

# **One False Move Study Guide**

## **One False Move by Harlan Coben**

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# Plot Summary

One False Move by Harlan Coben is a fast-paced novel detailing a period of time in the life of Myron Bolitar, sports agent, and a long standing secret in his hometown. Myron meets with Norm Zuckerman the CEO of Zoom sports manufacturing company about his star player, Brenda Slaughter. Norm is concerned about threats that Brenda has been receiving and wants Myron to protect her, as well as find out from where the threats are coming. Though Myron is at first unwilling, the fact that Slaughter has no agent sways him to agree with Norm.

Myron is intrigued by Brenda, and agrees to help her, not only to have the chance to become her agent, but because he realizes that they have a tie from years past. Brenda's father Horace is missing, and she wants to find him. Myron had known Horace years ago and had considered him a friend. Horace had coached Myron in his own basketball career, the two losing touch after Myron's career had been tragically ended.

Working with Brenda to find her father and mother, Myron realizes that he is falling in love with her, causing him to question his long term relationship with Jessica, his live-in lover. For years Myron had been trying to hold together a relationship that might not have been what either party wanted. The easy peace he finds when he is with Brenda is surprising for Myron.

The investigation leads Myron and Brenda to one of the most powerful families in New Jersey, and a relationship between her mother and Arthur Bradford that had been kept secret for twenty years. Brenda had always believed that her mother had left her when she was a young girl, but Myron begins to follow leads that might lead in a different direction. While trying to unravel the mystery of Elizabeth Bradford's death and Anita Slaughter's connection to the family, the pair also run into problems with the mafia, trying to persuade Brenda to leave the basketball league she is a part of and sign with their agency and the league they will operate in the future. Twists and turns pop up at every turn, leading Myron and Brenda through the past to find the truth in the present.

The truth is revealed in the end, too late for Brenda. Mabel Edwards, Brenda's aunt had killed her mother for the money Anita had saved to make her new start. Mabel killed Horace when he began to search for his wife again. Brenda's death was yet another cover-up, simply to keep the truth from being revealed. Mabel was unaware that Arthur Bradford was also still looking for Anita, his lover from so long ago. Bradford had been in love with Anita, and was in reality, Brenda's father. Myron tells Arthur Bradford the truth about Anita's disappearance and Brenda's death, leaving the powerful man to deal with Edwards. Bradford does, having Mabel killed, finally paying for the pain she had caused so many. In the end, Myron does not return to Jessica, preferring the memories of the short time he shared with Brenda to the turmoil and uncertainty that he had experienced in the past.



# Prologue: September 15, Chapters 1-5

## Prologue: September 15, Chapters 1-5 Summary

Myron Bolitar becomes involved in the life of Brenda Slaughter, rising basketball star, when Norm Zuckerman requests his help. Brenda's personal life is more complicated than Myron had imagined, and his personal life becomes more complicated the more time they spend together.

In the prologue, Myron waits at a cemetery. A man approaches and Myron states that the man has killed her. The man agrees, and Myron asks him if he is happy. The stranger asks Myron the same question.

Chapter one finds Myron reporting to Norm Zuckerman, the CEO of Zoom. Norm is worried that the future star of the WPBA is in danger and wants Myron to keep an eye on her. Brenda Slaughter is not willing to have someone act as a bodyguard, but Myron is straightforward, explaining what Norm wants, and Brenda appreciates his honesty. Slaughter accepts Myron with the condition that he leaves her alone if she requests it, and that he stays out of her business. Myron agrees, and the two have a tentative working relationship. Brenda tells him that her father is missing and in trouble. She wants Myron to find him if possible.

In chapter 2, Myron calls Esperanza Diaz at the office. Esperanza has been at MB SportsReps since Myron opened the agency. Myron tells Diaz why Norm wanted to meet with him. Esperanza is not happy about the situation and tells Myron that she will need help in the office. Myron knows that she is referring to hiring Big Cyndi, her former wrestling partner, and agrees reluctantly. When the photo shoot is over, Myron asks Brenda where her father is living currently and suggests they start looking for Horace there.

Chapter three brings Myron and Brenda to the apartment building that Horace had lived in since Myron had known him. When Myron was younger, Horace Slaughter had coached him on the neighborhood basketball courts, Myron being the only white boy that would venture into the area. Myron could feel the eyes of the people in the area watching him as they drove up. Myron asks Brenda about the threats she has been getting. Brenda tells him a white male has called, telling her that she had better retain Horace as her agent, another time saying she would be hurt if her father was not found. Brenda has no idea who the calls are from or why, just that they started when her father had disappeared. Slaughter also tells Myron that the first call had instructed her to call her mother. Myron asks her if she had, and Brenda informs him that she has no idea where her mother is, as she abandoned her when she was five. A few letters postmarked New York are all she has gotten over the years. Myron tries to ask about her relationship with her father, but Brenda balks, explaining that no matter what her relationship with Horace, he still needs to be found. Brenda tells Myron that her father had been zealous in her coaching, as well as protecting her. As an example of Horace's



behavior, Brenda tells Myron of two boys that had heckled her at a game. Horace had gone after them, but security had intervened. A few days later, the boys were found tied up on a roof top, with their Achilles tendons cut with pruning shears.

At Horace's apartment, Myron and Brenda find that a messy search has been conducted. The apartment is torn apart and there is no sign of Horace. Brenda goes to the room she uses when she stays with her father and finds that the letters her mother had written her are gone. Horace's closet is almost empty, suggesting that he had gotten away before whoever had searched the apartment had been there.

In chapter four, Myron drives Brenda to her dorm at Reston University. Brenda is in medical school, studying to be a pediatrician. Before getting out of the car, Brenda speaks about her memories of her mother, and asks Myron to find her as well.

Myron drives to the loft that he shares with his girlfriend Jessica. Myron had lived with his parents until a few months ago when Jessica had asked him to move in with her. Jessica finishes working and they order dinner in. Over Chinese food, Jessica tells Myron that she has to fly to LA for the next few weeks to do some research on her current book. Myron is uncomfortable with Jessica leaving, and tells her so. Jessica explains that they are adults, and that the freedom of their relationship is one of the good things they share. Myron is unsure, but lets the subject drop, sex being better than arguing.

In chapter 5, Myron is on his way out the next morning when a black limo stops and two men order him into the car. Myron answers sarcastically until he is informed that the men work for Frank Ache a leading mob boss in the area. In the car Myron keeps a running dialogue going about where they might be taking him, despite the fact that the two men don't answer him. Myron realizes they are headed to TruPro, the sports agency that Ache brother's had taken over in exchange for the debt owed to them by the former owner Roy O'Connor. At the office Myron greets Frank Ache and they are joined by Roy and Frank's son Frank junior, known as FJ. Frank asks Myron if he is representing Brenda, and Myron tells him truthfully that he is not. Frank begins to get angry, but they are interrupted by a phone call. Win is on the line, and his voice visibly shakes Ache. Win acts as if the call is just a simple social call, but the Aches know better, and Frank tell Myron to leave, threatening him if he says another word. In the lobby, Myron meets up with Win. Win had known where Myron was because Myron had called him on his cell phone and left the line open so that Win could hear everything. Walking back to the office, Myron informs Win of what is going on with Brenda. Win warns Myron that the Aches are not to be taken lightly, and that FJ is especially unstable. At the office, Myron finds Big Cyndi behind the desk, and she informs him that Esperanza is in his office. Diaz tells him that Horace has not used any of his credit cards since his disappearance. Myron asks her to find Anita Slaughter as well. Esperanza is frustrated that once again Myron is acting as an investigator instead of a sports agent, and tells him so, reminding him that she wants a partnership in the firm as well. Myron stalls, but Esperanza tells him he has a time limit to make the decision. Myron calls Win to make arrangements to meet that evening, and then heads out to meet Brenda.



## Prologue: September 15, Chapters 1-5 Analysis

Myron Bolitar is a sports agent with a background in investigation, having once worked for the government. Though this information is supposed to be a closely guarded secret, Myron is hard fought to find anyone that doesn't know of his past. Because of this, Norm Zuckerman, the CEO of Zoom, a sports manufacturing company, wants Myron to help him protect his star player, Brenda Slaughter, from threats that she has been receiving. Norm knows that Brenda would never accept a bodyguard, but as Myron is an agent, Norm believes that Bolitar can work with Brenda without her knowing that he is actually protecting her. Myron is unwilling to get involved with protecting Brenda at first, but as she makes her entrance onto the court he is drawn to her somehow. When Norm introduces them, Myron is shocked to realize that he had met Brenda many years ago when her father Horace had been coaching him in basketball. When Norm leaves them alone, Myron tells Brenda the real reason that he is there, and Brenda, surprised by his honesty, agrees to allow him to protect her, though there are limits. Myron discovers that Brenda's father is missing and feels regret that he had not maintained the relationship he had with the man many years ago. While Brenda is modeling for the photo shoot, Myron calls Esperanza Diaz at the office of MB SportsReps to tell her what is going on. Esperanza wonders if Brenda is bisexual like her, then expresses her irritation with Myron straying from the agency again. Myron agrees to have Big Cyndi, Esperanza's former wrestling partner come in to help out, though he is not comfortable around the extremely big woman.

Myron takes Brenda to Horace's apartment, hoping to find a clue about where he is and why he is missing. Along the way, Brenda shares the tale of the two young men that had taunted her and earned her father's anger. Though Horace must have been an obvious suspect to the police, the boys had refused to name the person who had cut their Achilles tendons with pruning shears. This act of violence will be revisited later in the novel. The old neighborhood where Myron had played basketball makes him feel uncomfortable, not only the way things seem more run down, but the open hostility of the people that look at him. There had been a time that Myron had not minded being the only white boy in the area, but that time had passed. At the apartment, Myron and Brenda find that someone had been there before them, and that Horace's home had been torn apart by someone looking for something. Brenda appears most upset by the letters from her mother being missing, as they are the only link she has to the woman who left her more than twenty years ago. Horace's nearly empty closet also reminds her of her mother's leaving, and she becomes subdued. Myron takes Brenda to her dorm, and she shares thoughts about her mother, something that it is clear she does not do often. The hurt that Brenda feels at the abandonment is evident, and Myron agrees to help locate Anita Slaughter as well, already feeling inexplicably drawn to Brenda.

At the loft he shares with Jessica, Myron shares some light moments with his girlfriend over dinner, before finding out that she will be traveling to California again for a few weeks. Myron is obviously uncomfortable with the separation despite Jessica's reassurances, but she manages to calm him by changing the subject to sex.



