted to get a head start on getting out of town while Kutuzov's men believed she was still staying at her apartment.

Craig Carney

Craig Carney is the deputy director of the CIA. According to Diana's friend Emma, Diana had gotten her start in politics because she was a housekeeper for Carney before he became deputy director. The two had an affair during this time. Ben first believes that the blackmail video is of Carney and Diana. He later learns that Carney was acting strangely about the tape because he knew it was a video of Diana and the First Lady. Carney did not tell the President about the blackmail tape or the Russians' plan to use the tape to alter American politics. Instead, he tried to handle the situation himself by advising the President to mention Diana's death in a press conference so that the Russians would know she was dead. He also advises the President to not get involved with the war between Russia and the Republic of Georgia. Carney is forced to turn in his resignation when the President learns about Carney's attempt to hide information from him.

Marty Casper

Marty Casper is Benjamin's father. Although Ben did not realize it, Ben's father was a spy for the Chinese. Because his mother finds out what his father does for a living, the Chinese kill her in fear that she will blow his cover. The Chinese tell Ben's father that the murder cannot be pinned on them. So, Marty arranges for it to look like Ben might have shot his mother. Although it is determined that her death was a suicide, there are still doubts in the minds of the police. Ben was the prime suspect in the murder, but his father never allowed the boy to talk to the police. Ben learns later that Marty acted as he did because the Chinese had threatened to kill Ben as well if the murder was blamed on the Chinese or on Marty.



Sean Patrick Riley

Sean Patrick Riley is the private investigator who contacts Ben wanting information about Nina Jacob's death. Ben uses the information that Sean has uncovered to prove that Diana is still alive and that Nina was killed in her stead. Although Ben tries to get Sean to go home in order to keep him from getting killed because he has information discovered about Diana, Sean refuses. Sean assists Ben in setting up Kutuzov and getting him to tell about his plans to blackmail the United States. Sean calls the police telling them that Ben has been sighted at the National Mall, making it appear to Kutuzov that the police are coming after him. It is also Sean who shoots Kutuzov.

Ellis Montgomery Burk

Ellis Montgomery Burk is a detective with the MPD's Second District. Benjamin goes to Ellis hoping to get a lead on Diana's murder. He shows Benjamin the pictures of the crime scene which Ben realizes that it was not Diana who was killed. Ellis helps Benjamin in his initial investigation into Diana's death. Ellis is killed as he and Benjamin drive to Edgar Griffin's office to talk to him about Alexander Kutuzov. Although Ben is given a deal that would get him out of trouble for his interference into the investigation of Diana's death, Ben chooses not to take it because he believes that Ellis' family deserves to know why he died.

Professor Andrei Bogomolov

Professor Andrei Bogomolov is a professor who works at American University. It is from Andrei that Ben finally learns about the purpose of the original Operation Delano. At the conclusion of the novel, Andrei confesses to Ben that he is an American patriot brought to American University to keep tabs on Ben's father, who was a spy for the Chinese. He also tells Ben that it was the Chinese who killed his mother and that his father tried to pin the murder on Ben because the Chinese warned him they would kill Ben if either they or Ben's father were fingered for the murder.

Anne Brennan

Anne Brennan is Diana's best friend and turns out to be her lover. She comes to Benjamin one day when he happens to be at his newspaper office worried because the CIA have been coming to her, asking questions. Although she came to Ben's office the first time on her own resolve, the CIA use her to keep tabs on Benjamin, telling her that she will be able to visit Diana if she helps them. One evening when Benjamin goes to visit Anne, they have a fling. Anne promises that the fling was not orchestrated by the CIA but Ben is still disappointed with the way the relationship ends.



Detective Liz Larkin

Detective Liz Larkin is the officer who officially arrests Ben after Ellis is killed even though she does not yet have specific charges. Ben tells Larkin his story but she doesn't believe him. Instead, she uses information she has dug up on his mother's death to create a pattern between Ben's mother's murder and Liu's murder. It is also Larkin who suggests to Ben that reciting presidential trivia is an attempt to bond with his father.

