

# **Presumed Innocent Study Guide**

## **Presumed Innocent by Scott Turow**

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# Plot Summary

Presumed Innocent by Scott Turow, is often proclaimed as a breakthrough novel in the genre of courtroom dramas or mysteries. Published in 1987, it was the first novel by Turow, a graduate of Harvard Law School, and it does venture well outside the action-driven plotting of much genre fiction. Several of Turow's later works were filmed, as was this book, and he has become one of America's most commercially successful authors. Novels that are written in recognizable genres such as adventure, romance, mystery, or fantasy often do not place great emphasis on character development, which is the hallmark of so-called literary fiction. Instead, genre novels tend to concentrate on the development and rapid-paced movement of the plot and on creating a vivid atmosphere. When a novel that fits into a genre also presents highly developed and believable characters, it is liable to be praised as a breakthrough book as was this one. As the book opens, an election is underway for prosecuting attorney in the fictional Kindle County. The chief deputy prosecuting attorney is Rusty Sabich, the book's protagonist and narrator. He is quickly sketched as talented, intelligent, and nobody's fool, yet loyal to his boss, Raymond Horgan, who is running for reelection. Horgan is drawn as a sharp and self-interested politician but also a highly capable attorney, which Rusty admires. They have worked together for twelve years. Rusty has a wife, Barbara, and a young son, Nat. He loves them both but is having difficulties with his wife, especially since Rusty's affair with a coworker, Carolyn Polhemus, who now has been murdered apparently by a rapist.

Rusty heads the investigation into Carolyn's killing with his police partner and friend, Dan Lipranzer. Meanwhile, Horgan loses the election to Nico Della Guardia, a former employee whom Rusty fired. Lipranzer and Rusty are in the process of assembling evidence when Rusty is told by Nico that he is the prime suspect and that he will be charged with the crime. Surprisingly, it looks as though Rusty's boss, Horgan, will testify against Rusty. Much of the second half of the book takes place in the courtroom. Rusty's personal life at home and his out-of-court investigations continue in chapters that alternate with the courtroom scenes, a novelistic strategy that moves the plot forward even as he provides ample space for further development of Rusty's personality and background. A subplot involving a law enforcement corruption case is pursued by Rusty and Lipranzer throughout much of the book because of its potential to shed light on the murder of Carolyn. The development of this subplot causes the number of murder suspects to widen even as the case against Rusty becomes increasingly weaker. In classic mystery fashion, the question of Rusty's guilt has been compounded by questions concerning several other characters until the disclosure that might stun some readers and might leave others less surprised, yet still wondering how it all happened. On all counts, this fast-paced, insightful, and meticulously realistic novel of the legal world does not disappoint.



# Opening Statement and Spring, Chapters 1 and 2

## Opening Statement and Spring, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Presumed Innocent, by Scott Turow, is a best-selling courtroom drama that was made into a major Hollywood film. It revolves around Rusty Sabich, a prosecuting attorney who is investigating the murder of a colleague with whom he had an extramarital affair. To his astonishment, Rusty is accused and brought to trial for the murder. The novel begins with an "Opening Statement," which is Sabich's description of how he makes his first statement to a jury as the prosecutor in a court trial. The main technique, he explains, is to point directly at the accused. Initially, Rusty would put himself in the defendant's shoes, he says, but he later dropped such scruples because he had a job to do. Finding the truth, he tells juries, is the main goal. Chapter 1 of the first section, "Spring," opens with Rusty's boss, Raymond Horgan, saying he should feel more sorry. Horgan is running for reelection as Prosecuting Attorney but it soon becomes apparent that Horgan is not talking about the campaign and instead about the recent death of a woman named Carolyn Polhemus. In conversation with Rusty, who is Horgan's righthand man, it is revealed that Carolyn was a smart and sexy deputy prosecuting attorney who was bound, raped, and murdered three days earlier. Another deputy prosecuting attorney named Nico Della Guardia is running in the election against Horgan for Kindle County Prosecuting Attorney and Nico publicly suggests that the death of Carolyn Polhemus is an example of the weakness of Horgan because effective law enforcement begins at the top. Nico is a commanding and confident but untrustworthy person, whom Rusty fired nine months earlier from his position as head of the Homicide Section. Rusty and Horgan are in a car headed for Carolyn's funeral and when they get there, Rusty encounters Nico who says he would like to have Rusty as his chief deputy prosecutor after the election. Rusty does not believe it, knowing that a deputy prosecutor named Tommy Molto is Nico's best friend. He also knows that Tommy has disappeared in the last three days, presumably intending to reappear for a media occasion at which Nico will announce that Tommy had joined his campaign.

Many dignitaries are in attendance for Carolyn's funeral but Rusty taken aback to discover that a young man hovering near the coffin is Carolyn's son. Rusty suspected that the sexually liberated and independent Carolyn was married but he is stunned to learn that she has a son. Hiding his emotions, Rusty decides not to attend the internment. He has already done is grieving over her. Chapter 2 opens in the "Dickensian grimness" of the Kindle County office of the prosecuting attorney, where Rusty and a colleague and close friend named Dan Lipranzer go over the paperwork concerning Carolyn's death. Lipranzer reports that the rapist tied her up with slipknots as if to strangle her while raping her. Dr. Kumagai, the county's inept pathologist, nicknamed Painless, writes in his report that the rapist was sterile. Lipranzer says all the



doors and windows of Carolyn's apartment were unlocked and he suggests that the sexually liberated Carolyn might have let in one of the men she prosecuted for rape. Rusty understands the logic but rejects it. He realizes that Lipranzer did not like Carolyn. Rusty tells Lipranzer that Carolyn always kept her doors and windows locked. They decide to investigate Carolyn's phone calls and Rusty says if they go back six months, his number will be on the list. After these indirect admissions that he was involved with Carolyn, Rusty realizes that Lipranzer somehow already knew it. Lipranzer leaves and Rusty summons the willpower to look at photographs of Carolyn at the crime scene. She looks horrified in death and he realizes that it is the first time he ever felt that she needed his pity and help.

## Opening Statement and Spring, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The short Opening Statement section not only describes what Rusty Sabich's first comments to a jury are but also reveals a couple of important things about his character. First, he mentions that John White, the chief deputy prosecuting attorney, taught him to point at the accused person and Rusty admits that even then, his thoughts tended toward eventually replacing White in his job. Rusty's ambitiousness is balanced by the revelation that he had to overcome a desire to put himself in the defendant's place, which shows Rusty's ability to empathize with others. These conflicting attitudes immediately set him up as a complicated character. The complications get deeper in Chapter 1 when the campaign for reelection of Rusty's boss, Raymond Horgan, is introduced. Rusty likes Horgan and is loyal to him but at the same time, he sees weaknesses in the Prosecuting Attorney and thinks of him as a "sap." People have asked Rusty about running for the office himself and Horgan's opponent in the race, Nico Della Guardia, even confides that Rusty's potential candidacy is the only thing that worried him. Despite Rusty's ambitious nature and his suspicion that Horgan is losing his grip, he still seems loyal to his boss.

At the funeral of Carolyn, two situations predominate. First is that Nico and Horgan are using the event for campaigning, although Nico is much more callous about it than Horgan is. The second point is that Rusty tells himself he will not go to Carolyn's internment because he has already done his grieving over her and from this thought, it is apparent that she was more than just a friend and colleague to him. Chapter 2 is the start of the procedural or investigative part of the story as Rusty and Lipranzer discuss the time of death, the use of rope on the victim, evidence that the rapist was sterile, fingerprinting, glass found on the counter, and a search of Carolyn's phone logs. These descriptions are very realistic and believable, which not only adds to the texture of the novel but begins to make it interesting on the level of a mystery or thriller alongside the development of Rusty's character in particular. The relationship between Rusty and his friend Lipranzer looks like a couple of well-matched and hard-nosed guys whose interchanges will be entertaining as the novel proceeds.



# Spring, Chapters 3-5

## Spring, Chapters 3-5 Summary

Chapter 3 begins at an indistinct point in time, "when it was all over," as Rusty puts it. This apparently refers to the entire case involving Carolyn's death, which puts the chapter in the future, with the characters looking back on the past. Rusty is seeing a psychiatrist named Robinson, whom he tells that Carolyn is the most exciting woman he has ever known and he fell in love with her. He describes the case on which he was working with Carolyn at her death. It involved a banker named Darryl McGaffin whose gangster brother, Joey, was laundering money through Darryl's bank, without Darryl's knowledge. Several years earlier, the three-year-old daughter of Darryl and his wife had died when she fell from a terrace at Joey's home. When Darryl's wife brings their five-year-old boy to the doctor to treat him for a fall, the doctor recognizes signs of foul play, alerts Carolyn, and she has the McGaffin house searched, where a vise grip is found with bits of skin from the boy's skull on it. The boy also had been burned with cigarettes. Rusty tells Robinson about his mounting obsession with Carolyn when they were working together on the prosecution of the case, and his guilt about his feelings, especially because his father had been a philanderer, but Rusty says he felt out of control. Chapter 4 opens with Rusty looking at his son, Nat, as he sleeps. His love for the boy is obvious. He goes into the bedroom and finds his wife, Barbara, who says she has been masturbating in his absence. As she talks about her day, he pretends to not notice her weary bitterness. Barbara has gone back to school to get her PhD in mathematics, at which she is a whiz. She is doing her dissertation and she also reads widely in other subjects. However, the couple does not talk about any of that. When Barbara discovers that Rusty will investigate Carolyn's death, she is incensed, because she knows that her husband and Carolyn had an affair.