The introduction of Frank Ache into the storyline further complicates things. Ache and his brother are mob bosses in New Jersey with a reputation for violence. Myron calls his friend Win on his cell phone and leaves the line open so Win will know where he is if there is trouble. At the office of TruPro, Myron meets with Frank Ache, as well as the former owner, and Ache's son FJ. FJ is openly hostile, and Myron is uncomfortable with the way things are going when they are interrupted by a call from Win. Frank realizes it is time to back off for now, but threatens Myron as he leaves. Outside Win informs Myron that FJ is very dangerous, and Myron is not at all happy about the assessment. Win is an enigma, not at all what he appears. Rich and powerful, Win is willing to do whatever it takes to help and protect his friends when they need it, and his thoughts on FJ are not at all comforting. If Win is worried about someone, there is very good reason to be worried.

At the office, Myron meets with Esperanza who is clearly unhappy, not just with having to locate Horace Slaughter, but with the working relationship she has with Myron. Myron knows that Diaz wants to be a partner, but is very worried that if their work relationship changes, their friendship will be damaged beyond repair. Esperanza knows that Myron has no doubt in her personally but is unwilling to let the matter drop. Diaz gives him one week to make up his mind about the partnership.



# Chapters 6-10

## Chapters 6-10 Summary

Chapter 6 finds Myron at Englewood High School, where Brenda's team, the New Jersey Dolphins practices. Brenda sees Myron and comes over to him and he tells her that her father had cleaned out his bank account before he disappeared. Brenda tells Myron that her mother had done the same thing twenty years ago. The pair discuss Horace's job, and Myron asks if there is anyone to whom Brenda's father would turn. She tells him that if Horace would talk to anyone, it would be Horace's sister, Mabel Edwards. Brenda makes a phone call from the hallway and sets up an appointment for Myron with her aunt.

In Chapter 7, Myron drives to West Orange to meet with Mabel Edwards. A call is patched through from Norm Zuckerman, who is not happy that Myron left Brenda alone at practice. Myron does not see the problem, since Slaughter is surrounded by people there. Norm reluctantly agrees, and the two agree to meet at the school in an hour to talk.

In West Orange, Myron arrives at Mabel's house. Edwards is a big woman with a lovely smile and a gentle nature. The two reminisce about Myron's time playing basketball with her brother. Myron asks if Mabel has heard from Horace, and she grows cautious and discourages Myron from getting involved. Myron asks Mabel about the photos in the room and she proudly tells him of her son Terrance and his political career. Terrance had been a baby when his father was murdered in front of his home in a robbery, had worked his way through Yale, and become a town councilman when he was just 25. Mabel then shares with Myron that the men that are after Horace are dangerous. Two men, one large, and one small with a tattoo of a snake on his arm, had come to her house looking for her brother, and when she had no information for them, the big one had hit her. She had not called the police because her brother had told her not to. Myron switches thoughts and asks Edwards about Anita Slaughter, Brenda's mother. Mabel stiffens, but tells Myron that Anita was a beautiful woman who had broken her brother's heart when she left him. Mabel had introduced Anita to her brother; the two women had worked together at the Bradford Estate. Myron is shown a picture of Anita with a young Brenda and suggests that perhaps she had met with foul play, that the note she had left Horace was a forgery. Mabel shocks Myron when she informs him that Anita calls her periodically to check on Brenda; the last time had been when she had been accepted to medical school. Tired, Mabel asks Myron if they can continue the conversation another time.

In chapter 8, Myron meets with Zuckerman who tells him that there are other issues of which to be aware. TruPro is planning on starting its own women's basketball league, and the man they are setting up for commissioner of the PWBL, or Professional Women's Basketball League had told Norm he would wipe him out. No other contact





had been made, but it was logical to assume that TruPro might be behind the threats to Brenda.

Myron meets Brenda after practice and informs her of what he's learned from her aunt. The two head to St Barnabas Hospital to meet with Horace's supervisor. Along the way, Myron tells Brenda about the advantages of being represented by MB SportsReps. Brenda realizes that Myron has not told her everything about his meeting with her aunt, so he tells her of the phone calls from her mother.

At the hospital, Myron meets with Calvin Campbell, Horace's supervisor. Campbell tells him that Horace had not shown up for work for three days, and that he had sent a letter firing him by return receipt. No receipt had been returned to the hospital yet. Campbell requests that Myron have Brenda clean out her father's locker. In the locker Myron and Brenda find a letter from an attorney demanding that Horace stop contacting them. Myron checks with Esperanza regarding Horace's phone bill and she confirms that Brenda's father had called Attorney Kincaid many times, as well as the Bradford gubernatorial headquarters numerous times. There is also a shirt with a large blood stain, but Brenda does not want to call the police.

In Chapter 9, Myron takes Brenda to her late practice and drives to the library to research the Bradford family, interested since they seem to have been involved in the life of the Slaughters in some way. The Bradford's were a wealthy family, and Arthur Bradford was running for governor, his brother Chance acting as his campaign manager. Myron discovers articles detailing the death of Arthur Bradford's wife twenty years earlier. Elizabeth Bradford had fallen to her death from a porch outside her room and had been discovered by a maid arriving for work.

In Chapter 10, Myron calls Mabel Edwards and confirms his suspicions; Anita Slaughter had been the maid that had found Elizabeth Bradford's body. Myron receives a phone call from his contact at the phone company, who tells him that a tracer is already in place on Brenda's phone line. Myron picks Brenda up at practice and tells her of the trace on her phone, suggests that she might be in danger and recommends that Brenda stay at Win's apartment until they can arrange a safe house for her. Brenda agrees, as long as she can continue to practice and play in the opening game. The pair goes to Brenda's dorm so she can gather some things and find FJ Ache outside. FJ tells Brenda and Myron that Horace had acted as her agent to sign her with the PWBL. Brenda tells FJ that Myron is her agent, and Myron points out that without Brenda's signature, TruPro has nothing. As Myron and Brenda leave, FJ smiles and tells Myron that killing him will be fun.

## Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Myron enjoys watching Brenda play basketball, remembering the joy he used to feel on the court in his past. When he informs Brenda of her father's actions before he disappeared, the strange parallel between his actions and the actions her mother took when she left are revealed. Though it makes sense to take money when one goes in to



hiding or on the run, there is more significance to the similarities than the reader is aware of at this point.

Meeting with Brenda's aunt Mabel, Myron tries to gather information that will help him find Brenda's father. At first, Myron is sidetracked from his purpose when Mabel reminds him of his time with Horace as a coach. Myron discovers that Horace had followed his career all along, crying when Myron was injured and forced to leave the game he loved. Myron regrets that he had not kept in touch with Horace, perhaps believing that there would always be time to get back in touch, or possibly because the connection was a painful reminder of Myron's loss. Mabel is kind enough, but discourages Myron from becoming involved. Unsure of how to proceed, Myron asks about her family and learns about her son working his way through Yale Law School and advancing quickly in his political career. Myron asks about Brenda's mother and Mabel is shaken by his inquiry. She shows Myron a picture of Anita and Brenda, and he is stunned by Anita's beauty. When Myron tries to gather more information about Anita's disappearance, suggesting that perhaps she was taken against her will, or met with foul play, he is stunned to learn that Anita has called Mabel throughout the years to check on Brenda. Myron is sure that Brenda is unaware of this, but Mabel tells him that she had told Horace of the calls at first and believes that Horace might have gotten some calls from Anita in the past as well.

Turning back to the topic of her brother, Mabel tells Myron that Horace does not want anyone to know where he is, pointing out her injury to illustrate her point. The two men that had come to her looking for Horace had struck her when she had no information about her brother for them. Feeling that it is best to let her brother hide, Mabel asks Myron to leave. This one passage holds a large amount of information that the reader will be referred to later in the novel. Mabel is an important character in the novel, and like many of them, is not at all what she seems.

Myron's thoughts are led down yet another path when he is informed by Norm of the TruPro situation. The threats to Brenda could indeed be coming from the Ache family, and yet the phone call requesting that Brenda call her mother does not fit into that scenario.

Horace's supervisor provides little information, but the locker search does. A bloody shirt, while shocking, and a letter from an attorney are found. The letter provides more information when Esperanza tells Myron that Horace had indeed called the attorney many times, as well as the Bradford campaign headquarters. Brenda does not know who the lawyer is, but the name is familiar. Myron can think of no reason for Horace to harass the lawyer or contact the Bradford family, but the significance of both will become clear later.

Another link to the Bradford family is made when Myron discovers that Anita Slaughter is the person who found Elizabeth Bradford dead more than twenty years ago. Myron Bolitar is increasingly curious about the connection between the Slaughter family and the Bradford family.



Another important fact is revealed when Myron learns that there is already a trace on Brenda's phone. The trace is sophisticated and recent, suggesting that someone in law enforcement is involved. Perhaps most significant is the phone call Brenda had received to call her mother. If Brenda had been able to contact her mother, whoever had placed the tap on her phone would have been able to find Anita. Myron is unsure at this point if someone is looking for Horace or Anita, or possibly both. Myron persuades Brenda to stay with Win for her safety, an idea that proves wise when the two run into FJ Ache outside the dorm. Ache threatens to kill Myron, claiming it will be fun. Ache is obviously unstable.



# Chapters 11-15

## Chapters 11-15 Summary

Myron and Brenda arrive at the Dakota, Win's apartment building. Brenda makes herself comfortable in her room and Myron asks Win if he can arrange a meeting with the Bradford family. Win concedes that he can but does not follow Myron's logic regarding the situation. While the Bradford family does seem to be tied to the Slaughter's in some way, the connection appears circumstantial to Win. If Anita Slaughter had seen something she shouldn't have when Elizabeth died, Win believes that the Bradford's would have taken care of it then, not waited nine months to do away with her. Brenda is listening, angry at having been left out of a conversation involving her life. She agrees with Win, but points out that perhaps her mother found something suspicious well after the death of Mrs. Bradford. The discussion over, Brenda leaves the two men, and Myron discusses his problem with Esperanza wanting a partnership. Myron argues that it will ruin their friendship. Win finds it ironic that Myron believes in marriage, but not in partnership.

In Chapter 12, Win and Myron arrive at the Bradford Estate, and are ushered into a library to meet with Arthur and Chance. Two men, one large, one skinny are outside the door. Myron is reminded of the two men that had assaulted Mabel Edwards. The Bradfords welcome Myron and Win, expecting political dealings and are shocked when Myron asks about Anita Slaughter instead. At first the brothers are evasive, claiming to have had no dealings with her since their mother handled the help. Myron asks if they know Horace, and they deny it, assuming that he is related to Anita in some way. Myron points out his many phone calls to the campaign headquarters, but Arthur brushes it off, saying many people call there. Myron and Win thank the Bradfords for their time, confusing them briefly, and as they leave, Myron wonders aloud why the two men wouldn't remember the woman that had found Elizabeth Bradford dead.