Jonathan Liu

Jonathan Liu is a Chinese man whom Diana has somehow involved in the Russians' blackmail scheme because she gets greedy. During the times that Benjamin talks to Liu, he believes that the man is scared. Ben visits Liu's house hoping to get information from him but finds the man has been killed. The person or people who killed him have made the murder look similar to the way that Ben's mother died in an attempt to pin the murder on Ben.

Edgar Griffin

Edgar Griffin is the lawyer for Andrew Kutuzov. He is aware of the negotiations about Kutuzov's Russian pipeline. Ben questions Griffin about his knowledge of Kutuzov's plan to help Russia blackmail. Griffin pretends not to know about the plan but Ben notices the temperature in the room drop.

Ronald Ham Hamilton

Ronald Hamilton is the top Secret Service man who protects the President. He is the first man to talk to Ben after he is arrested at Mellon Auditorium. It is to Ham that Ben gives a message to send to the President saying that he wants to talk to him or else he will release the nature of the blackmail to the public.

Eddie Volker

Eddie Volker is the lawyer with whom Ben consults about his legal situation. Also known as "Fast" Eddie, Volker is the lawyer for the Capital Beat. From the beginning, Volker tells Ben that his case does not look good. It is Volker who tells Ben about the incriminating evidence that the police have found against him in his home.

Libby Rose Francis

Although Libby Rose Francis, the President's wife, does not have a great deal of input in the novel, it is she who causes much of the fuss that disturbs Ben's life. Diana



secretly taped herself and Libby Rose Francis having a sexual encounter. This tape was given to the Russians who are using the tape as blackmail against the United States.

Nina Jacobs

Nina Jacobs is the girl who was set up to be killed by Diana. Nina looked similar to Diana so Diana had Nina watch her house. When the Russians go to the home, they find Nina there and throw her from Diana's balcony, believing that she is Nina.

Ashley Brook Clark

Ashley Brook Clark is Benjamin's partner at the Capital Beat. She covers for him and takes care of the paper while he is trying to determine the cause of Diana's death. She helps Ben out with some legwork while he is investigating and hiding out.

President Blake Francis

President Blake Francis is the president of the United States. He is not aware, but the Russian authorities are attempting to blackmail him to allow them to overtake the Republic of Georgia and begin recreating the old Soviet bloc.

Detective Amy LaTaglia

Detective Amy LaTaglia is the detective who worked the investigation of Benjamin's mother's death. She made it quite obvious that she believed Ben was responsible for his mother's death.

Randy Hotchkiss

Randy Hotchkiss is Diana's brother. He is killed because he asked too many questions about Diana's death.



Symbols and Symbolism

AC Adapter

One of the pieces of video surveillance equipment that Ben puts in Diana's apartment is a camera and voice recorder that looks like an AC adapter.

2009 Triumph America

Ben's motorcycle is a 2009 Triumph America.

Capital Beat

The Capital Beat is the name of the Internet newspaper that Ben owns and of which he is the editor.

MPD Press Pass

It is Ben's press pass that gets him out of trouble with the police officer at the crime scene at Diana's apartment. It also this press pass that gets him into the Boy Scout award ceremony where the president is speaking.

Apple Geraniums

When Diana first dies, Ben suspects that she has been murdered because the apple geraniums that she loves were knocked from her balcony. Ben thinks that even if she had been trying to kill herself, she would not have done anything to destroy these plants.

Cessna 172N Skyhawk

Ben's plane is a Cessna 172N Skyhawk. Someone tries to kill Ben by putting jet fuel in the Cessna's gas tank.

Operation Delano

Operation Delano is what Jonathan Liu tells Ben he should be asking about. Ben learns from Andrei that Operation Delano was the key name for Stalin's attempt to blackmail President Roosevelt.



Operation Delano 2.0

Operation Delano 2.0 is the name given to the current Russian leader's plan to blackmail the President of the United States into allowing Russia to put together the old Soviet Union.