Rusty explains that Horgan might lose the election and asked Rusty to take the case, which surprises Barbara, but she declares that is not the reason that he is doing it. She asks why Carolyn stopped seeing him and he replies that he does not know but thinks that he was not very important to her. In Chapter 5, it is Monday morning and Rusty is filling in for Horgan who is busy campaigning. Rusty gets a call from a reporter named Stew Dubinsky, who asks about new information concerning Carolyn and about the missing Tommy Molto. However, Rusty has no comment on either topic. Dubinsky suggests that Molto might be investigating Carolyn's murder on Nico's behalf, which Rusty thinks is loony. He goes to Carolyn's office and finds a mention in her files of a B file, which concerns bribery of law enforcement officials and was not Carolyn's expertise. Later, he asks Lydia MacDougall, the chief administrative secretary, what Carolyn was doing with a B file, but she does not know. He asks her to assign people to discover Tommy Molto's whereabouts. When Rusty sees Horgan, he asks him about the missing B file. Horgan is very stressed about Nico publicly nagging him over the death of Carolyn and he takes it out on Rusty, telling him to work harder and get results. Just before Horgan rushes to another appointment, he reaches into his desk drawer, hands the missing B file to Rusty and says they will talk soon.



## Spring, Chapters 3-5 Analysis

At the start of Chapter 3, when Rusty describes going to see a psychiatrist some time after his affair with Carolyn is over, it provides the opportunity to further enrich his development as a character, but it also sets up a situation in which Rusty can talk about his relationship with Carolyn. It is impossible to tell whether the case of Carolyn's murder has been solved when Rusty speaks to Robinson, because Rusty only says vaguely that he started seeing the psychiatrist "when it was all over." In any case, the presence of Robinson allows Rusty to explain to an outsider what happened while he was working with Carolyn on the McGaffin case, which he could not easily say to the other characters in the book because they already know. At the same time as the plot background is filled in, Rusty also can emphasize the intensity of his obsession with Carolyn. In Chapter 4, the excitement Rusty felt when he was with Carolyn is starkly contrasted to the deadness of his relationship with his wife, Barbara. This gives a motive for Rusty to stray and it also might make some readers feel more forgiving toward him for his infidelity, stemming from the idea that to understand is to forgive. In any case, Rusty dotes on his young son, Nat, which is another appealing aspect of his character.

Chapter 5 goes back to the business of finding out what happened to Carolyn. By this time, the reader has begun to detect an alternating pattern of personal and work issues in the novel, which means it will not be a one-dimensional thriller made purely of action and cardboard characters. Again, Rusty's description of his work as interim Prosecuting Attorney while Horgan is campaigning is full of details that give it a sense of authenticity. Several minor characters are introduced who are all sketched quickly and memorably. They include a nosy court reporter named Stew Dubinsky, Rusty's lazy and rather insubordinate secretary, named Eugenia, the highly efficient and wheelchair-bound chief administrative deputy, Lydia McDougall, and Horgan's slick former law partner Larren Lyttle, now a judge. A plot complication also develops concerning the B file that Carolyn had and that Horgan had put in his own desk. The chapter ends on a "cliffhanger" note with Horgan rushing away from the office as he promises to explain later to Rusty why he has the file. All of these additions to the story have the twofold advantage of enriching it even as they provide potential fodder for more twists in the plot.





# Spring, Chapters 6-8

## Spring, Chapters 6-8 Summary

Chapter 6 begins with Rusty telling Robinson that Warren McGaffin, the boy who was abused, became important to Carolyn and him. Wendell was a bit dull and uncommunicative but Carolyn connected with him. While a psychiatrist named Mattingly and Rusty watched in admiration, Carolyn gradually got Wendell to talk about being mistreated by his mother. When Rusty told Mattingly how impressed he was by the rapport between Carolyn and Wendell, Mattingly said it must be because she reminded the boy of his mother. One night, when Rusty and Carolyn were working late, he suddenly recognized her carnal interest in him but all she said was, "Not now." This excited him but he also began to feel fear. Chapter 7 returns to the present as Rusty visits Marty Polhemus, Carolyn's son, at Studio B in the university's Art Center. Marty says he hardly knew his mother. His father had been remarried for 15 years and he thinks of his stepmother as his mother. Marty says he has no idea who killed Carolyn. Unexpectedly, Rusty tells Marty that his own mother died when he was in law school and Rusty found his father packing to move to another state, apparently with no intention of even saying goodbye. Marty asks what Carolyn was to Rusty and he admits that they had an affair. Marty is disappointed but not surprised because he knew she had a lot of boyfriends.

Chapter 8 opens at the police department headquarters in McGrath Hall, where Lipranzer, nicknamed Lip, is saying that most police officers think the case of Carolyn's murder will never be solved. As Rusty and Lip get into an unmarked police car and head back to the county prosecutors' building, Lip says his search of suspects who use slipknots on their victims turned up nothing, and Rusty reports that that his talk with Marty was also fruitless. Rusty is still thinking about his father, a baker from Belgrade who Rusty felt never loved him. Rusty says he got a call from the pathologist, Dr. Kumagai, who said he had a report back from the forensic chemist, although "Painless" made it sound like nothing of significance. They arrive at the County Building and Lip asks if Rusty got the fingerprint report on Carolyn's apartment, but Rusty had forgotten. Back in Rusty's office, he shows the B file to Lip. It contains a typed and unsigned letter to Horgan. It says that nine years ago someone the writer calls Noel was arrested for something very embarrassing. Noel decided to pay \$1500 to cover it up and the writer accompanied Noel when he brought the money to Horgan's office. Noel's case was then dismissed in court. The writer, who has not seen Noel for two years, thinks an assistant prosecutor took the bribe and wants Horgan to know. Lip and Rusty realize that hundreds of gays were being busted for indecency in a place called the Public Forest at that time and they think this must be the embarrassment that worried Noel. Carolyn had written "Noel" and its backwards spelling, "Leon," on the file. She also wrote "Kenneally" for Lionel Kenneally, commander of the 32nd police district in the North Branch, where the gay busts were made. Lip and Kenneally do not get along, so Rusty says that he will talk to Kenneally. Lip says the search of Carolyn's phone calls turned up several made from her place to Rusty's home, which Rusty realizes was himself calling Barbara to



make excuses. He asks Lip to conceal that information, which Lip does not like, but probably will do.

## Spring, Chapters 6-8 Analysis

Until now, Carolyn has been portrayed as beautiful and smart, but also wild and selfish. Her connection with young Warren McGaffin reveals a new dimension to her through her ability to empathize with a victimized child. The affair between Carolyn and Rusty has not happened yet, but Chapter 6 makes it almost inevitable. Rusty's fear at this prospect demonstrates his guilt over an impending disloyalty to Barbara. Rusty realizes that his visit to Marty in Chapter 7 has no real objective in terms of the investigation. However, his attachment to Carolyn was so strong that he cannot resist meeting her son whose existence he was unaware before her death. When Rusty tells Marty about his own father's neglect of him, it is a way of sympathizing with the boy's plight and trying to suggest indirectly that some parents are simply not capable of giving much love to their children. This seems to be the only kindness Rusty can think of doing for Marty. When Marty asks if Carolyn was Rusty's girlfriend, he confesses that she was, which is another sudden truthfulness not necessary under the circumstances but offered by Rusty simply because he wants to treat the boy well by not lying to him.

Chapter 8 is another of the chapters that deepen the police procedural part of the plot. Rusty and Lipranzer go over what they have discovered so far, which is not much and what they still need to do. The pieces of the puzzle that remain to be fitted into the picture are few, but of course they have the potential to lead in interesting directions. The glass found on the counter at Carolyn's apartment might have fingerprints. The forensic chemist's report in Dr. Kumagai's hands might be useful. Most of all, it appears that the lead Carolyn was pursuing regarding the B file on bribery of a law enforcement officer could be critical. Neither Lip nor Rusty has much hope at this point about any such leads, but to the reader of a detective novel, these clues are full of possibility. The last detail in Chapter 8, regarding Rusty's calls home from Carolyn's apartment to make his excuses to Barbara, has the effect of putting Rusty in Lip's debt. Lip does not like the situation either, which foreshadows potential trouble between the two men.



# Spring, Chapters 9-11

## Spring, Chapters 9-11 Summary

Chapter 9 begins with Rusty telling Robinson that eventually Wendell McGaffin had to go on the witness stand to counteract the tearful defense of Wendell's mother by his father. Rusty reports that Carolyn conducted the examination beautifully. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the boy was telling the truth about something that he understood was wrong. Rusty gave an impassioned closing statement and then he and Carolyn went out as they waited for the verdict. They had drinks and Rusty noticed she was older than the lotions and exercises made her look, but that did not bother him. The jury returned a verdict of guilty on all counts. Rusty and Carolyn had more drinks and finally, they went back to her apartment and made love. Rusty tells Robinson that this was the moment when he knew he was lost. Chapter 10 goes back to the case, as Rusty sits in an office in McGrath Hall asking a police commander named Lou Balistrieri about the fingerprints. Balistrieri gets on the phone and orders a computer search of the prints on the glass against everything in the police files, which he says will take about a week. Rusty thanks him and goes to see Dr. Kumagai, an unpleasant man who refers to Rusty by the nickname "Savage." Kumagai pretends to forget that he has the forensic chemist's report on Carolyn and then he tries to act as though nothing significant is in it. He lets slip, however, that the rope burn on Carolyn's neck is skinny, which indicates she did not struggle.