In Chapter 13, Myron and Win discuss what they have accomplished by meeting with the Bradfords. Myron states that he wanted to shake them up, and it appears he has done so. Win drives Myron to the Ritz Diner, where he finds Officer Francine Neagly. Francine had gone to high school with Myron, and Myron wants her to help him check into the death of Elizabeth Bradford. Neagly is cautious, but also curious. Francine wants to know if Myron is planning on using any information to embarrass Arthur Bradford, but he tells her that he only wants to know if she did indeed die accidentally. Myron promises that if he finds out otherwise, he will tell Francine, and she agrees to help him.

In Chapter 14, Win tells Myron that while he was in the diner, the two men from the Bradford estate have driven by. Myron decides to see what happens and asks Win to drive him to Brenda's practice. On the way the two men discuss the problem of FJ Ache. Win states simply that FJ will not back down and they will have to kill him. Myron asks him not to. At Brenda's practice, Myron is shocked when the coach tells him to suit up,



since they are short a player. Before he reaches the locker room, Brenda stops him to tell him that she has remembered that the lawyer her father had been contacting, Thomas Kincaid, had administered her first scholarship when she was twelve. Another lawyer, Rick Peterson, handles her current scholarship. A call to Esperanza reveals that Horace had repeatedly called Peterson as well. Myron also gets a message to call Jessica in L.A. and does. Jessica tells him that the company that optioned her last book wants her to stay and work on the screenplay. Myron asks her to come home, afraid that he will lose her again. Jessica swears that things will be fine, and they will talk later.

As Myron heads to the court to practice with the team he sees two men, obviously police officers. They approach and ask Brenda to come with them.

Chapter 15 finds Myron and Brenda being escorted to the Mahwah police station by two detectives, with Myron acting as Brenda's attorney. At the station, Myron and Brenda wait alone in an interrogation room until Detective Maureen McLaughlin and Detective Dan Tiles arrive. The two detectives want to ask Brenda some questions, but Myron is unwilling to allow it since they refuse to tell Brenda why she is there. Tiles examines Myron's hands and tells McLaughlin to let Brenda know why they are there. McLaughlin tells Brenda that Horace's body has been found three hours earlier. Horace died from a close range bullet wound. The detectives theory is that Brenda had killed her father when he had failed to obey the court issued restraining order she had against him. Horace had pushed Brenda nine days ago when she had last seen him and had been dead for about a week. Myron is surprised but warns Brenda not to speak. Something is bothering Myron about the investigators' demeanor and he tells them that Brenda wants to see her father's body. McLaughlin tries to discourage it, but Myron insists. The police do not know about the bloody shirt that Brenda had found in her father's locker, but Myron remembers it.

## Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Discussing the issue of the Bradford's, Win tries to dissuade Myron from going down the wrong path. Though they do seem to be tied to the Slaughter's in some way, Win has known the family for years, and knows that they would have handled a problem like Anita Slaughter immediately, not giving her the chance to destroy their family. Brenda agrees with Win; though by pointing out the fact that her mother might have found out something after the fact, she gives the two men something else to think about. Brenda still believes that her mother left for another man, pointing out that Myron is having difficulty with a mother leaving her child for any reason.

The meeting with the Bradford brothers is interesting for many reasons. Foremost, the two men that Mabel Slaughter had described to Myron are present, furthering the connection Myron had been making. Though he had originally thought the men worked for the Ache family at TruPro, it seems that they work for the Bradfords.

Though Arthur and Chance are more than friendly when they think that Myron and Win are there to exchange political favors, they become very reserved and cautious when



Myron mentions Anita. Their reaction tells Myron that they do have something to hide, though at this point he believes it is because they are involved in her disappearance. The Bradfords refuse to be drawn into any conversation about Anita Slaughter, and Myron and Win leave. Chance reacts verbally, confused, but Arthur does not. As they leave, Myron's parting remark about the connection between Anita and the late Mrs. Bradford catches the brothers off guard, making Myron wonder exactly what is going on.

The Ritz Diner brings back memories of high school and his youth as Myron once again thinks back to his past. Francine Neagly is part of that past, and the two enjoy thinking about their days in high school. Francine is cautious when Myron brings up the Bradford family and the death of Elizabeth, reminding Myron about how powerful the family is. Myron agrees, but tells Neagly that he simply wants to verify the truth and does not want to make any trouble for them. Ambition seems to win out for Francine, who agrees to help Myron, as long as he promises to come to her first if he discovers anything.

Knowing the two men from the Bradford estate have followed them confirms for Myron and Win that something is indeed strange. The men have passed by, but Win is confident they will continue to follow them. Win takes Myron to Brenda's practice, but brings up the matter of FJ Ache. The calm manner in which Win states that they will have to kill FJ to stop him reveals something of his character. Myron knows too well that Win is capable of murder, and asks him not to do anything unless necessary. Win gives Myron a gun, and Myron realizes that judging by the two families that are involved in whatever is going on, a weapon is a good idea.

At the gym, Myron is asked to play with the team and plans to do so, but is waylaid by more information. The fact that Horace has been trying to contact the lawyers that had administered Brenda's scholarships is interesting. Myron will draw some conclusions about this later in the novel, at first incorrectly. A phone call from Jessica brings Myron up short. Jessica has been invited to stay in California, and Myron is upset. Jessica had cheated on him in the past, and the memory of that painful time is suffocating. Jessica tries to reassure him but is unable to do so. Myron is unsure of how to deal with this development. Esperanza hates Jessica because of the pain that she had caused Myron, and Win does not have any experience with relationships. He feels truly alone. Thinking things through, Myron goes to the court to join the practice, but two detectives arrive wanting to speak with Brenda. Myron knows that whatever is going on, it isn't good.

The two detectives take Brenda and Myron to Mahwah where they are met by Detectives McLaughlin and Tiles. Myron is aware that the pair are playing the roles of good cop, bad cop and tries to protect Brenda as best he can. It is clear the police think that Brenda had something to do with her father's murder, even though Brenda is shocked by the news. Myron continues to interrupt the questioning but is stunned to learn that Horace had assaulted Brenda nine days earlier. Brenda is quiet and tells the police she does not know why he did so. McLaughlin suggests that perhaps Brenda killed her father in self defense, encouraging her to confess and save herself a trial, but Myron remembers the bloody shirt in Horace's locker. Myron realizes that there is

something the police are not telling Brenda, some information that does not fit into the scenario they have created.



# Chapters 16-20

## Chapters 16-20 Summary

In chapter 16, The body of Horace Slaughter is viewed, and Myron points out bruises on his face and a broken nose. McLaughlin is not happy when Myron tells her they are leaving. Outside, Myron explains to Brenda that the police had tried to trap her into confessing, then using the evidence of the bruise to lock her into a confession. Tiles had checked Myron's hands for signs of bruising, suggesting that he might have been the person that had assaulted Horace. Brenda is shaken and asks to stay with Myron.

In chapter 17, Myron and Brenda arrive at his parent's house. A neighborhood picnic is going on with relatives and friends. Myron's mother Ellen teases him, and Brenda settles in with the group comfortably. Ellen invites her to spend the night, then goes to bed. Myron and Brenda walk and talk. The pair walks to the Bradford estate so Brenda can see where her mother had worked for six years. Returning to his parent's house, the pair gets ready for sleep, and Brenda kisses Myron. He protests, but Brenda tells him that she is not kissing him out of vulnerability and he knows it. Myron manages to say goodnight and goes to his old room in the basement.

A phone call wakes Myron in chapter 18; Francine Neagly wants to meet with him. She hangs up without answering any questions. Myron finds his mother and Brenda discussing her situation in the kitchen. The murder of Horace had made the front page. Inside the paper is a picture of Terrance Edwards with Arthur Bradford. Myron points out the fact that the Bradford's keep popping up. After explaining that he has an errand, Myron meets Francine Neagly in the woods near the high school. Francine is angry and wants to know why Myron is looking into the Bradford death. Myron is leery, but tells her he is just curious. Francine informs him that according to the file there was no cover-up, the investigation concluded that Elizabeth's death was accidental. Myron argues a bit, but Francine is firm. Myron asks why they even had to meet and Francine tells him that her apartment had been searched after she read the file, and she had been called into the chief of detective's office and questioned about her interest. Roy Pomeranz was the other investigating officer in Elizabeth Bradford's death. Francine is upset that she had been drawn into the situation and demands some answers, so Myron fills her in on what has been going on, up to and including Horace's murder. Francine remembers Anita Slaughter had been mentioned in the police file and makes the connection. Stunned she informs Myron that Anita Slaughter had been assaulted twenty years ago.

In chapter 19, Myron gets information from Win that Horace had used one of his credit cards two weeks ago at the Holiday Inn. At home, Myron finds Brenda waiting for him. People are gathering at her aunt's house. Myron gives her a ride, but stops first at the hotel to see if he can find any information. Without any trouble, Myron discovers that Horace had lunch at the hotel with Caroline Gundeck, a woman who had worked there forever. Gundeck is not in, but Myron checks the phone book and left a message on what he hoped was her machine. In the lobby, Brenda is looking around in a shocked





way. Brenda believes she has been to this hotel before with her mother when she was very young, but can not remember any details.

On the way to Mabel's house, Myron tells Brenda of his theory that Horace had been looking for Anita. Unable to tie everything together neatly yet, it seems to him that if Horace had made the connection to the Bradford family that Myron had, he might have started calling them. If the Bradford's had not wanted Horace to start trouble, they might have had him killed. On a hunch, Myron has his contact at the phone company check Mabel's phone and a tap on the line is confirmed. Myron theorizes that that is how someone had found Horace. Brenda questions the calls to the scholarship attorney and Myron explains another theory. Anita might have blackmailed the Bradford family, using the money to make sure her daughter got an education. Brenda is not happy with the theory but lets it go as they arrive at her aunt's house.

The people there are quiet and judgmental, barely speaking to Brenda until she sees that Mabel, her aunt, openly hugs and comforts her. Afterward, Myron speaks with Mabel and promises to do what he can to find her brother's murderer. Mabel agrees to do whatever it takes to help him. Myron mentions the Holiday Inn and Mabel reacts oddly. When Myron tells her that Brenda seems to have recognized the location, Mabel seems even more upset. She tells Myron to come back that evening without Brenda and talk with her.