Jonathan Liu's Laptop Computer

When Ben finds Liu dead in his house, he takes the man's computer in the hopes that there will be some clues on the laptop that will help him figure out the mysteries that surround his death as well as Diana's death.

Nationals Baseball Cap

When Ben arranges to meet Carney at the National Monument, he has him wear a Nationals baseball cap so he will be sure to recognize him.

Copy of a Video

It becomes apparent to Ben that it is because the Russians and the Americans believe that he has a copy of a blackmail video that they are trying to kill him.

Black SUV

It is men in a black SUV who shoot at Ben, trying to kill him. When the SUV is surrounded by secret service police, the occupants detonate bombs, destroying themselves and the vehicle completely.



Settings

Diana's Apartment

The book begins in Diana's apartment as Ben is poking around as he is installing surveillance equipment as Diana has requested that he do. Diana's apartment is also the scene of Nina Jacobs' murder. She is pushed off Diana's balcony in an attempt by the Russians to kill Diana. They don't realize that Diana has arranged for Nina to stay in her apartment.

Ben's Apartment

Very few events in the novel take place in Ben's apartment, but this is a significant setting as it is here that evidence has been planted linking Ben to both Diana's death and Liu's death.

Madison, Wisconsin

Madison, Wisconsin is Diana's hometown. It is to this town that Ben travels to attend Diana's visitation. On his way home from Madison, Ben's plane crashes because its gas tank has been filled with jet fuel. He believes the mistake was an attempt to kill him.

Ben's Lake Cabin in Virginia

Ben believes that he can hide out at his cabin on Lake Anna, but on the first night he stays there, men break in, trying to shoot him.

AK Collectibles

Ben visits Alexander Kutuzov's store AK Collectibles in hopes of meeting the man but learns he is not there.

American University

It is on the campus of American University that Ben first talks to Andrei. This university is where Ben's father worked and also where Ben went to school.

National Mall

The National Mall is the setting for several significant scenes in this novel. It is on the National Mall that Ben meets the second time with Craig Carney. It is from here that Ben



calls Carney to tell him that he has a copy of the video. It is also on the National Mall, near the statue of Abraham Lincoln, that Ben has his final confrontation with Kutuzov.

Intersection of M Street and 22nd

It is at this intersection that the Secret Service sets up a roadblock to stop the black SUV whose occupants are shooting at Ben.

Mellon Auditorium

Mellon Auditorium is where the President is speaking at a Boy Scout awards ceremony. It is here that Ben yells out that America is being blackmailed, getting him arrested but also alerting the President as to what is happening with Russia.



Themes and Motifs

Patriots and Spies

The premise of *Mistress* is based on the idea that there are both patriots and spies. Patriots are the people, like Benjamin and Andrei, who try to protect the integrity of the United States. It is the spies, like Diana and Marty, who pose a threat to the country and those around them. These people are often difficult to identify. Even Ben did not realize that his father was a spy. It is not until the end of the novel that Ben learns what his father did for a living and that it was because his father was a spy that his mother was killed. At the same time, Ben also does not realize that his former professor at the University, Andrei, was working for the CIA keeping an eye on Marty.

Similarly, Ben does not realize that Diana is a spy working for both the Russians and the Chinese. He believes that she is a dedicated employee of the United States government. Although by the end of the novel, Ben could be termed a Patriot, he does not consider himself to be a supporter of his country on the same level as those who are honored with monuments at the National Mall. Ben does not believe that what he has done for his country has been really great, though he has saved the President from allowing a plan to reunite the old Soviet Union go unchecked.

Credibility

With no family of his own, Ben considers his newspaper and the staff of that paper to be his family. He has protected his newspaper's credibility closely, refusing to print anything that he has not been able to verify. Although he does not want to do so, Benjamin is afraid that in order for him to be able to stay alive, he will have to print unverified information about his investigation in order to persuade the people with whom he is trying to work to give him the information that he wants. Ben, however, is willing to do almost anything necessary, including sacrificing himself, to keep his paper's credibility intact.