Rusty reads the forensic chemist's report and sees that Carolyn had used contraceptive jelly, which explains why Kumagai's pathology report had concluded the rapist was sterile. Yet, no diaphragm was found. After a verbal struggle with Kumagai, Rusty wrests the opinion from him that the sex was consensual and that the man then killed Carolyn, tied her up to make it look like rape, and took the diaphragm with him. Rusty notices that the chemist's report is dated five days previously and that Kumagai had written Tommy Molto's phone number on the top. Infuriated, Rusty leaves with the report. In Chapter 11, Rusty visits Horgan, who is working late in his office. Horgan is looking at poll results and he tells Rusty that Della Guardia will win the election. The two men have a few drinks in the office and Horgan suggests he might have sufficient influence to get Rusty a job as a judge, which Rusty sees as a reward for years of loyalty. Rusty asks Horgan if he had an affair with Carolyn and Horgan admits that he did. Rusty asks why he gave Carolyn the B file in the first place and Horgan simply says that she asked for it. Rusty says Horgan should have told him about the case and Horgan apologizes. He asks if Rusty would like to take over as Prosecuting Attorney after the election and before Della Guardia assumes the post, but Rusty declines, saying honestly that Horgan's shoes are too big to fill.



## Spring, Chapters 9-11 Analysis

The allure to Rusty of Carolyn intensifies even more in Chapter 9, when he sees how skillfully she conducts the examination of young Wendell. His own emotions are in such turmoil now, because of his feelings for her and his natural repugnance at the crimes of Wendell's mother that he gives a powerful closing statement. He is not quite sure exactly what he will say before he starts speaking. When Rusty and Carolyn are alone, he recognizes from her makeup that she is not as young as she might seem at first glance, but this only makes her more interesting to him, which is a sign of his infatuation with her, in the sense of the old saying that love is blind. Finally, when they have sex after these weeks of build-up, Rusty realizes he is totally under her control. He tells Robinson in retrospect that he was lost, a phrase that has the double meaning of his surrender to the charms of Carolyn and the loss of his fidelity to Barbara. Once again, the author switches gears in Chapter 10, by bringing the reader away from the love affair and back to the present investigation of Carolyn's death. As usual, this chapter is full of detail about the prosecutor's job, including the politics involved in interchanges between lawyers and police department personnel. The delay in getting a computerized scan of the fingerprinting material is partly explainable by the date of this book's publication, 1987, before almost everyone had powerful computers, but also by squabbling within the police department over access to available computer time.

Dr. Kumagai's effort to play down the importance of the forensic chemist's report is another example of political gamesmanship. Kumagai is aware that Della Guardia will be elected Prosecuting Attorney, and is already playing that side of the fence by having given the chemist's report to Della Guardia's right-hand man, Tommy Molto. When Rusty's visit to Horgan in Chapter 11 further demonstrates the treacherous politics that surrounds Rusty's job. Horgan has realized that he won't be reelected, and yet it becomes clear that he has not been forthright with Rusty about the investigation of Carolyn's murder. Horgan did not tell Rusty that he, too, was once involved romantically with Carolyn and Horgan only admits it when Rusty directly asks about it. Also, there is the question of why Horgan even bothered to run for office again, instead of stepping aside and letting Rusty run. This author clearly suggests this question to the reader without letting Rusty dwell on it. The effect of this technique is to strengthen the loyal character of Rusty, which becomes even more apparent when Horgan asks if Rusty would like to take over as interim Prosecuting Attorney after the election. Rusty says he could not fill Horgan's shoes and he means it, although the portrayal to this point of Rusty as very bright and capable makes the reader believe Rusty would have made an excellent leader. This is important because Rusty has engaged in marital infidelity, yet he must remain likeable to reader. Without a likeable protagonist, it would be harder to enjoy the book.



# Spring, Chapters 12-14

## Spring, Chapters 12-14 Summary

Rusty is talking to Robinson again in Chapter 12, telling him that one aspect of his infatuation with Carolyn was a passion for New Wave rock. Rusty says he assumes this fascination arose because the music is screeching and chaotic, reflecting his own disordered mental state. He describes to Robinson the weeks after the affair with Carolyn began and how his love for her was passionate but hopelessly abject, as if he had lost all direction. It was seldom joyful for him. His almost prayerful approaches were in contrast to her lusty response, which sometimes seemed coarse to him, especially when she talked dirty. Rusty remembers that Carolyn was the first to tell him that Horgan would lose the election to Della Guardia. She said Rusty should approach Horgan to step aside, so that Rusty could enter the election and win. Rusty realizes that Carolyn wants this because she thinks she then could be chief deputy prosecuting attorney. Rusty tells Robinson that the sex with Carolyn became rougher and kinkier. Chapter 13 opens at the 32nd District police station where Rusty is with Lionel Kenneally, an unapologetically tough cop. Rusty asks him what Carolyn was investigating at the station and Kenneally replies that it was files concerning the gay arrests. Kenneally mentions that Carolyn had worked as a probation officer at the North Branch nine years earlier before becoming a lawyer, which Rusty had forgotten. Kenneally calls in a young officer named Guerash, who provided the files to Carolyn.

Guerash says Carolyn never told him exactly what she sought, but she said she never found it. He does recall that she was looking for "Noel LNU." The acronym means "Last Name Unknown." All three men look through the files, which are badly disorganized and Rusty realizes they have been purposely messed up to conceal the fact that one file is missing. Rusty says that he will go get the court file copy that corresponds to the number of the missing file. In the car, he hears on the radio that the mayor has just endorsed Della Guardia in the campaign. Chapter 11 begins with Rusty at his son Nat's T-ball game, which Rusty enjoys because of the casual camaraderie of the parents and the relief it affords from the pressures of work. Nat misses a ball in the outfield because he is daydreaming, which does not surprise Rusty. He knows that Nat, a physically beautiful boy, has always been a dreamer. Father and son meet Barbara at a café after the game. Barbara is still angry and distant with him, and she becomes extremely irritated when he mentions that Horgan will not win the election. She says Rusty let Horgan use him, as he always does with everyone. Rusty understands that she feels bereft, but he cannot see what he can do about it. He thinks he cannot calm her inner tumult because too much of his energies must be directed toward the "monumental task" of just being himself.



## Spring, Chapters 12-14 Analysis

The New Wave music that Rusty begins to like after beginning his affair with Carolyn is a clear symbol of his own clashing emotions. His description of his love life with Carolyn is almost that of a master-slave with Rusty in the subordinate role. It also is a reversal of a traditional description of sexual relations in which the male has more interest in the physical aspect of the relationship and is less invested in the emotional experience compared to the female. This dynamic emphasizes key attributes of Rusty and Carolyn. His emotional availability to people, a trait often associated with females, might pose a problem for him in the dog-eat-dog world of his business. In contrast, Carolyn's self-interest, a stereotypically male characteristic, could serve her well in that same work atmosphere. The author follows up this implication when Carolyn suggests that Rusty ask Horgan to step aside from the election. Not only does Rusty reject this idea out of loyalty to Horgan but he also recognizes that Carolyn has her own best interests at heart in making the suggestion. The roughness she prefers in their sex life implies that while she is exploitive, she also might not be unfamiliar with being exploited. This notion also has significance concerning her violent death. In Chapter 12, when Rusty checks on Carolyn's investigations of the gay arrests, the idea of being an exploiter and exploited again suggests itself. In a sense, the gays are being repressed through the arrests but at the same time, they are exploiting one another and the public through open sex at Forest Place.

It looks like Carolyn did find the file she sought and then tried to conceal that discovery by mixing up the other files. This is in keeping with all the misdirection and treachery Rusty experiences every day at the office, which does not seem like a safe place for a kind and caring person to be. It turns out in Chapter 14 that Rusty's son Nat is a beautiful and sweet-natured but slightly disconnected boy. Rusty thinks that Nat might have gotten his good looks from Rusty's father, which he hopes is not true, because Rusty associates his father with the emotional harshness of beautiful people. This thought leads the reader straight to Carolyn, although Rusty does not name her. When Rusty and Nat go to meet Barbara at the restaurant, she scolds her husband for allowing himself to be used by Horgan. She says he lets everyone use him, and again, the reader thinks of Carolyn. Rusty understands and sympathizes with Barbara's pain, but he also feels incapable of helping her. Like Nat, Rusty is a little disconnected, at least where Barbara is concerned. His inability to offer her comfort is a painful demonstration of the couple's estrangement.





# Spring, Chapters 15-17

## Spring, Chapters 15-17 Summary

Everyone on Horgan's team is hanging around the office on election day, a traditional day off, when the exit poll results come in, predicting that Della Guardia won. Horgan holds an election party at the hotel that Rusty attends while Lipranzer goes back to the North Branch courthouse to check on the files that correspond to the police station files Carolyn saw. At the party, Horgan goes around thanking everyone, and tells Rusty that he intends to resign right away, as planned. Horgan's former law partner and now a judge, Larren Lyttle, appears to say that Della Guardia wants to meet in the morning with Horgan. Lip returns from the courthouse and takes Rusty aside to show him photocopies of documents that identify a man named Leon Wells as the one who was arrested on indecency charges and who bribed a prosecutor. The documents show that Carolyn was Leon's probation officer, and the form dismissing the case, signed as Horgan, is cosigned by the deputy who prosecuted the case, Tommy Molto. In Chapter 16, Rusty goes back to talking with Robinson about Carolyn. She ended it rather quickly and deftly, he says. Devastated, he made efforts to revive the affair, but she firmly rejected them. In the office, she artfully avoided him. He called her at home a few times but never had the courage to speak after she answered the phone.