In chapter 20, Myron calls Jessica's hotel, but she is not in. Esperanza also calls with a problem with a client. Francine Neagly calls and tells Myron she is being followed. He meets with her and picks up the car that had been trailing her. Arriving at the little league field, Myron discovers that the man following Francine is retired detective Eli Wickner, the investigating officer in the Bradford death twenty years ago. Myron approaches Wickner and gets right to the point, asking why there was a cover up. Wickner almost responds, but they are interrupted by Roy Pomeranz, Wickner's former partner. Pomeranz suggests that Myron is working for Davison, Arthur Bradford's rival for governor. Myron mentions the assault of Anita Slaughter and the two men appear stunned, but recover. Pomeranz tells Myron that the file is missing and leaves in disgust. Myron speaks again to Wickner who tells him to drop it; no good can come of his investigation. Myron tells him he will not stop until he finds out the truth, and Wickner states in a resigned fashion that more people will die.

## Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Myron knows that by putting his arm around Brenda he is offering comfort but also knows that his feelings for her are growing. When Horace's body is viewed, Brenda identifies him as does Myron, but the information he knew the police were holding back is evident. Horace had been shot, but there was evidence of an assault as well. Myron knows that the police believe that the assault occurred when Horace was murdered, but the blood-stained shirt at the hospital tells him otherwise. Myron explains to Brenda that her father must have been assaulted first, and had gone to the hospital to clean up himself. After doing so he had fled. The killer had found him a day or two later. Brenda is



shaken and refuses Myron's offer to take her to her aunt's house. He is pleased when she tells him she would rather stay with him.

The picnic at his parent's house is helpful to both Brenda and Myron. Brenda is able to forget, even if only for a moment the turmoil in her life, and Myron can relax and stop thinking about Jessica and their situation as well. Myron is happiest when surrounded by family and friends, and they all accept Brenda without question. Afterward, Brenda tells Myron of her last meeting with her father. Horace had been drunk and had mistaken his daughter for the wife that had left him. At his parent's home, Myron is a bit taken aback by Brenda's kiss but feels drawn to her as well. Unwilling to take advantage of her at such a vulnerable time, Myron does not continue the kiss. He also needs time to work through the situation with Jessica. Having loved Jessica for ten years, the fact that another woman has become so important to him in such a short time is a bit frightening.

The meeting with Francine Neagly is revealing. The police report does not show any cover-up in the death of Elizabeth Bradford, yet after Francine had read the file, she had been called before the chief of detectives and her apartment had been searched. The question to Myron is, if there were no cover-up, why is there such an interest in the file being read twenty years later. The mention of the assault of Anita Slaughter that is mentioned in the case file also draws Myron's attention, though he is unsure what to make of it. All Myron can do is tell Neagly to be cautious and apologize for getting her involved in the situation.

Myron realizes that the information Win had about the credit cards most likely means that Horace had lunch at the hotel before he was murdered. Stopping there with Brenda, Myron makes some inquiries and his suspicions are confirmed. Finding Brenda in the lobby remembering a previous visit to the location with her mother is odd and very significant.

Myron's theory that Horace had been searching for Anita is interesting, and the facts that Myron has so far do seem to point in that direction. Brenda, however, points out that no matter what theories Myron develops, he always casts her mother in a good light. Even having to leave her daughter to keep her safe, or blackmailing the Bradford family is always done to protect her. Brenda realizes that Myron is trying to make her feel better, but Slaughter reveals her feelings to him. No matter what her mother's reason for leaving, there is no way to make a girl grow up and not wonder why her mother did not love her enough to stay or take her with her when she ran.

Mabel's welcome of Brenda helps Brenda overcome some of the grief she had been keeping inside since she had heard about her father's murder. Mabel speaks with Myron and promises to help, but her reaction to the mention of the hotel is odd, and she seems sad or resigned when Myron tells her that Brenda seems to remember having been there with her mother. This is another significant fact. Though Myron is still not close to solving the case, he has more pieces to the puzzle than he yet realizes.



Myron gets a call from Francine Neagly that she is being followed and arranges to pick up her tail. On the drive he thinks about his relationship with Jessica and all they have been through, as well as how he feels when he is with Brenda and the kiss they had shared. When Myron confronts Detective Wickner, it is almost as if the man had been waiting for this. It seems that Eli might have shed some light on the situation if his former partner had not arrived. Wickner seems to have reacted to the fact that Myron no longer respected him. Pomeranz seems to believe that Myron is working for the opposition to Arthur Bradford's campaign for governor. Wickner is stunned when Myron tell them that he is working for Brenda Slaughter. The way the two detectives react to Myron's knowledge of Anita's assault tells Myron that it is an important detail. Myron is stunned by the resignation Wickner exhibits when he states that more people will die if he does not stop looking into the death of Elizabeth Bradford.



# Chapters 21-25

## Chapters 21-25 Summary

Myron is greeted at his car by the two men from the Bradford home. A few brief questions confirm that they are indeed the men that had visited Mabel Edwards, but comments that Myron makes about hitting a grandmother are met with confusion by the larger man. The small man tells Myron that Arthur Bradford would like to meet with him. Myron tells him he will drive himself and kicks the large man in the groin. The small man does not react, telling Myron to do as he likes, also telling him to ask his father about him. Myron is confused by the statement and leaves for Bradford Farms.

In chapter 22, Myron is escorted to the indoor swimming pool and meets with Arthur who notes the absence of Sam and Mario. Bradford wants to know why Myron is asking questions about Anita Slaughter. Arthur claims that Horace had made contact and tried to blackmail him, stating he had information about Anita Slaughter. Bradford makes reference to Myron meeting with known criminal associates of his rival, and Myron assumes Arthur means the Ache family. Bradford confirms this. Myron explains that his interest is only in Brenda Slaughter and tells Arthur about the rival basketball league the Ache's are planning. Bradford does not understand why his wife's death is related to Brenda Slaughter and why Myron would bring up the past in the hopes of locating Horace. Myron tells Bradford that he was also looking for Anita and Bradford reacts strongly. Myron is unsure why, but assumes it is somehow tied to her disappearance and the death of Elizabeth. Bradford asks Myron why he thinks Anita is alive after twenty years, but Myron does not reveal the fact that Anita had been in contact. Myron mentions his second condition in remaining quiet for now. His concern is Brenda and keeping her out of jail. Bradford tells him not to worry about it. Leaving, Myron asks Bradford if he knows his father. Arthur asks why and Myron tells him Sam mentioned it. Bradford suggests he ask his father.

In chapter 23, Myron leaves as Sam and Mario arrive and Mario storms toward him. Myron simply knees him in the groin again and leaves. Outside Win waits and asks Myron what he hopes to accomplish, to which Myron replies he wants to find Horace's killer, find Anita, and protect Brenda. Win points out that annoying powerful people might not be the best way to protect Brenda and that Anita Slaughter might not want to be found. Myron mentions a possible cover-up in Elizabeth Bradford's death, but Win scoffs at that, as well as at Myron's wish to find Horace's killer. Win asks Myron if he is in love with Brenda, suggesting that his feelings are clouding his judgment. Myron refuses to back down, so Win agrees to help him, warning Myron that by being relentless he can easily be stupid as well.

In chapter 24, Myron stops at the office to see Esperanza. Big Cyndi is there and hugs Myron exuberantly, so grateful to have been given a job at the agency. Meeting with Esperanza, Myron handles a problem with a client, then asks Esperanza why she hates Jessica. Esperanza tells him that it has become a habit to hate her; Jessica had hurt



him badly when she had cheated on him, and Esperanza had been there through it all. His friend is unwilling to see him hurt again. Changing the subject, Esperanza tells Myron that she had researched Elizabeth Bradford's death for him and nothing looked suspicious. The only curious item is that Elizabeth had stopped attending any type of social activity six months before her death. Esperanza agrees to find the woman who wrote the society column that often mentioned Elizabeth Bradford. Esperanza then brings up her demands for a partnership. Myron is unwilling to lose her as a friend, and Esperanza tells him that would never happen. At an impasse, Esperanza leaves, telling Myron she will give him three weeks notice to ease a transition.

In chapter 25, Myron goes to the Inglemoore Convalescent Home to meet with Deborah Whittaker, the woman who had written the society column for the Jersey Ledger. Whittaker is an aging woman, full of life and sarcasm, who informs Myron of her tentative grasp on the present. Myron asks Deborah about Elizabeth Bradford and in a strange mix of present and past tense, Whittaker tells Myron that Elizabeth had been a force in the circle of the wealthy but had disappeared from the scene almost completely. Struggling to follow the woman's changing train of thought, Myron gathers that people believed that Elizabeth had a drinking problem, but Deborah does not believe that to be the case. Rumor at the time had stated that Elizabeth had a breakdown and Arthur had her institutionalized. Deborah does not believe this to be the case either, pointing out that if Elizabeth had been in a hospital, she could not have fallen to her death in her home.

## Chapters 21-25 Analysis

Myron is not surprised to find the two men from the Bradford estate waiting for him. The large man is intimidating, but something about the smaller man is more frightening to Myron. When Sam confirms that they are the men that had hit Mabel, Myron grows angry and taunts them with comments about striking a grandmother. The large man is confused, but Myron assumes that he is too stupid to understand sarcasm. This seemingly small bit of information will tie into the investigation later. The two men are there to escort Myron to Bradford Farms, but angry, Myron strikes the larger man and draws his gun. The smaller man does not even react except to tell Myron striking Mario was wasteful. He then tells Myron to ask his (Myron's) father about him. Myron is perplexed by the mention of his father.

At the Bradford home, Myron meets with Arthur who is somewhat surprised that Sam and Mario are not with him. Calmly, Bradford asks Myron what he really wants, assuming that because the election for governor is approaching, that Myron works for the opposition and is trying to stir up trouble. When Arthur discovers that Myron is simply working for Brenda Slaughter he is a bit surprised but still does not see the connection between Brenda and the death of his wife so many years ago. Myron's revelation that he is also looking for Anita Slaughter causes a much bigger reaction in Bradford when the man visibly pales and needs to gather his thoughts again. Bradford's reaction is odd, but Myron thinks it is simply defensiveness, a politician's unwillingness to allow his past to be used against him. When Myron asks Bradford if he knows Al



Bolitar, Bradford is mysterious, simply telling Myron that Sam has worked for him for a long time.

Myron becomes defensive when Win questions his motives. Win is acting as the voice of reason, but Myron is blinded to it. Win's question about whether Myron is in love with Brenda stuns him, but facing the truth, Myron admits that he might indeed be in love with her. Win points out that Myron may be rationalizing all his excuses to continue investigating Horace's death and Anita's disappearance, using them as a reason to stay near Brenda. Myron is dumbstruck, but internally admits that Win might have a point.