Along these same lines, the most painful hit that Ben takes from the CIA is its attack on his paper and employees. While Ben wants to find out what is going on so that he can validate Ellis Burke's death, he does not think it is fair that his employees are punished for his own misdeeds. The CIA has the paper taken from the Internet and its funds frozen so that Ben's employees aren't even getting paid. Ben's lawyer arranges for it to appear that the site is down for maintenance so that Ben's readers won't believe that the paper is involved in any sort of wrongdoing.

Meanwhile, Ben depends on his integrity as a journalist to lead others to believe, or at least look into what he has to say to them. When he is carried out of Mellon Auditorium, Ben asks the press there if he has ever appeared to be crazy as he tells them that the President is being blackmailed. He hopes they will consider his credibility and at least look into his claims. When Ben gets to talk to the head of Secret Service after he is



arrested, he uses the same reasoning to try to persuade the man that he has a good reason for acting as he has.

Journalistic Curiosity

Another aspect of Benjamin's personality that is very apparent in the novel is his journalistic nature. In his thoughts, he plays with words and even punctuation. At several points, he investigates the use of the word "brandish" wondering in what context the word is used most adequately. Benjamin also chides himself at one point for putting his thoughts into parenthesis, as if he were writing his thoughts out in story form. Ben also uses his experience and abilities as a reporter to help him find out all that he can about Diana's death. He uses the sources that he has available to him to find out what he can, then piece together what he learns to come to the conclusion that he does about the blackmail attempt. He uses his press pass to get him out of trouble with the cops at Diana's apartment the day after she died then again to get into the Boy Scout award ceremony where he alerts the president about the blackmail.



Styles

Point of View

This story is told from the first person point of view of Benjamin Casper. This point of view makes the story most interesting and intriguing because the reader is given the information that Ben knows and is able to try to figure out the mystery as Ben does. If the reader had known the nature of the blackmail or the plans of the Russians before Ben had known these things, there would have been no mystery to the book.

The story is told mostly through exposition as Benjamin is on the run with only his thoughts as he tries to determine first why his friend was killed and then, later, why her death was faked. Ben does talk to people, but generally only in strict settings in hopes to illicit information from them that he needs to solve the mystery in which he has found himself to be involved. Time passes in a relatively steady manner with possibly only a few weeks passing between the beginning and the end of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of this novel is quite unusual. At first, Ben appears to be crazy. He seems obsessed with presidential trivia. It is later learned that Ben learned all the trivia from his father, who was a history professor with an emphasis on presidential history. At one point, Ben attempts to stop himself from quoting this trivia as a police detective accuses it as being his way of bonding with his father. Because his mother was killed when he was young by the Chinese, Ben's father keeps him isolated at home until he is old enough to go to college. It could be for this reason that Ben constantly refers to his huge bank of knowledge about movies and movie stars. It makes sense that as a lonely child and teen, Ben would have watched a good deal of television and movies as a way to entertain himself and pass his time.

Benjamin's journalistic flair makes itself obvious through his writing and word choice. He argues with himself as he tries to choose proper words to describe what he is thinking or feeling. At one point in the novel, Benjamin chides himself for separating his thoughts with punctuation in his thoughts as if he were writing a book or play.

Structure

This novel is comprised of 113 fairly short chapters of 3-4 pages. The chapters have no worded titles, only a number distinguishing them. The short chapters give the reader just enough information about each topic to be interesting. They keep the story flowing along quickly and concisely. The author gives just enough information to let the reader know what is happening and developing but not enough that the reader gets bogged down in unnecessary details.



The novel features a main plot as Benjamin tries to discover why his friend Diana was killed. In conjunction with this main plot, there is a subplot dealing with the long ago death of Benjamin's mother. In the same time that Benjamin is learning what happened to Diana, he is also learning the truth about his own family. He loses his admiration for Diana, but he gains a new respect for his father. After all the years, Ben had never known that his father was protecting him by his unusual behavior and his act of setting Ben up for his mother's murder.