Finally, when he saw her in a bar, he asked her what he should do about his attachment to her. The advice she offered was that he should grow up, which he told Robinson made him feel for a moment that he wished she were dead. Chapter 17 goes back to the office where Della Guardia is now ensconced as the boss with Molto as his chief lackey. Those two are in a meeting with Horgan and Mac, from which Rusty angrily feels excluded. When Horgan calls him into the meeting, Rusty finds that everyone seems either nervous or angry around him. Horgan says he will leave the office at the end of the week, which is much sooner than Rusty expected. Horgan explains that there are concerns about how Rusty has handled Carolyn's case. When Rusty presses for details, Molto says Rusty may have obstructed justice. He says the prints on the drinking glass are Rusty's, and accuses him of having been in Carolyn's apartment on the night of the murder. Rusty says he was at home babysitting, but Molto says the telephone records show that Rusty was calling her all month. Rusty leaves in a rage but Molto calls out that Rusty is the murderer. Rusty returns to whisper, "Yeah, you're right," before he walks away.

## Spring, Chapters 15-17 Analysis

In classic detective novel fashion, the plot thickens. First, Della Guardia's election is confirmed. Next, Lip uncovers evidence that suggests the law enforcement officer who was bribed in the gay arrests incident was Tommy Molto. Right after that, the author returns to the end of the affair between Rusty and Carolyn and Rusty admits to Robinson that he could not let it go, calling Carolyn's home several times during a



period that roughly corresponds to the time of the murder. On top of that, Rusty tells Robinson that after Carolyn told him to grow up, he wished she were dead. All these details are in the detective-story vein of piling on evidence against the protagonist in order to make it hard for him to get out from underneath an accusation of wrongdoing. In Chapter 17, the boom is lowered when Molto reveals that the prints on the glass belong to Rusty and that the call records show he was telephoning her. Rusty unwisely responds to these charges, even saying sarcastically that he was the murderer.

The reader never believes it, because even before Rusty is called into Della Guardia's office to face the charges, he is outraged at being left out of the conference. He thinks Horgan and Mac are cutting deals for good jobs or recommendations under Della Guardia's new leadership, while Rusty himself is being forgotten. Rusty is not in the least worried about criminal proceedings being undertaken against him and when he learns that this is the case, he is astonished. A careful reader will not forget that Lip has uncovered evidence suggesting that Molto was the bribed law enforcement officer whom Carolyn was investigating. This does not seem like enough of a crime to warrant Molto framing Rusty for murder but the author has already demonstrated that nothing is as it seems in Kindle County. More information certainly remains to be revealed and how or when it will come to light is enjoyable to consider.





# Spring, Chapters 18 and 19

## Spring, Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

Chapter 18 is preceded by a court form that shows Rusty has been formally charged with the murder of Carolyn. It is a hot day in July and Rusty is meeting with his lawyer, Alejandro "Sandy" Stern, and Sandy's assistant attorney, Jamie Kemp. The arraignment will be held that afternoon. Rusty is feeling panicky and full of incomprehension and rage. Sandy points out that Nico Della Guardia is not seeking the death penalty. News of the case is in all the local and national media. Among witnesses Nico has subpoenaed are Horgan, Rusty's secretary, Eugenia, and Robinson. Aside from the fingerprints on the glass and the phone records, the evidence against Rusty includes spermatozoa of Rusty's blood type in Carolyn's genitalia and malt-colored carpet fibers on Carolyn's clothing that match samples taken from carpeting in Rusty's home. Sandy asks Rusty to encapsulate the case against him, which Rusty does by saying Nico will argue that Carolyn agreed to see Rusty one last time, after which he killed her, either because she said this was the last time, or out of jealousy over another man. Sandy replies that the motive is not strong, especially because the evidence against Rusty is circumstantial. Sandy adds that the defense will stand by Rusty's statement that he was babysitting at the time of Carolyn's death. He notes that an unidentified fingerprint was found alongside Rusty's prints on the glass, which Nico will find hard to explain.

It is agreed that Rusty will act as an assistant in the case to help keep down the expenses. The telephone records show that Rusty called Carolyn on the night of the murder. He wonders if the records might have been doctored to set him up but Sandy says it would be dangerous to go after the prosecutor. Sandy is also worried that the prosecution will call Horgan but Rusty is sure Horgan would never be a hostile witness. Sandy says he got a call from Robinson who said he would make no statement on the grounds of doctor-patient privilege. Rusty mentions the B file with Molto's name on it and Sandy thinks it might be worth pursuing but could be dangerous to do. Rusty proclaims his innocence and Sandy pats his hand, which makes Rusty realize that Sandy has heard such proclamations countless times before this. In Chapter 19, Rusty braves the media with Jamie and Barbara as they enter the courthouse for the arraignment. When Nico enters, Rusty thinks about earlier cases they tried together. He recalls that Sandy said Nico did not want to add a charge of obstructing justice because if Rusty is not guilty of murder, he should not have to deal with an obstruction charge, which would ruin his career. When the magistrate asks if the lawyers want the usual pre-trial conference to plea bargain, Jamie says no because the charges are serious against a man with a high reputation, and they want to go to trial as quickly as possible. The judge agrees and a trial judge is chosen by lottery. It is Larren Lyttle.



## Spring, Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

Now that the author has developed the main characters and has offered convincing sketches of the supporting characters, the flood of evidence that Rusty and his lawyers encounter in the long Chapter 18 is not just facts. If the reader did not know what kind of characters Rusty and Carolyn and others in the book are, it would be much harder to keep all the evidence in mind because the reader would have no emotional connection to the characters. This relationship between character development and the facts of the story can be appreciated simply by imagining a friend in trouble compared to a stranger. Sandy Stern, who was mentioned earlier in the novel, is now fleshed out as a rather courtly but highly competent defense attorney. Of all the physical evidence that is mentioned, the most confounding piece is the fingerprints on the glass because Rusty had not been to Carolyn's apartment since they broke up about six months before the murder. This little mystery clearly must play an important role as the case against Rusty is contested in court.

Another interesting development is Nico's decision not to add a charge of obstruction against Rusty on the grounds that it could ruin his career if he proves to be innocent of murder. It seems like an odd argument and Sandy points out that it could be in Nico's prosecutorial interest to stick to one big charge rather than diluting it with a smaller charge that might make the jury suspect Nico is not fully convinced of Rusty's guilt as a murderer. Sandy says he has had a long talk with Nico, however, and he suspects that Nico actually does have mixed feelings about the charges because of his respect for Rusty. Sandy thinks that Nico's stance is the proper one to take, which Rusty privately finds ironic, considering he is innocent of the murder. During the arraignment, Rusty's reflections on cases he and Nico tried together adds to the question of Nico's belief in the murder charge, by showing how well the two men worked together, and even how much fun they sometimes had. It is now evident that this is a technique the author frequently uses. First, he puts a proposition or idea in the mouth or mind of a character and then he further develops the theme in a scene immediately thereafter. It is reminiscent of a lawyer making a case.



# Summer, Chapters 20-22

## Summer, Chapters 20-22 Summary

After the arraignment, Barbara and Rusty drive home as he tells her that drawing Darren Lyttle to be the judge is the best outcome, although Rusty privately reflects that it could hurt if Darren's best friend, Horgan, turns out to be a hostile witness. Rusty tells Barbara that he appreciates her support. Under this adversity, their relationship has taken a turn for the better. Rusty never felt sexually deprived by Barbara, who is an athletic and imaginative lover and their love life is now revived, although with some sadness in it. Barbara's old devoted attention to Rusty also has reappeared, which makes him think of their early married years, when they both were sexually insatiable and very happy. Chapter 21 begins a week after the arraignment, as Rusty and Sandy enter the plush law offices in which Raymond Horgan is now a partner. Horgan is his usual bluff self as they sit to discuss what Horgan's testimony will be. Sandy wants to know why Horgan is on Nico's witness list. Horgan replies that he was subpoenaed and the prosecutors have interviewed him several times, which Rusty realizes is a very bad sign, because it means he is a star witness. Sandy probes for what Horgan will say in court, and Horgan replies in general terms that he will discuss Rusty's interest in handling the case. Rusty breaks in, which Sandy warned him not to do. He reminds Horgan that it was he who asked Rusty to take the case with Carolyn. Horgan denies remembering this and an argument escalates between Horgan and Rusty, much to Sandy's silent fury. Horgan says in anger that while Rusty asked about Horgan's sexual involvement with Carolyn, Rusty never told Horgan that he, too, was involved with her.

Before the meeting is over, it is plain that Horgan believes that Rusty killed Carolyn to punish Horgan for having an affair with her and that Rusty succeeded in ruining Horgan's career as prosecuting attorney. Horgan will now testify against Rusty to get his revenge. After they leave, Sandy says he had no idea Horgan had an affair with Carolyn and Rusty says he forgot to tell him. Later, a deathly frightened Rusty silently prays for escape to a God in whom he does not much believe. In Chapter 22, Judge Lyttle presides over the arraignment. An imposing figure who was an adept defense lawyer before taking the bench, he still enjoys putting prosecutors in their places. Lyttle responds to the defense's request for a quick trial by saying he can fit it into his schedule in three weeks, which is far faster than the lawyers expected. Sandy agrees, and when Nico says he needs more time to prepare, Lyttle sternly reminds him that the charges against a highly respected attorney are extremely serious and if he is not prepared now, the arraignment should not have been held. The defense also has requested that Tommy Molto not be allowed on the prosecuting team because he is also on the witness list, and the rules forbid one person having both roles. Lyttle then suggests to Nico that if he would try to argue that Rusty's facetious comment about being guilty that he made to Molto was actually the truth, then Lyttle would be likely to reject this argument, and Molto's testimony would not be allowed. Lyttle takes pleasure in anticipating and trashing this ploy of the prosecution, which reminds Rusty of similar attacks the judge has made on prosecutors and policemen in court.