Esperanza's old wrestling partner, Big Cyndi, hugs Myron almost to the point of injury in her gratitude for a job at the agency. Myron is happy that he has made it into the office alive when she finally releases him. Meeting with Esperanza, Myron asks about her hatred for Jessica. Esperanza explains that she had not been happy to see Myron hurt and was not willing to see it happen again. His friend tells him that he used to leave himself open to getting hurt, being too sensitive, giving too much of himself. Myron states that that might be more his fault and Esperanza agrees, but that Myron has been forever changed by Jessica. The information that Esperanza had found about Elizabeth Bradford will turn out to be important. The fact that Bradford had been a regular on the society pages and then had more or less vanished from mention will be explained later in the novel. Myron will follow the lead, but it does not take him where he believes it will.

The information Deborah Whittaker provides about Elizabeth Bradford is stunning to Myron, as well as a key point in the novel. The sudden disappearance of Mrs. Bradford from the social scene six months before her death had been the subject of much gossip, and both theories, her drinking and her having a breakdown seem plausible. Myron agrees with Whittaker about the key point. If Elizabeth had been sent away after a breakdown, she would not have fallen to her death at her home.



# Chapters 26-30

## Chapters 26-30 Summary

In chapter 26, Myron meets with Arthur Bradford on the campaign trail. Chance is not happy to see him but instructs him to wait on the bus, where Myron finds Sam reading a magazine. Myron asks Arthur about his wife's disappearance from the social scene. Bradford is confused as to why Myron keeps bringing up his wife when he is supposed to be looking for Anita Slaughter. Resigned, Bradford agrees to tell Myron the truth, which upsets Chance greatly. Arthur Bradford tells Myron that his wife had indeed had a breakdown, though she had not been institutionalized. What had seemed like moments of quiet contemplation when they had met in college had turned out to be mental illness that had gotten worse throughout the years. Confirming what Myron had suspected, Bradford tells him that Elizabeth had not died by accident, she had committed suicide, and the story had been covered up by the family. Chance is furious with his brother for telling Myron the truth, and when Myron questions who had beaten Anita, Chance becomes enraged, threatening him. Sam comes forward, and Myron pulls his gun, holding it on Chance until Arthur calls Sam off.

In chapter 27, Myron goes to his father's office to ask about his connection to Arthur Bradford and Sam. Myron has a close relationship with his father, and Al is happy to see him, though somewhat surprised. When Myron mentions Bradford and Sam, his father pales and tells him to stay away from the men, they are pure evil. During the riots in New Jersey, Bradford had been involved with the unions, and Al Bolitar had been resistant to unions in his shop. Sam Richards had come with Arthur Bradford to convince him otherwise. When Al had still refused and told them to leave, Sam had put pruning shears on his desk and asked Al's opinion about how much a person can be hurt before they die. Al had gone home shaken but had not told his wife. That night when Al had gone to tuck Myron in, there had been pruning shears on his bed. In tears, Al tells Myron to stay away from the Bradfords and Sam Richards.

In chapter 28, Myron calls on Win to help him. Myron explains what has been going on and they drive to West Orange to see Clay Jackson, one of the young men that had had his Achilles tendon cut with pruning shears. On the way, Win tells Myron what he has found out about the scholarships Brenda has received and that the listening devices in Mabel and Horace's house were at least three years old.

At Clay Jackson's house, Myron and Win are escorted into the backyard by Clay's mother. Soon, eight men with baseball bats arrive and announce that they will use lethal force to protect Clay if necessary. Underestimating Win, the apparent leader attacks and Win incapacitates him with little effort. Clay Jackson appears on crutches and wants to know why Myron and Win are interested in who hurt him. Jackson is unwilling to talk and Win demonstrates that he can be much scarier than the men who hurt him by grinding Clay's uncle's face in the mud. Jackson relents finally, telling them that he had been cut by Sam Richards.



Chapter 29 begins with Myron and Win discussing Win's actions. Myron believes Win had gone too far. Win explains that though Myron may be uncomfortable with the way he handles things, he always calls on Win when there is a problem to be handled. Win drops Myron off at Mabel Edwards' house, where he is stunned when Mabel tells him that Brenda had been at the Holiday Inn with her mother the night Anita had left Horace. Mabel explains that Anita had planned on taking Brenda with her but had changed her mind and called Horace to come get her. Myron is unable to grasp why Anita had changed her mind, and Mabel states that something had obviously scarred Anita so badly that she was afraid to take her daughter. Mabel tells Myron that when her husband had been killed she had fallen apart, turning to drugs and alcohol. Anita and Horace had sent her away to get clean and had taken care of Terrance, Mabel's son. Mabel felt guilty because when Anita needed her she hadn't been there for her. Edwards also tells Myron that she had asked Anita to come back, but Brenda's mother had told her that if she ever came back, Brenda would die.

In chapter 30, Myron goes home to change and finds Jessica waiting for him. Shocked, Myron is obviously not himself and Jessica asks him why. Myron tells her that he almost slept with another woman but had not because he was involved with her. Jessica is faced with the possibility of losing Myron, and says she will do whatever she has to to keep him. Discussing marriage and family, Jessica asks Myron if that is what he wants and Myron tells her it is. They are interrupted by Win, who has arrived to tell him that Norm Zuckerman has been trying to reach him. Norm tells Myron that Brenda has not shown up for the game.

## Chapters 26-30 Analysis

The information that Myron had gotten from Deborah Whittaker leads to Arthur Bradford revealing the truth about his wife's death. Elizabeth had killed herself after years of debilitating mental illness. Anita Slaughter had been the person to find her, and though there was a cover-up in order to protect the family name, Anita had never asked for any money, had in fact refused to take a payoff. All that information makes sense to Myron until he remembers that Anita had been assaulted weeks before Elizabeth died. Chance reacts strongly, demanding that Myron be killed for knowing too much about the family. Myron is quick to respond, holding a gun on Chance until Arthur tells him that Myron will not be harmed. Arthur reminds Myron of his promise to find Anita Slaughter and keep Brenda safe. Myron still does not think that Arthur's request is strange, feeling that Bradford is trying to protect his campaign. Arthur has an entirely different reason for wanting to find Anita, which will become clear to the reader later.

Myron meets with his father and is shocked to learn of Al Bolitar's history with the Bradford family and Sam Richards. Al is extremely emotional and warns Myron that the men he is dealing with do not have an ounce of caring, making them impossible to fight. The mention of the pruning shears triggers something for Myron, and he remembers that Brenda had believed that Horace had used pruning shears to cut the Achilles tendon of two men who had hassled her.





At Jackson's home, Myron and Win find themselves in a bit of trouble when eight men with baseball bats threaten them. The men are protecting Clay, but Win is not interested in them. When the leader of the group attacks, Win demonstrates his skill by quickly disarming him. When Jackson appears and is not willing to cooperate, Win seems more than willing to kill the older man to get the information he wants. Myron is aware of this side of Win but is still uncomfortable. Jackson relents, and tells the men what they want to know. What is unclear is why Sam Richards would maim the young men in such a way.

Myron is upset with Win's casual attitude about threatening to kill a man to get information from Clay Jackson. His reaction may stem from his recent trip to his father's office, and the similarities between Win and the actions of Sam Richards.

At Mabel Edwards' house, Myron is shocked to learn that Anita had taken Brenda with her when she had run away twenty years ago, but Myron does not understand why she so quickly changed her mind. Mabel explains that something had frightened Anita badly and tells Myron of her own struggles after her husband's murder. Mabel tells Myron that she still feels guilty for not helping Anita when she needed her most. Though the story is believable, the reader will learn shortly that it is not entirely true.

Myron's life takes another turn when he finds Jessica waiting for him at the loft. Jessica is stunned to find out that Myron had almost slept with another woman. Knowing Myron, Jessica realizes that he is seriously involved with the other woman, as he is not a cheater, and would not have even thought about it if his feelings had not been strong. The two discuss what they want from life and it becomes clear to the reader that though Jessica and Myron love each other, they do not necessarily want the same things. The arrival of Win and the announcement that Brenda is missing send Myron into a panic, and he almost collapses.



# Chapters 31-35

## Chapters 31-35 Summary

In chapter 31, Myron and Win rush to Madison Square Garden. Inside, videos of Brenda plays on the jumbo screen while celebrities wait for the game to begin. The two men race to the press box and find Norm Zuckerman waiting with detectives McLaughlin and Tiles. Norm tells Myron that Brenda has not arrived. Win and Norm retreat to a corner while McLaughlin and Tiles speak to Myron. The detectives want to speak to Brenda because they had executed a search warrant at her dorm and found a gun of the same caliber that had killed Horace. Myron rejects them out of hand and talks to Win. Win informs him that Brenda had received a phone call at practice and left. No one had seen her since. Myron wants to follow up with Detective Wickner, and Win stalls Tiles and McLaughlin.

Chapter 32 finds Myron at Wickner's cabin. Myron is surprised by Wickner holding a gun on him and escorting him into his cabin. Inside, Myron sees Detective Pomeranz dead from a shotgun wound to the stomach. Wickner tells Myron the truth about Anita Slaughter and Elizabeth Bradford. Wickner had met Anita a few weeks before Bradford's death, when Slaughter had been on a bus stop and bleeding and a citizen had called it in. Anita had not told Wickner who had attacked her and he had assumed it was a domestic issue. A few weeks later Wickner is called to the Bradford home when Elizabeth Bradford commits suicide. There was indeed a cover-up. Myron had been right all along. Wickner explains the involvement of the police and his regret and then kills himself with the shotgun.

In chapter 33 and 34, Win arrives and the two men drive to the Bradford estate. Win searches the premises for Brenda while Myron intends to meet with Arthur. Ambushed, Myron is taken to the wine cellar where Arthur and Chance wait. Arthur reveals the truth at last. Elizabeth had killed herself in front of Anita Slaughter, Arthur's lover. Arthur and Anita had intended to run away together. Elizabeth had found out about their affair and killed herself. Arthur still searched for Anita, believing that she had run away. Upon hearing the truth of the night from Myron, Arthur shoots Chance in the knee demanding to know all and kills Sam Richards without a second thought. Chance tells Arthur that the night he was supposed to meet Anita, he and Sam had found her dead in a hotel room. Anita had not been missing for 20 years; she had been dead. The truth is overwhelming for Arthur Bradford. At this point in time all he can think about is Brenda, his biological daughter, a secret he and Anita had kept from the world. Bradford begs Myron to find her and keep her safe.

In chapter 35, Myron and Win rush to the car, with Win telling Myron that he could not find Brenda anywhere on the estate. As they ready to leave, Win receives a phone call, telling him Brenda is dead.



## Chapters 31-35 Analysis

The story begins to move at a much more rapid pace and the pieces of the puzzle fall together. Myron and Win arrive at Madison Square Garden to find Brenda missing from her debut as the star of the new women's basketball league. Detective Tiles and McLaughlin wait for Brenda to question her about a weapon found in her dorm room. Myron bolts with Win providing a back-up and rushes to retired detective Wickner's cabin, hoping to find some truth after all these years.