Quotes

Murder can be made to look like suicide, and suicide can be made to look like murder.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 1 paragraph 20)

Importance: This statement is repeated frequently throughout the novel and seems to be one of the themes of the book as several people die of murder, but their deaths are set up as a suicide.

You're not like everyone else, Benjamin. You never were. Even before — well, even before everything happened with your mother.
-- Marty Casper (Chapter 4 paragraph 12)

Importance: Even though his father told him that he was different from other people, Ben didn't really know what his father meant at this point in the novel.

I came away with three things I didn't previously know. First, the Metropolitan Police Department is treating Diana's death as a homicide investigation. Second, they're acting like they're not, for some reason.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 8 paragraph 22)

Importance: Benjamin visits Diana's home with the intention of taking the surveillance equipment he had installed the prior day but is not able to do so because the police are watching the house. He does learn that the police are investigating Diana's death as a homicide.

Diana and I, we were different. We were pals. Buds. True, I wanted more, but her resistance forced us to develop a different kind of relationship. Once we got to the romantic part, we would've already checked off all the other boxes.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 9 paragraph 4)

Importance: Benjamin admits that he liked Diana as more than a friend even though he was aware that she didn't feel the same about him. He feels, though, their friendship would have eventually led to a deeper relationship.

Over the last two days, I have veered wildly between depression and bitterness and fear, depending on whether I consider that (a) Diana is gone forever; (b) someone violently took her from this world; (c) someone might have similar thoughts toward me; or (d) somehow, in some way I can't fathom, I am being set up for Diana's murder.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 10 paragraph 12)

Importance: As Benjamin tries to come to terms with his friend's death and the method of her death, he also begins to realize that he may be being set up for her murder.

Did you hear the wind, Diana, as you fell to the pavement?
-- Benjamin (Chapter 16 paragraph 21)



Importance: As Benjamin's plane falls out of the sky, he wonders if Diana heard the wind, as he is now hearing, when she fell to her death.

I get the last screw out of the smoke detector and pop the bottom lid and— and there isn't any camera or microphone. The surveillance equipment has been removed.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 25 paragraph 14)

Importance: Benjamin hopes that he will find some clue about who killed Diana by looking at the surveillance equipment he installed. When he goes back for the equipment, though, it has already been taken.

But there's no way Liu wrote this himself. Whoever wrote this wanted to convey regret. Jonathan Liu, the one time I spoke with him, was not regretful. He was flat-out scared.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 42 paragraph 22)

Importance: Even though Benjamin is just an amateur investigator, he realizes that Liu did not write the suicide note that has been left on the computer.

That's what we call a modus operandi, Benjamin. You skated on a murder charge as a boy, but you never forgot that little trick, did you?
-- Detective Liz Larkin (Chapter 50 paragraph 6)

Importance: Detective Larkin tries to corner Benjamin by connecting the similarity of Liu's death and his mother's death.

We're both fighting our government. I just didn't realize I was doing so until people started shooting at me and framing me for murder.
-- Benjamin (Chapter 62 paragraph 9)

Importance: As Benjamin talks to Craig Carney, he compares himself to civil rights leaders as he is also fighting the government, even though he did not intentionally start the fight.

And even if you keep up this investigation of yours — and let's pretend you dig up something worth printing — all you'll accomplish is making this country less safe by disclosing tactical advantages we've managed to put in place against our enemies. And that's assuming you manage to stay out of jail and you're not under prosecution for two murders.
-- Craig Carney (Chapter 63 paragraph 16)

Importance: Carney tries to convince Benjamin that if he continues investigating Diana's death, he will put the entire country at risk. He also threatens him with the possibility of jail time if he is persecuted for the murders of Liu and Diana, as Carney has the ability to make happen.