## Summer, Chapters 20-22 Analysis

The revival of feelings between Rusty and Barbara seems a natural occurrence, given that people with things in common often will put aside whatever differences they may have to unite against a common enemy. They have not completely overcome the damage done by Rusty's infidelity, but the serious threat to the family's future gives Barbara a chance to display her commitment despite her disappointment in Rusty. It's also a chance for them to get over the rut in their relationship, and move on to a new phase. Rusty is grateful to her but the renewal of their love life also brings to his mind their carefree and exciting early days together, which he recalls with longing. Whatever happens, he knows those days are gone forever. When Rusty and Sandy go to see Horgan, it soon becomes apparent that the long friendship between Rusty and his boss is finished. Horgan has interpreted the death of Carolyn and the evidence against Rusty, particularly the fingerprints on the glass, as proof that Rusty was out to punish Horgan. This shows not only how self-involved Horgan is but it also allows him to be outraged by Rusty having questioned Horgan about his sexual relationship with Carolyn, when Rusty himself had been involved with her but has not said anything to Horgan about it. Horgan, who now works in a beautiful law office, acts as if it is his life that is being destroyed, which shows that Rusty's faith in him as a great man was misplaced. Another small but significant issue is that Rusty never told Sandy of Horgan's admission that he had been sexually involved with Carolyn. Rusty claims he forgot to tell Sandy, which the prosecutor clearly doesn't believe. This is the first indication that Rusty is withholding any information about the case from Sandy, but no reason for this is offered.

Judge Lyttle's rough treatment of Nico and Tommy Molto at the arraignment bodes well for Rusty, although it is probably as much about the judge's dislike of prosecutors and policemen as it is about safeguarding justice. This situation offers an interesting comparison of the judge and his best friend, Raymond Horgan. Both appear to react to legal situations in a personal way, as if ultimately how they respond and what the situation means to them is more important even than finding the truth. Horgan does not care whether Rusty is guilty of murder or not. He cares only about the damage done to his career and he blames Rusty for that. Similarly, the author seems to be suggesting that although Judge Lyttle has nice words to say about Rusty's contribution to the state as an attorney over the years, it is really Rusty's new position as a defendant who needs a defense lawyer and a judge partial to defense that interests Lyttle. Rusty is under his wing now, and Lyttle intends to show him what that means.



# Summer, Chapters 23-25

## Summer, Chapters 23-25 Summary

Someone has begun calling Rusty once a week and although the caller does not identify himself, Rusty knows it is Lipranzer. He just wants to reassure Rusty that he's there to help and support him. During one such call, Rusty asks Lip if he will help him by finding Leon Wells, the man named in the B file. Lip cautiously says he will do it after he testifies, and although Rusty knows this will probably be too late to help, he thanks Lip. The scene switches to tee ball again. In summer league, Nat is more focused, which Rusty sadly thinks must be in part because the boy has become aware of the world through the world's attention on his father. The two leave after the game without staying for barbecue and Nat apparently understands. When Rusty asks Nat if he is frightened about the trial, the boy says no because his mother told him that it is a "bunch of junk," which causes Rusty's heart to soar with gratitude toward his wife. In Chapter 24, Rusty and Lip are at Carolyn's apartment when Marty Polhemus shows up. He has received a notice from the court of the inspection, which Rusty explains is a formality, but Marty shows no signs of wanting to leave. Marty says he has dropped out of school but intends to go back eventually. Also present are Jamie Kemp and a cop named Tom Glendenning who wants to go in with them, but Kemp tells the policeman to call Molto about that. Glendenning does so, and then reluctantly stays outside the apartment.

Jamie searches for evidence of contraceptives. Rusty counts the glasses in Carolyn's cupboard and finds a full set of twelve. He then finds a personal phone directory hidden under pantyhose in Carolyn's bedside table drawer that has his number. Within it, he finds the numbers of himself, Horgan, Molto, Larren Lyttle, and Carolyn's doctors, whose numbers he copies. Before everyone leaves, Marty tells Rusty that he has been approached by the prosecutor, who wanted to know if Rusty said anything to Marty about having an affair with Carolyn. Rusty freezes because he had forgotten this admission, but Marty says he denied knowing anything, because he does not think Rusty was the murderer. Rusty is badly shaken by this near-disaster. In Chapter 25, Rusty awakes in the middle of the night from a bad dream about his mother, Rose, in pain and terror just before she died of cancer. Rose was an odd person, given to swings of mood, but Rusty loved her despite her strange manner. Barbara took care of Rose who lived with them at the end of her life. Rusty worries about what will become of Nat if he is convicted. Nat is being sent to camp near a town called Skageon until the trial is over. Rusty has heard every horror story about what happens in prison and he is terrified of the prospect. Thinking of stories he has heard, he considers running away, but knows he will not do it. He sits at home in the dark of the early morning, shivering.

## Summer, Chapters 23-25 Analysis

Over these chapters, Rusty becomes increasingly immersed in the trial, even as his fear grows over the deep trouble in which he has landed. It's as if everything that happens



reminds him of what he has to lose. Lipranzer's weekly calls to Rusty's house are anonymous, because Lip is afraid of consequences. He repeatedly offers his help, but when Rusty asks him to find Leon Wells, Lip has to decline until after he testifies, for fear of legal consequences. Rusty is grateful to Lip for his loyalty, but at the same time, he realizes their friendship has been crippled by the events. Rusty's troubles have forced his own son to emerge from the delicious dreaminess of youth. The two of them no longer can hobnob with the other parents and children at the tee ball, because the awkwardness of Rusty's situation puts too much pressure on everyone. Even the gratitude Rusty feels toward Barbara for coaching Nat into a belief that Rusty will beat these trumped-up charges is sad, precisely because Rusty feels so beholden to his wife for what should be a simple thing. Nothing is simple anymore, though. Everything is fraught with danger, worry, and intense emotions. Rusty's support from Lip, Barbara, and Nat is supplemented in Chapter 24 by Marty Polhemus, who confides that he did not tell the prosecutors that Rusty had had an affair with Carolyn. Rusty's relief at this is overwhelmed by the terrifying recognition that he had overlooked this slip-up, which could have badly damaged his chances of acquittal.

In Chapter 25, Rusty's dream about his mother has several roles. It causes him increased worry about the future of his own son, especially if Rusty gets a long jail sentence. The dream also sends him into a waking reverie about the kindness of Barbara toward Rose in the old lady's last days, which further intensifies Rusty's gratitude for his wife's current conduct. Last, because Rose is sick and near death in the dream, her plight echoes Rusty's concerns about his own future. Despite the support of friends, family, and associates, Rusty feels very alone, and cannot shake his horror of what will await him if he is convicted. In emphasizing the gravity of Rusty's situation and the terrible consequences that might await him, these chapters increase tension in the novel by making the reader feel Rusty's fear.





# Summer, Chapters 26-28

## Summer, Chapters 26-28 Summary

The atmosphere is always electric on the first day of a murder trial, Rusty reflects as Judge Lyttle enters the courtroom. When proceedings begin, Kemp tells the judge that the defense has not been allowed to examine the glass, which Nico says will be taken care of after court that day. Nico also says the prosecution will not call Molto as a witness, and Lyttle makes it clear that this decision will stand for the duration of the trial. Seventy-five potential jurors enter for the selection process, during which Lyttle impresses upon them that the defendant must be assumed to be innocent until proven otherwise beyond a reasonable doubt. The final selection is mostly young and single people, which Rusty thinks is good for his side. During a recess, Kemp says he thinks Rusty will beat the charge, a voiced optimism for which Sandy chastises him. Back in court, Nico makes his opening statement. Watching, Rusty finds it surprisingly bad, unprepared, and out of rhythm. Sandy is far more commanding in his statement, which questions why Rusty is even being accused on such unconvincing circumstantial evidence. Chapter 27 opens with the revelation that the prosecution cannot find the glass. The defense and prosecution teams meet in the judge's chambers, where Lyttle warns Nico that he won't allow discussion of evidence that nobody can find. Back in court, the prosecution calls Detective Harold Greer, the third police officer to reach the scene of the crime. Greer discusses grisly photographs of Carolyn's body and other photos of the crime scene. During Sandy's cross-examination, Rusty tells him to have Greer count the glasses in one of the photos. Greer counts twelve, a full set, which would make the missing glass one too many. Later, Sandy says Rusty should have told him about this earlier but Rusty says he just noticed it.

In the afternoon, Rusty's former secretary, Eugenia Martinez, testifies that she picked up the phone one day when Rusty was talking to Carolyn and heard him call her "my angel." Sandy establishes that Eugenia now works for Nico's office and that she never told the investigating officer, Glendenning, that she heard Rusty say "my angel," at which Eugenia retracts her statement. Mrs. Krapotnik, Carolyn's landlady, is even worse. When asked who she saw at Carolyn's apartment, Mrs. Krapotnik identifies Judge Lyttle and Molto but is not sure about Rusty. In Chapter 28, Raymond Horgan testifies. He admits that he had an affair with Carolyn and suggests that Rusty did, too, but did not tell Horgan. If he had, Horgan says, he would not have allowed Rusty to conduct the investigation of Carolyn's death. In cross-examination, Sandy establishes that Horgan withheld the B file from Rusty, and that Horgan did not tell anyone he had an affair with Carolyn. Horgan contends that he was using judgment and discretion, but Sandy asks why Rusty would not exercise the same professional restraint. Rusty realizes that Sandy has untied the juncture between deceit and murder, thus destroying Horgan's testimony. Sandy begins to ask Horgan how he met Rusty, but Rusty signals him to retract that question.