Wickner takes Myron at gunpoint and escorts him into his home, where Myron finds Detective Pomeranz dead. Wickner had killed him. Unable to cover up the family secret any longer, the Bradford's had sent his partner to silence him. Wickner, at his core a good man, had been troubled with the secrets he had carried for years.

Anita Slaughter had watched Elizabeth Bradford purposely dive off the balcony in her home, killing herself. The Bradford family had bribed the police department to cover up the crime. In addition, Wickner reveals to Myron that he had seen Anita one last time, being carried out of the Holiday Inn by Sam Richards. Unsure of what to make of it, Myron is stunned again when Wickner kills himself.

Win and Myron go to the Bradford Estate and Myron meets with Arthur Bradford under less-than-desirable conditions. Believing he will be killed, Myron lays the cards on the table and is surprised to find that Arthur Bradford does not know the truth about his lover's disappearance. After 20 years, Chance reveals that Anita is dead and has been all along, though he was not responsible for her death. In anguish, Arthur kills Sam Richards and begs Myron to find his daughter. Myron is dumbfounded over the fact that Bradford had been unaware of Anita's death for so long.



# Chapters 36, 37 & Epilogue: September 15

## Chapters 36, 37 & Epilogue: September 15 Summary

In Chapter 36, a young boy is missing in New Jersey and a frantic search of the wooded area near his house takes place. The boy and his distraught parents are reunited quickly; however, a search dog locates the body of a young woman. An hour later the woman is identified as Brenda Slaughter, dead from two gunshot wounds to the head.

Myron wants to be alone and takes Win's car. Stopping at Esperanza's home, Myron finds her outside waiting for him. Myron tells Esperanza that he had been wrong. Win had talked to him about making leaps of faith, but he had misunderstood him. Unwilling to lose Esperanza, Myron seems to be more accepting of a partnership between them.

In Chapter 37, Myron arrives at the home of Mabel Edwards and finds her awake. At first Mabel plays the role of the bereaved aunt, but as Myron accuses her of killing Anita, Horace and Brenda, her attitude becomes more cautious. Myron tells Mabel that he had stopped at Sam Richards' partner's home. The man had sworn that neither he nor Sam had ever struck Mabel. The pieces of the puzzle had clicked for Myron while meeting with Arthur Bradford. Though Mabel had claimed Anita had called her throughout the years, a phone tap long in place had not clued Bradford into this. Myron realized that Mabel had been lying to him from the beginning. Laying his theory out, Myron talks to Mabel, who does not deny anything. Mabel Edwards had killed Anita 20 years ago for money. When Horace began looking for his wife after all these years, Mabel killed her brother to protect Mabel's secret. Finally, when Brenda had remembered the Holiday Inn she had visited with her mother so long ago, Mabel had killed her as well. Brenda's mother had not abandoned her twenty years ago; Anita was going to take her daughter with her. Mabel was concerned that if Brenda remembered the hotel she would remember the rest of the evening, including seeing Mabel at the hotel. Myron is unable to comprehend that Brenda is gone and is devastated when Mabel admits she had lured Brenda from practice to her death by telling her that her mother wanted to see her. Though he is armed, Myron does not harm Mabel, leaving her and driving to New York only telling one person what had happened.

In the Epilogue, Myron waits at the cemetery until Arthur Bradford arrives. Bradford confirms that he had Mabel Edwards killed, and that she had died slowly. Myron is not proud of himself, but his grief is still overwhelming. Bradford leaves after telling Myron that he would be dropping out of the governor's race. Jessica is waiting by Myron's car when he readies to leave. Unwilling to hurt again, Myron leaves, with Jessica still standing by the roadside in the rain.



## Chapters 36, 37 & Epilogue: September 15 Analysis

The death of Brenda is devastating to Myron. Even with the dangerous investigation and his time-tested relationship with Jessica, Myron had thought that he had finally found love in Brenda. Her death crushed him, almost turning off all feeling. The realization that the relationships he has are precious, Myron visits Esperanza, who is devastated for Myron. Esperanza knows that Myron had loved Brenda, and that he is once again heart broken. The two discuss their relationship and the reader is left with the sense that any difficulties and misunderstandings have been overcome between the two friends.

Meeting with Mabel Edwards, Myron knows that the woman had him fooled from the beginning. Her matronly appearance had disguised an evil heart. Mabel had killed her sister-in-law twenty years ago and taken the money Anita had saved through the years. When her brother began to look for his wife so many years later, Mabel had simply killed him as well to cover up her crime. The final death, Brenda, was also a cover-up. Brenda had remembered the Holiday Inn her mother had taken her to the night they had run away together. Mabel had killed her to prevent the truth from being revealed. The saddest thing for Myron was that Brenda would never know that her mother had not abandoned her after all; Anita had planned on taking Brenda with her so many years ago.

Mabel knew that Myron would never kill her; however she was unaware how deeply his anger ran. Myron told Arthur Bradford the truth about Anita and Brenda's deaths, knowing that Bradford would never allow the woman who had taken his final chance at happiness to live. At Brenda's graveside, Arthur tells Myron that Mabel is dead and that she had died slowly. There is no relief for Myron, simply an end. The final scene is Myron leaving Jessica on the roadside, unwilling to hurt her, but also unwilling to return to life he had been leading.



# Characters

## Myron Bolitar

Myron Bolitar is the main character in *One False Move*, by Harlan Coben. Myron, a former almost-pro basketball star owns MB SportsReps. As a sports agent, Myron is contacted by Norm Zuckerman, the CEO of Zoom, a sports merchandising company. Zuckerman wants Myron to protect Brenda Slaughter from anonymous threats. Myron is unwilling at first, but as Slaughter does not have an agent, he agrees to help.

Myron spends time with Brenda, growing close to her quickly. Their relationship starts out as a friendship, but the two quickly become closer, and Myron begins to fall in love with her. Matters are complicated by the relationship that Myron has with Jessica Culver, his live-in girlfriend. Though Myron loves Jessica, they have had problems in the past. Myron wants the proverbial r marriage, children and a future. Jessica is in no rush, and seems to fear commitment.

Myron becomes entangled in Brenda's life, and wants to help her find her father and mother. As the investigation progresses, Myron become more deeply involved with Brenda, and his feelings for her strengthen. As the truth about Brenda's past become clear, Myron does his best to keep her safe, but is unable to. Myron is an honest man, true to his friends, and willing to do what it takes to keep those around him safe. His past with Jessica has changed his willingness to trust somewhat, but his aspirations remain the same, and he still has faith that all people are inherently good, despite the times he has had to deal with life's more unsavory characters.

## Windsor Horne Lockwood III

Win has been one of Myron's closest friends since they attended Duke University together. Win is an executive at Lock-Horne Industries, raised in a life of wealth and privilege, Win's youth lacked warmth and caring; as a result, Win does not operate within the norm of acceptable behavior at times. Though Win does not believe in marriage or in long term relationships, the few friendships he has are deep and long lasting. Win is always there for his friends, willing to do whatever it takes, legal or not, in order to be of assistance.

Myron calls on Win to help him with the problems Brenda is facing. Win is more that willing to help, even opening his home to Brenda when she needs a safe place to stay. Win assists Myron in the investigation surrounding Brenda, as he has contacts in the financial world that Myron does not have, and as a rich man, has contacts within the circles that various suspected parties travel.

Win's life has made him almost a psychotic individual, and at times Myron even worries that Win can not control his tendencies for violence. This is evident when Win simply states that FJ Ache must be killed rather than dealt with, or when Win calmly grinds a



man's face into the mud, almost killing him to get information. Despite this, Myron Bolitar knows that Win is his true friend, and because Myron accepts him for what he is, Win is extremely loyal, willing to do no matter what it takes to maintain their friendship.

## Brenda Slaughter

Brenda is a rising star in women's basketball and the future star of the new women's league, the WPBA. Brenda has been getting threatening phone calls, and Norm Zuckerman is worried about her, as well as his investment in the Women's Professional Basketball Association. Norm asks Myron to keep an eye on Brenda, using the fact that she does not have an agent to convince him.

Brenda's life has always been full of turmoil. Brenda believed that her mother had left her when she was five years old, and she had been raised by her father Horace. Though Horace loved his daughter, their relationship does not seem to have been a close one. At this point in Brenda's life, when she sits at the crest of a career in a new woman's basketball league, and in her final year of medical school, her life comes crashing down around her. Her father is missing, presumably on the run, and she discovers that her aunt has heard from her mother periodically throughout the years.

With anonymous threats being made against her, and mysterious calls telling her to contact her mother, Brenda has no one that she can trust to turn to. Her relationship with Myron quickly grows from a working friendship to more. Brenda is falling in love with Myron, and the two agree that being together feels right. Events escalate and Brenda's life becomes even more complicated, though the threats and danger she faces come from a person that no one had suspected, her aunt, Mabel Edwards.

## Esperanza Diaz

Esperanza Diaz is Myron's best friend and works for him at MB SportsReps. Formerly a wrestler known as Little Pocahontas, Esperanza is now a law school graduate and wants a partnership in the firm. Myron balks at the thought of giving up part of the company, not because he doubts Esperanza's abilities, but because he believes a partnership between friends and family is doomed to fail. Esperanza gives Myron an ultimatum, either give her a partnership in the company, or she will leave. Esperanza is bisexual, believing it does not matter what sex someone is as long as you care for them.

Esperanza loves Myron, and because of that dislikes his girlfriend, Jessica. Jessica had cheated on Myron breaking his heart. Esperanza had watched Myron fall apart and helped him recover. Esperanza believes Myron gives too much of himself in a relationship, and she does not want to see him hurt again, now that he and Jessica have reconciled. When Brenda is killed, Esperanza's heart is broken for Myron. Brenda's death makes Myron realize that nothing would be able to destroy his friendship with Esperanza, and he tells her that he does not want her to leave the agency.



## Jessica Culver

Jessica is Myron's girlfriend and a writer. Jessica and Myron live together in her loft in New York. Their past is troubled because Jessica had cheated on Myron in the past. Though things seem to have gotten better, Myron is upset when Jessica calls from a meeting in California to tell him that she will need to stay there for a while working on a screenplay for one of her books. Myron believes Jessica is running away from commitment again, though she promises she is not.

Jessica returns to New York to find that Myron is having second thoughts about their relationship because of his feelings for Brenda. Jessica is willing to do whatever it takes to keep Myron, but he is unsure things will work out, as Jessica and Myron do not want the same things. Jessica is at the cemetery waiting for Myron when he leaves Brenda's grave, but he leaves her there, unsure if their relationship can be repaired.