Delores Burk is correct. There is such a thing as right and wrong. There is black and white. Washington, DC, is a town that lives in the middle gray. But that doesn't mean I have to.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 64 paragraph 9)

Importance: It is Ellis Burk's wife who gives Benjamin the inspiration that he needs to decide that he does not want to live in the middle. He decides instead to give the Burk family a reason that their family member was killed.

Capital Beat is my only family. It's the only thing I've ever created. If I print something I can't prove, I deface something I love.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 70 paragraph 17)

Importance: Although Benjamin could use his paper to print the allegations he believes, but he does not want to print rumors as it will destroy the reputation of his paper.

The talk,' he says, 'is that Operation Delano was the Soviets' attempt to blackmail the President of the United States.

-- Andrei (Chapter 72 paragraph 18)

Importance: When Benjamin talks to Andrei, a professor at American University, he learns that Operation Delano was an attempt to blackmail Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States in the 1930's and 1940's.

Operation Delano is the Russians' plan to blackmail President Blake Francis so he will stand down when Russia starts invading her neighbors.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 75 paragraph 2)

Importance: After Benjamin talks to Andrei, he pieces together a belief that Operation Delano is a plan to blackmail the current President just as the Russians tried to blackmail FDR.

All those evenings Diana spent at the White House, as an aide to the President's close ally Craig Carney. A blackmail scheme. And now the United States government desperately wants everyone to believe that Diana's dead. Which means she must be a liability.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 75 paragraph 7)

Importance: In keeping with his belief that the Russians are trying to blackmail the President, Benjamin realizes that Diana might have been killed because she was having an affair with the President.

So I ask again,' says Eddie. 'Why does the US government consider you a threat?

-- Eddie Volker (Chapter 28 paragraph 23)

Importance: During a discussion with his lawyer, Benjamin realizes that the government believes that there is a video of the President's misdoing in his possession.



This is about an SUV detonating today. This is about a conspiracy and cover-up all the way to the Oval Office.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 95 paragraph 14)

Importance: Benjamin tries to convince Sean that if he joins him in working on this case, it is much more than just about a missing woman.

She was pretending to be Diana, Sean. She was set up. And you've just helped me prove it.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 94 paragraph 16)

Importance: In this quote, Ben explains to Sean why Nina Jacobs was killed.

Diana wasn't a spy working for the United States. Diana was a traitor. She secretly recorded a sexual romp with the First Lady and was selling it to the highest bidder.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 100 paragraph 37)

Importance: It is when Benjamin and Sean see Anne kissing Diana, who is dressed in an orange jumpsuit, that Benjamin realizes Diana's role in the blackmailing.

But I got a few things in return. I got payback against a Russian billionaire and justice for Ellis Burk. I got twenty million dollars that, unbeknownst to said billionaire, was wired into an account for families of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. And I stopped the Russians from controlling our foreign policy.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 107 paragraph 3)

Importance: At this point, even though Benjamin still believes that he will be going to jail for his part in these crimes, he realizes that he has gotten some benefits that will reach far beyond his own life.

The President didn't know about any of this. He didn't know about the video. He didn't know the Russians were blackmailing the United States government.

-- Benjamin (chapter 108 paragraph 22)

Importance: It is not until Benjamin is offered a deal by Carney, who seems to be desperately trying to keep the president away from Benjamin, that he realizes that the President never knew about the attempted blackmail by the Russian government.

I'm not making a deal with you, Mr. President. Just tell me you're going to do what you think is best for our country. That's all I care about.

-- Benjamin (Chapter 109 paragraph 8)

Importance: Although Benjamin has a bargaining tool that he could use to benefit himself, he proves his pure intentions by telling the president that he is only interested in what is best for the country.



Your father came home... and found her dead. The Chinese told him... they could not... be implicated... nor could... he. You were... the only choice. Benjamin... your father... took every... step... to ensure your acquittal.

-- Andrei (Chapter 113 paragraph 35)

Importance: In the final chapter of the novel, Benjamin finally learns that his father was not the one who killed his mother. He also learns that his father tried, in the best way that he could, to protect Ben from powers that wanted to hurt them both.