## Summer, Chapters 26-28 Analysis

These chapters dive into the details of courtroom drama in an utterly convincing way. The description of the courtroom and the people in it, the preparatory proceedings, and the beginning of the trial are all presented with an assurance and attention to minutiae that make the reader feel almost present at the scene. At the same time, the lines of battle between the characters are even more clearly drawn, and the reader realizes that Tommy Molto will be the main aggressor, while Judge Lyttle is likely to be a strong ally for the defense. It is a little surprising that the author has Nico start his prosecution so poorly as if to signal that Rusty's road to acquittal might not be as rough as Rusty had suspected. This trend continues with Sandy's excellent opening statement, followed by the loss of the key piece of evidence, the glass bearing Rusty's fingerprints that was found at the murder scene. Greer's testimony is fairly strong for the prosecution, especially because of the shocking pictures of Carolyn's corpse, but Sandy undermines it when Rusty asks him to count the glasses in the photo. Rusty then claims he just noticed this, but the reader knows this is untrue, which is the second time Rusty has been devious with Sandy.

The prosecution's case takes a further beating when Eugenia testifies that she heard Rusty call Carolyn "my angel," and then quickly changes her mind when she realizes that the defense attorney has a transcript of her out-of-court testimony, which doesn't mention any endearments. Eugenia's perjury is upstaged by the ludicrous testimony of the landlady, Mrs. Krapotnik, whose identification of people she supposedly saw at Carolyn's apartment borders on the burlesque. Raymond Horgan is a strong presence on the stand at first, but Sandy soon reveals him as self-serving and vengeful. By the end of these chapters, it looks like Rusty's acquittal is all but inevitable. Even so, readers have been trained by the conventions of mysteries and thrillers not to take everything at face value, and by brushing away some of Rusty's problems, the author really has only made his audience wonder what new trouble awaits.





# Summer, Chapters 29-31

## Summer, Chapters 29-31 Summary

During lunch at Sandy's club, Rusty compliments his lawyer, especially in his deft handling of Horgan, but Sandy is cautious about the next critical testimony, which he sees as that of Dr. Kumagai. The physical evidence in the case is of central importance, and as an expert witness, Kumagai will say what he thinks happened at the crime scene. Sandy asks why Rusty did not want him to ask about how Rusty and Horgan met. Rusty explains that Horgan's law partner at the time had defended Rusty's father from tax evasion, which would not bear mentioning in court, because Sandy earlier had referred to Rusty's father as a former "Yugoslavian freedom fighter." When Sandy goes to another table to greet a friend, Rusty daydreams about his father, whose parents had been killed during World War II. As a child, Rusty's father had been in a prison camp where he saw people eat a horse raw. After the tax evasion trial, Rusty's father spent ninety days in jail but was contemptuous, which finally made Rusty lose faith in him. In the afternoon's cross-examination of Horgan, Sandy conducts an extensive tour of Rusty's achievements as chief deputy prosecutor. He then mentions that Sandy fired Della Guardia, which causes an uproar. The judge calls a hurried conference away from the jury and scolds Sandy, who lets it be known that it is not Nico that he is after but instead, that he is after Molto. He says he thinks Rusty has been framed but in order to prove it, he needs to discuss the B file in court. The judge gives provisional permission and Sandy proceeds, but does not elicit any revelations.

In Chapter 30, Rusty goes at night to a tavern called Six Brothers in a rough neighborhood, where he meets Lionel Kenneally in a back room. Kenneally is grumpy and anxious about being seen with Rusty, who asks if Kenneally remembers people taking bridges nine years ago in the North Branch station. Kenneally reluctantly admits that there were some shenanigans, and that as probation officer, Carolyn helped Molto to help smooth out problems sometimes. He then very reluctantly reveals that Carolyn was having an affair with Larren Lyttle, who was the district judge at the time, and that Lyttle probably got Horgan to hire Carolyn as a deputy prosecutor. In Chapter 31, Rusty and his lawyers work all weekend on the case. When Kemp mentions subpoenaing the phone company for the call record at Carolyn's house, Rusty says his earlier thought that they might have been doctored was no doubt wrong, which startles Kemp. Sandy decides on a technique called stipulations, in which prosecutorial evidence regarding the phone record, the carpet fibers, and the forensic chemist's report all will be accepted without testimony. On Monday, Lip takes the stand. When Sandy asks him about the B file, Lyttle interrupts, and Sandy repeats that the B file is critical to the defense. The judge says in that case Lip can be recalled to testify at the proper time about the B file. Rusty does not understand why Sandy keeps harping on the B file. In the afternoon, the stipulations are entered, which hurts the defense. In the evening, Lip arranges by phone to meet Rusty, and they discuss how Lip might find Leon Wells.



## Summer, Chapters 29-31 Analysis

No sooner has Sandy dealt effectively with the first morning's witnesses than the threat of Kumagai's testimony is foreshadowed. This is a time-tested technique to keep the plot moving, especially in a mystery or thriller: dispatch one problem and quickly raise another. The interchange between Sandy and Rusty concerning how Horgan met Rusty gives an opportunity for Rusty to reflect on his father's difficult past. In turn, this helps to explain why his father was such a surly and difficult individual. It also indicates how Rusty has structured his own life in reaction to the loveless nature of his father, while nevertheless also mimicking some of his father's own emotional distance. The implication is that offspring may go in their own directions, yet are never entirely free of early familial influences. In the afternoon, Sandy first riles the judge by mentioning in court that Rusty once fired Della Guardia, and then Sandy startles everyone by claiming in the chambers that he thinks Rusty was framed. Rusty cannot understand this tactic, especially because he knows that the B file, which presumably would be the evidence of a frame-up, cannot be admitted in court because it is hearsay. Sandy's motives are mysterious, and it is now clear to the reader that neither Sandy nor Rusty is being completely open with the other person.

Rusty's conversation with Lionel Kenneally reveals an important new piece of information: that Carolyn and Larren Lyttle had an affair years ago in the North Branch, and that they might well have been taking bribes along with Tommy Molto. The judge trying the case is now personally connected to wrongdoing by both the victim of the murder and one of the prosecutors. The footing has become extremely precarious for Rusty. The decision by Sandy to allow prosecutorial evidence without testimony or cross-examination is tactical, because it reduces the damaging effect on the jury of seeing people say things that tend to incriminate Rusty. The trade-off is that the evidence now cannot be contested. In the examination of Lip, Sandy again brings up the B file, which Judge Lyttle again warns him can only be mentioned in the context of a defense that contends that Rusty was framed. These legal details are absorbing, and they also show how the search for justice is circumscribed by rules and regulations that are meant to protect the innocent but that also sometimes could get in the way of finding the truth. In the last short section of Chapter 31, the plot is advanced again when Rusty and Lip meet to discuss how to find Leon Wells.



# Summer, Chapters 32-34

## Summer, Chapters 32-34 Summary

Chapter 32 opens with a battle in court over the prosecution's continued failure to find the glass. Nico and Molto argue that the testimony of people who saw the glass and the lab report is enough, and that to not admit their testimony because of police department negligence in losing the glass would be improper. Lyttle reluctantly rules to admit the testimony. In the restroom, Rusty encounters Nico, who asks him if he killed Carolyn. Rusty firmly denies it. Before the testimony of the fingerprint expert, Maurice Dickerman, the judge instructs the jury that the absence of the glass entitles them to raise reasonable doubt in their minds about Rusty's guilt, if they so choose. Sandy follows up this blow by asking Dickerman if Molto compared the five other, unidentified prints found in the apartment to see if they came from the same person. Dickerman says no. A maid from Rusty's neighborhood, Maybell Beatrice, testifies that she saw Rusty on a Tuesday night in April, but on cross-examination, she cannot recall if it was the Tuesday of the murder or exactly where she saw him, which deflates her evidence and makes Molto look inept. That night, Rusty gets a call from Lip, who says he has found Leon Wells. In Chapter 33, Tatsuo Kumagai testifies. At first, he is cool and collected but Kemp has told Rusty that something big has been uncovered concerning Kumagai. Rusty says that he would rather be surprised in court than immediately hear what it is.

In the cross-examination, Sandy slowly reveals that Kumagai's pathology report says that Carolyn had her tubes tied, which meant there was no reason for her to have used the contraceptive jelly that was found with the sperm sample. Sandy's implication is that Kumagai mixed up the sample with that of another case, either deliberately or through incompetence. Either way, it destroys the significance of the blood-type match with Rusty, and also ruins Kumagai's career. After court, Sandy broaches the idea to Rusty of calling Barbara as a defense witness, but Rusty doesn't want to put her through that. He wants to testify instead, but Sandy says he senses that Rusty has been too secretive about some things, which could be dangerous on the stand. Later, Rusty sees Kemp, who says he now believes Rusty was framed. In Chapter 34, Lip and Rusty find Wells at his apartment in the dangerous Grace Street projects, late at night. Wells is a captain in a black street gang called the Night Saints, some of whose members Rusty had prosecuted years earlier. Rusty recalls incidents that show how dangerous the Night Saints are. Lip has to disarm Wells before they can talk, and then Wells tells them that Carolyn set up the bribe, which Leon paid to Larren Lyttle.