## Norm Zuckerman

The CEO of Zoom, a sports manufacturing conglomerate, Norm is approaching seventy and dresses like he's in the 1960's. Norm asks Myron to keep an eye on his star player Brenda Slaughter. Brenda has an endorsement deal with Zoom, and is the star of the WPBA, in which Norm has a substantial investment. Norm is concerned with threats Brenda has been receiving and knows that she will balk at the idea of a bodyguard. Though Norm is concerned with the monetary investment he has in Brenda and the Women's Professional Basketball Association, he also cares for Brenda and is concerned for her safety.

## Horace Slaughter

Brenda's father, Horace had coached Myron in basketball when he was younger. Myron had not seen Horace in ten years. Horace had acted as Brenda's agent for a time, but the father and daughter had an argument resulting in Brenda taking a restraining order out against her father. Horace has been stirring up trouble trying to locate Brenda's mother, Anita, who disappeared twenty years ago. Horace has been calling the campaign headquarters of Arthur Bradford, as well as trying to contact the attorney that had handled Brenda's scholarships. Horace is found dead from a gunshot wound to the head after having been missing a week. Myron adds the mystery of Horace's death to his investigations, trying to find out exactly what is going on in Brenda's life.

## Mabel Edwards

Brenda Slaughter's aunt, Mabel, is a large, matronly woman who appears to be the only person to have spoken with Anita Slaughter since she ran away twenty years ago. Mabel is Horace's sister, and though her life has not been easy, it seems that she has overcome more than her share of hardships. Her husband was killed at the door of their





home when her son was young, and Mabel had fallen into despair, turning to alcohol and drugs. Anita Slaughter had taken care of her son so that social services would not take him from her.

Mabel has spent twenty years keeping secrets, using her kind, grandmotherly demeanor to disguise the fact that she had killed Anita Slaughter. When her brother begins to search for his wife in earnest again, Mabel kills him as well. Brenda's memory of the hotel where her mother was killed many years ago leads Mabel to kill her as well.

Myron tells Arthur Bradford of Mabel's guilt, knowing that Bradford has never stopped loving Anita, and that he loves his daughter, Brenda, despite the fact that she is unaware of her parentage. Arthur takes matters into his own hands, killing Mabel.

## **Arthur Bradford**

Born to the rich Bradford family, Arthur Bradford is running for governor of the state of New Jersey. Bradford has been a widower for more than twenty years, seemingly devoted to his wife's memory. Myron uncovers the secrets of the Bradford family while trying to locate Brenda's mother. Arthur's first wife Elizabeth had killed herself, leaping from a balcony to her death in front of Anita Slaughter. Elizabeth, though mentally ill, had discovered that Arthur was in love with Anita, and was the father of Anita's child, Brenda.

Arthur Bradford has spent the past twenty years searching for Anita believing she had run away after they had made plans to leave Livingston together. Upon discovering that his brother and his henchman had hidden her death from him for two decades, he kills them both. Knowing that Myron is his best chance for finding Brenda, Arthur releases Myron to do so. When Myron finds out the truth about Brenda's murder, he tells Arthur. Arthur kills Mabel, as Myron had known he would.

## **Chance Bradford**

The younger brother of Arthur Bradford, Chance had covered up the murder of Anita Slaughter twenty years before. Chance had tried to discourage his brother from running away with Slaughter and had believed he was acting in the best interest of his family when he ordered Sam Richards to get rid of Anita's body. Chance has protected the family name at the cost of all, and Arthur is unforgiving, shooting Chance in order to finally get to the truth.

## **Sam Richards**

A henchman for the Bradford family, Sam has been handling situations that arise for them for many years. Richards had been involved in threatening Myron's family when Bolitar was a young boy and seems to enjoy his job. Currently handling problems within



the Bradford campaign, Myron at first believes that Sam is the person responsible for hitting Mabel Edwards, but realizes that this is not the case.

Though Richards appears to be calm and laid-back, he is a very dangerous man, willing to kill to protect his employers. After capturing Myron at the estate, Sam is outmaneuvered by Win, and killed by Arthur Bradford when Arthur discovers Sam's part in the secrets about Anita's death.

## **Calvin Campbell**

Horace's supervisor at St Barnabas Hospital. Calvin called Brenda when her father did not show up for work, alerting her to the fact that her father was missing.

## **F.J. Ache**

Frank Ache Jr., known as FJ, is the son of Frank Ache, and a new employee at TruPro, the sports agency that Frank Ache had taken over. FJ has an MBA from Harvard and has been groomed by his father to lead a legitimate life, but FJ would prefer to stay within the mob business.

## **Officer Francine Neagly**

A former classmate of Myron's, Francine helps Myron by reading the case file of Elizabeth Bradford's death. Neagly is drawn into the problem when Detective Pomeranz accuses her of stealing the file in order to assist Arthur Bradford's opposition in the governor's race.

## **Detective Wickner**

A mainstay in the Livingston community, Wickner was the detective in charge of investigating the death of Elizabeth Bradford. Wickner has been involved with the Bradford family for decades, covering up the suicide of Elizabeth Bradford and the death of Anita Slaughter. When Myron discovers the connection, Wickner finally cracks, revealing the truth as he knows it to Bolitar, then killing himself.

## **Jean Podich**

The coach of Brenda's basketball team, the New Jersey Dolphins.

## **Detective David Pepe**

One of the detectives that takes Brenda to the Mahwah Police Department when her father is found dead.



## **Detective Mike Rinsky**

The second detective sent to retrieve Brenda from practice after her father's body is found.

## **Detective Maureen McLaughlin**

A detective with the Bergen County Prosecutor's office, McLaughlin is investigating the murder of Horace Slaughter.

## **Detective Dan Tiles**

A detective for the Mahwah Police Department, Tiles is the second investigator in the murder of Horace Slaughter.

## **Deborah Whittaker**

A society columnist, Whittaker provides Myron with information about the life of Elizabeth Bradford.

## **Ellen Bolitar**

Myron's mother and an attorney, Ellen loves her son and wishes him well in all things. Ellen is happy with the relationship she sees developing between Myron and Brenda.

## **Al Bolitar**

Myron's father, Al Bolitar, has had dealings in his past with Arthur Bradford and Sam Richards. During a time of unrest in New Jersey, Bolitar had refused to deal with labor unions and the criminals that represented them. Bradford and Richards had threatened Al and his family.



# Objects/Places

## Livingston

The town in New Jersey where Myron had grown up. Livingston is also the location of St Barnabas Hospital, where Horace had worked as a security guard and Brenda had worked on the pediatric ward.

## West Orange

Brenda's aunt, Mabel Edwards, had lived in West Orange since her husband had been killed in a robbery outside their old home. West Orange is a suburb of Newark, New Jersey.

## MB SportsReps

The agency that Myron owns, where he acts as a sports agent. Esperanza Diaz has worked there since the agency opened, and wants a partnership with Myron.

## New Jersey Dolphins

The basketball team that Brenda plays for, part of the WPBA, or Women's Professional Basketball Association.

## St. Barnabas Hospital

The hospital in Livingston, New Jersey where Brenda worked in the pediatric ward, and her father Horace had been a security guard.

## TruPro

The sports management agency formerly owned by Roy O'Connor, now run by Frank Ache and his son F.J. The Aches had taken over the agency after O'Connor had gone into debt with them.

## Englewood High School

The high school where the New Jersey Dolphins holds their practices.



## **The Dakota**

The apartment building where Win lives and Brenda stays when Myron is concerned about her safety. Famous for being the location where John Lennon was shot and killed.

## **The Ritz Diner**

A diner in Livingston where Myron had hung out when he was in high school. Myron meets with Francine Neagly at the diner and asks her to help him investigate the death of Elizabeth Bradford.

## **Mahwah**

A suburb in New Jersey, almost on the New York border.

## **The Jersey Ledger**

A local newspaper, where a society column was written by Deborah Whittaker detailing the life of the wealthy in the area.

## **Inglemoore Convalescent Home**

The home where Deborah Whittaker lives, aging and suffering from bouts of dementia.

# Themes

## Deception

The theme of deception runs through the novel *One False Move* from several different directions. The life of Brenda Slaughter, one of the main characters, has been filled with deception since she was a young girl. Now a grown woman in medical school and poised on the brink of a career in basketball, Brenda's life begins to unravel, the lies that have been told and the secrets that have been kept finally coming undone.

Brenda begins receiving threats, and Myron Bolitar is commissioned by Norm Zuckerman to help keep her safe. Myron agrees to do so, at first because of the opportunity to become Brenda's agent, then because he begins to care for her. Brenda asks for Myron's help, first in finding her father, then her mother. Along the way, Myron unearths a dark secret, a secret that led to other deceit for more than twenty years. Though everyone believed that Anita Slaughter had run away leaving her daughter and husband, the truth is finally revealed. Anita Slaughter had been killed by her sister-in-law, Mabel Edwards.

Another deception that takes place in the novel is the accidental death of Elizabeth Bradford. For twenty years, her death had been recorded as a suicide. When Myron starts to investigate the disappearance of Anita Slaughter, the truth is finally revealed. Elizabeth Bradford had killed herself, jumping off the balcony at her home to die in front of Anita Slaughter, her husband's mistress, and the mother of his child, Brenda.

Perhaps the biggest deception in the novel is by a character, Mabel Edwards. Brenda's aunt, Mabel is the epitome of a kind grandmotherly stereotype. Always caring for her family and putting others before herself, it is revealed through Myron's investigations that Mabel had killed Anita more than twenty years ago for the money that her sister-in-law had taken out of her (Anita's) checking account in order to run away. When her brother Horace begins to search for his wife again, Mabel kills him as well in order to cover up the crime. When her lies begin to close around her, Mabel kills her niece Brenda as well, in order to protect her secrets.

## Regret

In *One False Move*, by Harlan Coben, regret plays a large part in Myron Bolitar's life. At the outset, Myron is reminded of his friendship with Horace Slaughter, a coach in his youth and a mentor. The two had been close, as close as two people of different races and different backgrounds can be. Horace had coached Myron in basketball when Myron was a young man, following his progress through college and being drafted by the NBA. Myron had almost made it to the pros, but an injury had prevented him from realizing his dream. When Myron learns that Horace is dead, he realizes that the years lost can never be regained, and the relationship he once had with Horace is lost forever.



Myron also feels regret over the possible loss of friendship with Esperanza Diaz, his best friend. Esperanza has been with Myron since the inception of MB SportsReps and wants a partnership with Myron. Myron is unwilling to risk his friendship, and because of this, may lose not only his friend, but a wonderful employee. Throughout the novel, Myron considers his options with Esperanza but can see no way around the problem. The loss of Brenda finally reminds Myron that sometimes it is best to try, rather than lose without any effort.

The relationship that Myron has with his girlfriend Jessica and the budding relationship with Brenda also leads to regret. Myron has always been faithful to Jessica despite her indiscretions of the past and has worked through the pain that she has caused. When Myron's relationship with Brenda develops into something more than friendship, Myron balks, unwilling to be unfaithful to Jessica. Brenda is killed, leaving Myron to wonder if he should have taken that one step forward when he had the chance, rather than wait.

## Friendship

Myron Bolitar is the main character in *One False Move* by Harlan Coben. Myron is a caring man with deep friendships that have lasted through the years. His two best friends are Win and Esperanza. Though each relationship has faults, Myron knows that when the chips are down he can count on both of them to see him through.

The relationship that Myron has with Win is complex, but at the same time simple. Though Win is a rich man, raised in wealth and wanting for nothing, his private life had always lacked any type of personal relationship. After meeting Myron in college, the two men formed a bond that seems unbreakable. Myron and Win seem to offset each other. Whatever character trait one might lack, the other has, creating the balance needed to thrive.

Myron's relationship with Esperanza is similar. Esperanza is a good friend and an important figure in Myron's life. Myron relies on Esperanza as a right hand, not only in business, but in life as well. Their relationship is in jeopardy when Esperanza threatens to leave MB SportsReps unless she receives a partnership, but for Myron, the thought of losing her at all is too overwhelming to contemplate. In the end it seems that Myron will agree to the partnership, finally realizing that though there had been no agreement on paper, Esperanza is his partner, in the business and in life.

# Style

## Point of View

One False Move, by Harlan Coben is written in the third person. This is an important factor, as the novel follows the life of Myron Bolitar, and the third person narration allows the reader to not only know what Myron is thinking, but how he feels as well. Though the reader is able to discern the thoughts and feelings of other character by the way they interact with Bolitar, one is only able to know the true thoughts of Myron Bolitar himself.

The novel is written with a great deal of fast-paced dialogue, as well as descriptive passages. The dialogue allows the reader to feel the frantic emotions that the main character is experiencing, while the descriptive passages provide some explanation as to why Bolitar is prone to take the actions he does.

The novel takes place over a period of approximately two weeks, and the reader is moved through the novel at a fairly rapid pace, allowing one to experience the sense of urgency that develops up through the climax.

## Setting

One False move is set in New Jersey and New York. Myron Bolitar grew up in Livingston New Jersey and lived there with his parents until he had moved into his girlfriend's loft in New York City.

Though Myron lives in New York, a greater portion of the novel takes place in New Jersey, specifically in Livingston, where Myron grew up, and which is the location of Bradford Farms, the home of Arthur Bradford. Though Myron makes only three visits to the Bradford home, each visit is eventful. The Bradford estate also factors into the past, specifically when dealing with Anita Slaughter, Brenda's mother.

Various other locations in New Jersey are visited, as well as some locations in New York, such as Win's apartment at the Dakota, and Madison Square Garden, the location of Brenda's home opening game. The main character, Myron Bolitar, travels between New York City and several locations in New Jersey throughout the novel, giving the reader a sense of his familiarity with each location.

## Language and Meaning

The novel One False Move by Harlan Coben takes place in modern times and is written as such. The dialogue between the characters is free flowing and fast paced, giving the reader not only a sense of each character, but moving the storyline along quickly.





There is one plot, as well as several sub-plots. The language used allows one to keep pace with the characters without getting confused or side tracked when a twist in the storyline appears. The author assists the reader in following each sub-plot by writing clearly and not providing unnecessary verbiage that would detract from the novel itself.

## Structure

The novel *One False Move*, by Harlan Coben is comprised of 36 chapters with a prologue and an epilogue. The chapters are numbered and vary in length from one page to ten. The first chapter has a heading, August 30th. The prologue is dated September 15. The prologue draws the reader into the storyline, and the epilogue which takes place on the same day provides the reader with the final piece of the novel.

The main plot of the novel is Myron Bolitar agreeing to protect Brenda Slaughter, a rising basketball star from anonymous threats. By trying to find the source of these threats, as well as Brenda's missing parents, Myron is drawn into a web of lies, woven over a period of twenty years, concluding in the tragic death of Brenda. Along the way Myron comes to some realizations about his own life and relationships, allowing him to grow and perhaps break free of the things that have been holding him back.

The pace of the novel is very fast, with dialogue and descriptive passages that move the reader through the novel. As the novel nears its surprising conclusion, some of the action that takes place is only described by Bolitar to other characters, in order to keep the sense of urgency intact. The novel is an entertaining, easy read, with each twist and turn in the plot explained in an easily understandable way. The reader is not left wondering how or why something happened, making *One False Move* a fun, page-turning mystery.



## Quotes

"Fine, I'm a greedy capitalist pig. But you, my friend, are a sports agent. There is not a greedier, sleazier, slimier, more capitalist entity in existence."

Myron nodded. 'Suck up to me,' he said. 'That'll work.'

'You're not letting me finish. Yes, you're a sports agent. But a damn fine one. The best, really. You and the Spanish shiksa do incredible work for your clients. Get the most for them. More than they should really. By the time you finish with me, I feel violated. Hand to God, you're that good. You come into my office, you rip off my clothes and have your way with me.'"

Chapter 1, pg. 7

"Myron swiveled toward a voice like warm honey on Sunday pancakes. With her long, purposeful stride-not the shy-girl walk of the too-tall or the nasty strut of a model-Brenda Slaughter swept into the room like a radar-tracked weather system. She was very tall, over six feet for sure, with skin the color of Myron's Starbucks Mocha Java with a hefty splash of skim milk. She wore faded jeans that hugged deliciously but without obscenity and a ski sweater that made you think of cuddling inside a snow-covered log cabin.

Myron managed not to say wow out loud."

Chapter 1, pg. 10

"Myron followed her inside. The house had the stale smell of a grandparent. When you're a kid, the smell gives you the creeps when you're an adult, you want to bottle it and let it out with a cup of cocoa on a bad day."

Chapter 7, pg 66

"'I thought you two were discussing a business problem,' she said.

'We are,' Myron said quickly. 'I, uh, mean we're going to. That's why I came here. To discuss a business problem. But we just started talking about this first, and well, you know, one thing led to another. But it wasn't intentional or anything. Meaning, I came here to discuss a business problem, right, Win?'

Win leaned forward and patted Myron's knee. 'Smooth,' he said.

She crossed her arm. Her eyes were two drill bits-say, three-sixteenths of an inch, quarter inch tops.

'How long have you been standing there?' Myron asked.

Brenda gestured toward Win. 'Since he said I had nicely toned legs,' she said. 'I missed the part about being too big for his tastes.'"

Chapter 11, pg 113

"As though on cue, a door on the other side of the room-a bookshelf actually-swung open. Myron half expected Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson to storm into the room calling for Alfred, maybe tilt back the head of Shakespeare, and turn a hidden knob. Instead it was Arthur Bradford, followed by his brother, Chance. Arthur was very tall, probably six-six, thin, and stooped a bit the way tall people over the age of fifty are. He was bald, his fringe hair trimmed short. Chance was under six feet with wavy brown hair and the kind of boyish good looks that made it impossible to tell his age, though Myron



knew from the press clippings that he was forty-nine, three years younger than Arthur."  
Chapter 12, pg 124

"I don't want to sound maudlin,' Myron said, 'but if FJ does manage to kill me-'  
'I'll spend several fun-filled weeks spreading slivers of his genitalia throughout New England.' Win said. 'After that, I'll probably kill him.'  
Myron actually smiled. 'Why New England?'  
'I like New England,' Win said. Then he added, 'And I would be lonely in New York without you.'"  
Chapter 14, pg 142

"Myron pointed at him. 'You got some food stuck in your mustache. Looks like scrambled eggs.'  
Tiles leaned in closer until their noses almost touched. He had big pores. Really big pores. Myron almost feared he'd fall in one. 'I don't like your attitude, asshole.'  
Myron leaned in a bit too. Then he gently shook his head from side to side, nose tip making contact with nose tip. 'If we were Eskimos,' Myron said, 'We'd be engaged right now.'  
That backed Tiles up. When he recovered, he said, 'Your acting like an ass doesn't change the facts: Horace Slaughter was shot at close range.'"  
Chapter 15, pg 161

"Myron snapped up the knee again. And again it found its target. Big Dope Mario landed hard on the cool marble and thrashed around like a dying fish.  
'Today's friendly tip,' Myron said. 'A protective cup is a worthwhile investment, though not as a drinking receptacle.'  
Myron looked over at Sam. Sam still rested on the banister. He took another drag of the cigarette and let the smoke ease out of his nostrils.  
'New guy,' Sam said in way of explanation."  
Chapter 23, pg 245

"Deborah Whittaker gazed at Myron. The eyes were milky and cloudy, and Myron wondered what reality they were seeing. 'A breakdown,' she said at last. 'The ladies at the club were whispering that Lizzy had a breakdown. That Arthur had sent her away. To an institution with padded walls.'  
Myron felt his body go cold.  
'Gossip,' Deborah Whittaker spit. 'Ugly rumors.'  
'You didn't believe it?'  
'Tell me something.' Deborah Whittaker licked lips so dry they looked like they might flake off. She sat up a bit. 'If Elizabeth Bradford had been locked away in an institution,' she said, 'how come she fell at her own home?'  
Myron nodded. Food for thought."  
Chapter 25, pgs. 272-273

"You can probably guess what happened next. Elizabeth grew worse. She was nearly catatonic by the end. Whatever evil had entered her brain now moved in and laid total claim. You were right, of course. Her fall was not accidental. Elizabeth jumped. It was



not bad luck that she landed on her head. It was intentional on her part. My wife committed suicide."

Chapter 26, pg 285

"Dad looked at him with reddening eyes. 'You don't fight men like that, Myron. Because you can't win. It's not a question of bravery. It's a question of caring. You have people you care about, that are connected to you. These men don't even understand that. They don't feel. How do you hurt a person who can't feel?'"

Chapter 27, pg. 295

"Win turned toward Myron, his gaze as heavy as the ages.

For a fleeting moment Myron was puzzled. But only for a moment. Then his head fell to one side, and he let out a small groan. Win nodded. And something inside Myron's chest dried up and blew away."

Chapter 35, pg 367



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the relationship between Myron and Jessica.

Who does Myron believe is threatening Brenda? Why does he believe this?

Why do you think Myron is drawn to Brenda? Do you believe that their relationship would have lasted?

What is the truth about the death of Elizabeth Bradford?

Do you think that Arthur Bradford truly loved Anita Slaughter?

How is Myron's relationship with Jessica affected by his meeting Brenda?

Why did Mabel Edwards kill? Do you believe all of the killings were for the same reason?