## Summer, Chapters 32-34 Analysis

The trial scenes in these chapters are once again thoroughly convincing portrayals of legal proceedings, and they continue to lead Rusty toward exoneration. Rusty and Sandy had expected the glass to turn up, because both of them had frequent experiences of the police department mishandling evidence, but it usually was resolved



after a while. So far, that hasn't been the case with the glass, and in making it clear to the jury that this in itself could be regarded as reasonable doubt of Rusty's guilt, Lyttle almost shuts the door on the prosecution. Sandy makes it even worse for Nico when he cross-examines Dickerman, and shows the flaws in Maybell Beatrice's testimony. For the reader, none of this reduces the mystery at the heart of the story, which is uncovering the identity of Carolyn's murderer. Indeed, that question becomes even more complicated when Lip announces that he has discovered the whereabouts of Leon Wells, which could reveal much about the incriminating B file. When Dr. Kumagai is exposed as either incompetent or criminal in his cross-examination by Sandy, the prosecution's case is all but annihilated. Now the reader's question intensifies about who the real murderer is.

It seems a little odd that Sandy would want to put Barbara on the stand, when Rusty's guilt already seems so unlikely to be proven beyond reasonable doubt. Nor does there seem much point in Rusty testifying, even though Rusty reflects that defendants who do not testify tend to be regarded with suspicion by a jury. Perhaps this conversation between Rusty and Sandy is primarily meant to indicate that the trial is not over yet, despite how it looks. At any rate, when Rusty and Lip meet with Leon Wells, the possibilities of who murdered Carolyn widen. Lyttle has now been brought into the bribery, while Molto looks increasingly guilty, too. Horgan is another possibility and the reader's thoughts are drawn towards another question. The question is, "If any of these men is guilty, then in what way would the B file and its evidence of relatively small-time corruption justify murder?" The author cleverly implies this question but leaves all answers up in the air for now.



# Summer, Chapters 35 and 36

## Summer, Chapters 35 and 36 Summary

In bed, Barbara thinks Rusty is getting up at 6:30 AM when he is just going to sleep. He dreams of his father in jail and then is awakened by Barbara and they race to court, arriving late. Nico is trying to get Judge Lyttle to allow him to call Molto as a witness, but Lyttle is firm in his denial. Nico then says he will call Rusty's former psychiatrist, Miles Robinson. Molto asks Robinson if Rusty ever told him that he had murdered Carolyn, but the judge disallows the question on the basis of doctor-patient privilege. Sandy says he has no objection to this particular question, and Robinson then answers in the negative. Molto keeps at Robinson, but the judge interrupts by addressing the jury. He says the trial is over, because there is no credible evidence against Rusty, and it is unjust to continue persecuting him. Nico jumps in and moves for a dismissal, which Lyttle grants. In Chapter 36, the courtroom is in turmoil as Rusty receives congratulations from Barbara and others. That night, the tabloid papers trumpet the trial results and condemn Nico's prosecution. Rusty realizes that Sandy will now be an attorney of national standing. Late at night, Rusty finds Sandy still at work in his office. In a long talk, Rusty explains to Sandy why he thinks something is missing. He wants to know why Lyttle stopped the trial, and doesn't believe Sandy's argument that it was for lack of evidence.

Rusty says that Carolyn carried bribery money for Lyttle, but Sandy's expression does not reveal whether or not he knew this. Sandy eventually admits that he had heard about it from undisclosed sources, but he contends that it was all long ago, when Lyttle was confused by his recent divorce, was drinking excessively, and generally was not himself. Sandy also says he heard that Horgan got Carolyn the job as deputy prosecutor on the condition that Lyttle stop taking bribes. Since then, both Horgan and Lyttle have become exemplars of the legal profession, Sandy declares. From this, Rusty deduces aloud that Sandy's interest in the B file during the trial was never to introduce it as evidence, but to frighten Lyttle, a strategy that worked. Rusty says that at the risk of sounding like an ingrate, he doesn't approve of this tactic. In turn, Sandy suggests that Rusty knows more about the case than he has ever revealed, and implies that perhaps Rusty is the murderer. The two men part on cordial terms, knowing that in the future they will have little to say to one another.

## Summer, Chapters 35 and 36 Analysis

After a disturbing dream about his father in jail, Rusty's fears are unexpectedly allayed in court. Nico's attempt to have Molto testify appears to be a last-ditch effort to discredit Rusty by finally bringing a witness who knows that Rusty had an affair with Carolyn, which has never been established in court. That effort fails, though, and then after Robinson testifies that Rusty never confessed murder to him, Judge Lyttle ends the trial. This sudden turn of events has the effect of shutting off the investigation of the roles of



Lyttle, Molto, and Horgan in the B file episode and potentially in Carolyn's death. Now the reader is left with Rusty's acquittal and no notion of who is the murderer. The conversation between Rusty and Sandy after the trial is a small masterpiece of critical thinking and analysis by both men, in which their expertise as attorneys is showcased alongside a penchant for manipulation and secrecy that one takes to be requisite for a successful trial lawyer. The author injects an understated wistfulness or regret held by the two men over the reality that justice is subject to such subterfuge. As this section of the novel ends, the reader's combination of admiration and chagrin over the trial's outcome is counterbalanced by continuing interest in the central question of any good mystery, which is who did it.



# Fall, Chapters 37-39

## Fall, Chapters 37-39 Summary

At the start of this section, Rusty rhapsodizes over the thrill of being free, which is tinged by bitterness over what he has endured. His return to normal life is slow. He still receives checks from work, because Nico would not dare to fire him. Rusty has become a celebrity, the falsely accused hero. He stays at home and does very little, but his presence bothers Barbara, who wants to know when he'll go back to work. He ponders the outcome of the trial, and reveals in his thoughts that it was his seed taken from Carolyn, that the prints on the glass probably were his, that the carpet fiber came from his home, and that the calls to Carolyn's apartment came from his home phone. He resolves never to admit any of this. At a function, he sees Horgan, who invites him to lunch another day. When they meet, Rusty is very angry, even as Horgan apologizes for mistrusting Rusty, and promises to help with rehabilitating his career. Rusty says he knew about Lyttle taking bribes and Horgan admits that he took the B file to protect Lyttle after Carolyn was killed. As Rusty enters the elevator to leave, Horgan asks who did kill Carolyn, but Rusty merely half-bows in a gentlemanly fashion, keeping his silence.

In Chapter 38, Rusty is working in the yard when he picks up a large iron tool, and recalls washing the blood and hair off it in the basement when Barbara came upon him. Rusty made light of the moment. He goes inside, and Barbara tells him she has taken a teaching job in Detroit. She cannot live with him anymore. Slowly, Rusty begins to talk to her about the murder. He explains eloquently that he understands the rage and confusion that led her to do it. He understands the guilt she must feel and how difficult it would be to stay with him, which he wants. She cries and goes upstairs. He knows that soon she will begin packing to leave him. Chapter 39 opens several months later. Rusty bumps into Nico on the street. He tells Nico he and Barbara have separated, which Nico knew and Nico says a recall election will be held for his job, which Rusty knew. Nico says he never tried to frame Rusty and Rusty says he knows that. Nico thinks it odd that a year ago Rusty could have been him in the election and now he could do so again. He spreads his arms and says nothing has changed.

## Fall, Chapters 37-39 Analysis

At the outset of this section, a major step is taken toward solving the mystery of who killed Carolyn when Rusty picks up the murder weapon and recalls washing it off. After Barbara says she is leaving him, many readers probably would deduce that the killer was not Rusty but Barbara. Even so, the author draws out this revelation, milking it for every drop of suspense. At the same time, Rusty's explanation of what Barbara's frame of mind must have been as she worked herself into a frenzy of jealousy and rage tends to slightly soften the horror of the murder because the reader recognizes how disordered Barbara's thoughts were. Barbara adds to this impression by asking Rusty if





he can imagine what it is like to be crazy. Rusty's continued wish to stay with Barbara despite the murder is a kind of recognition of his own complicity in the crime, first through his infidelity, and then by protecting her during the trial. Exactly when he knew that she was guilty is a question that might arise in the minds of many readers but the author does not answer that question yet. In the short Chapter 39, the relationship between Nico and Rusty, which was always uneasy but obviously became very strained during the trial, is repaired somewhat. Each expresses sorrow over the plight of the other, and neither carries a major grudge, although both men seem to hold a reserve of suspicion toward each other. Nico does not know if Rusty is the murderer or not, and Rusty suspects that Nico's ambitions led him into a hasty prosecution of the case. When Nico remarks that Rusty is once again the hero and nothing has changed, the irony is powerful. Everything has changed.





# Fall, Chapter 40 and Closing Argument

## Fall, Chapter 40 and Closing Argument Summary

Most of the furniture is gone from Rusty's house and Barbara has moved to Detroit with Nat. Rusty had considered going to live near them but instead he has decided to stay in Kindle County and take an apartment in the city. He has received a Christmas card from Marty Polhemus, which causes him to think of his father, to whom he never wrote after Rusty's mother died. A woman called Wanda who had lived with Rusty's father called eight years earlier to say he had died. The doorbell rings and Lip is there, carrying a Christmas present. Rusty opens it to find the fingerprinted glass. Lip explains that he had taken the glass to Dickerman, the fingerprinting expert, and then got a call that the test was done. He went to pick up the glass but could not return it to Evidence, because he had been taken off the case, so he just tossed it in a drawer at home and nobody ever asked him for it. Lip asks if Rusty killed Carolyn and Rusty asks what Lip thinks. Lip says Rusty probably did it out of anger or jealousy. In explaining to Lip what happened, Rusty asks him to imagine a jealous wife with a crazed notion that to eliminate her competition was the only way she could get her husband back but who felt the crime the crime had to be committed in a way that the husband could deduce was her doing.

Planting the glass with his fingerprints on it and injecting his sperm into Carolyn's corpse were Barbara's main hints to him. Rusty says he knew for sure when he counted the glasses at Carolyn's house, recognized that her set was exactly like theirs, and that one of their twelve glasses was missing. Lip is astonished but he thinks Barbara did it with the intention of framing Rusty to get her revenge. He asks if Rusty told Sandy. Rusty says no, but maybe Sandy would have thought it was all set up by Rusty to frame Barbara, just in case Rusty's trial went badly. Lip asks uncertainly if that is true, and Rusty says no. In a short chapter titled, "Closing Argument," Horgan calls to say that he has arranged for Rusty to become the acting prosecuting attorney, now that Nico has been recalled in a closely contested vote. Rusty accepts. Nico will run for city council, and Rusty thinks he will win. Rusty goes to visit Barbara and Nat on many weekends, and has reconciled with Barbara, but he expects that one of them will meet someone else some day. In the meantime, Nat seems comforted that they are not divorced. Rusty admits that he still thinks of Carolyn occasionally and wonders why he was so enamored of her. In the end, he thinks it probably was because her troubled soul, her grace and beauty, drew him toward an abandonment that really was just a pursuit of exultation, passion, and hope.

## Fall, Chapter 40 and Closing Argument Analysis

As the loose ends of the mystery are tied up, the author stays true to his mission from the outset, in doling out facts and explanations at a calculated pace, even while continuing to enrich the personalities of his characters. It could be argued that Rusty's



Christmas card from Marty and his thoughts about his own father add nothing to the progress of the plot. They are included entirely to help show Rusty's thoughtful and troubled frame of mind at this stage of the story. Actually, however, these events do add to the credibility of the next development in the plot, when Rusty tells his friend Lipranzer that Barbara was the murderer. It turns out that Lip has taken a great chance in shielding Rusty by not bringing forth the most damning piece of evidence, the glass. Lip did so even while suspecting that Rusty was the murderer, which indicates that his respect and friendship exceed even his love of justice. Lip's character as an upstanding policeman has been thoroughly established, so the question that arises is why would he protect a suspected murderer even when the man is his best friend? The only satisfying answer is that Lip must regard Rusty as an essentially good man who made a bad mistake. If the reader is to believe this, then Rusty's goodness as a husband and father, and as a son who tried hard to forgive and overcome the darkness of his own father, must once again be emphasized. Lip is not the only one who has to feel comfortable about protecting Rusty. The reader has to feel that way, too, or the novel risks becoming unsatisfactory at the very end.

Lip's suspicion that Barbara was trying to frame Rusty rather than merely to get him back is part of this effort at maintaining the reader's sympathy toward Rusty. If Barbara was really so nasty, which is possible in what was obviously a crazed state of mind, Rusty's belief and trust in her is all the more appealing, even if he was gulled by her. The author does not leave it there, though. He has Rusty suggest to Lip that maybe Barbara was the one who was being set up by Rusty. This creates just enough suspicion to make Lip uneasy, to once again display Rusty's creative intelligence, and to make Rusty look like anything but an innocent dupe. It is hard not to admire someone like that. In the "Closing Argument" chapter, Rusty assumes the mantle of prosecuting attorney that he had shunned at the beginning of the book, a year earlier, when people advised him to shoulder past his boss Horgan and take the office for himself. He now has the job but has lost his wife and his beloved son. The price is tremendous and it is not one that he ever would have willingly paid. All this happened, as Rusty sees it, because of his overwhelming attraction to a woman. To him, she represented a flight from the darkness of his life, including the coldness of his father, the emotional distance of his odd mother, and the growing estrangement from his wife. Carolyn was irresistible because she represented both the dark inside him and the light toward which he strove.



# Characters

## Rusty Sabich

Rozat K. "Rusty" Sabich is the novel's main character and narrator. A highly successful lawyer of about forty years old, he is chief deputy prosecuting attorney of Kindle County when the novel opens. Rusty is a very bright and logical thinker who has a twelve-year history of putting miscreants behind bars for the state. As his character is developed throughout the novel, it becomes clear that Rusty is sensitive, caring, and honest but that he also knows how to be secretive and even manipulative when necessary, especially in doing his job. He loves the work but he also recognizes that self-interest, lies, and corruption exist not only among the people he prosecutes but among his own peers. Rusty has a light side and a dark side. The lightness is perhaps best demonstrated in his love for his young son but it also is apparent in his devotion to his wife, even though they have major marital difficulties. Rusty's dark side largely derives from a difficult childhood, dominated by a heartless father and a distracted and moody mother. In Rusty, this manifests as a tendency to emotionally fade away from people, especially when he feels under pressure. He clearly thrives on the excitement and challenges of the courtroom and this attraction to emotional thrills plays a role in his obsession with his beautiful colleague, the novel's murder victim. Rusty's love for her is a study in abandonment. Without fully understanding why, he develops an intense devotion to her during the few months in which they have an affair and he continues to be obsessed with her for a long time after that. There is something hapless and forlorn about his worshipful approach to her, especially because she does not respond in kind. A gifted man with a keen mind, Rusty never shows a consistent ability to avoid being controlled by his emotions.

## Carolyn Polhemus

Carolyn Polhemus is the novel's murder victim. She is more than forty years old, but remains extraordinarily beautiful in a rather stereotypical way with a buxom and fit figure and a cascade of golden hair. Carolyn is a damaged person. She is intelligent and capable in her job as a deputy prosecuting attorney, but her ambitions to ascend in the hierarchy lead her toward initiating sexual relationships with several powerful men in the legal profession. She also gets involved in corrupt practices. As an attorney, she has a fascination with people who are vicious and a special place in her heart for abject victims. Her sexual escapades verge on the kinky and dangerous. She displays an animal attraction to men but shows no capacity for love. She has a teenaged son which no one at her office knows about until Carolyn was murdered. The portrait that emerges of her character over the course of the novel is of a person who must have been seriously harmed earlier in life and who has responded by emotionally shutting down. Everything she does seems utterly self-directed, which makes her similar to some of most ambitious and ruthless men with whom she works. However, the tragedy for Carolyn is that she has left herself no way to be true to the best of her womanly



instincts. She sees herself as surrounded by pariahs and has chosen to become a pariah as well. Despite a confident, cheerful, and even sassy demeanor, Carolyn must be a tormented and unhappy person.

## Raymond Horgan

Raymond Horgan, the county's prosecuting attorney, is Rusty's boss when the novel opens. Horgan is big, bluff, and canny. He projects a powerful sense of presence. In many ways, he is born to politics, yet he also seems a little tired or distracted, as if he were just beginning to pass the peak of his powers. Horgan has seen a lot in his day and he remains self-confident and ambitious, but something in his attitude suggests that perhaps he has lost a bit of the killer instinct he needs to survive in the jungle of legal politics. Even so, when he loses his job in an election, Horgan shows that he knows very well how to place blame and attempt to extract vengeance. Virtually everything he does is driven by self-interest and even his interpretations of events are made through this sometimes skewed view of what people are trying to do to him. An interesting aspect of his character is that while he is the classic and charming egotist, he also has this capacity to turn mean because of his egotism. Naturally, he rebounds from his election to land on his feet as a partner in a wealthy law firm and he retains much influence within the legal community. He also displays the willingness to do whatever is necessary to get ahead and stay there, even if it is personally demeaning. As a larger-than-life character, Horgan initially elicits admiration or even awe in the reader, but the more his personality is filled out, the less appealing he becomes. In the end, he is downright unlikable.

## Barbara Bernstein

Barbara Bernstein is Rusty's wife and the mother of their son. Like many other characters in this novel, Barbara is unusually intelligent. A mathematics whiz, she goes back to college after the birth of her son to get a doctorate in math. Her habits are meticulous where she keeps everything in place, and is deeply interested in intellectual pursuits of many descriptions. For fun, she reads books on all sorts of arcane subjects. Her devotion to Rusty and their son is absolute. When Rusty engages in an affair and later confesses to Barbara, her bitterness is intense. She disengages from him emotionally and physically and picks him apart verbally every night with sarcasm and insult. After he is accused of murder, her attitude changes again, as she rallies to his support. Her warmth toward him returns, albeit with the unspoken but felt reservation now that their relationship is forever tainted. Barbara's attachment to her son is so powerful that she has told her husband she does not think she ever could feel as strongly about another child as does about him. Barbara is an attractive woman whom many men would desire but she never displays any interest in straying. She is an enthusiastic and imaginative lover to her husband and has told him that he is the only man she ever loved. Barbara is a compelling, complicated, and mercurial character.



## Sandy Stern

Alejandro "Sandy" Stern is Rusty's defense attorney. An Argentinian Jew and a Spanish gentleman, he is elegant, erudite, courtly, soft-spoken, and beautifully manicured. Physically, he is short, roundish, and balding. As a trial lawyer, Sandy is low-key, fastidious, and extremely adept, with an instinct for divining the characters of people. In court, he seems to concentrate as much on figuring out the psychology of a witness as he does on the facts themselves. He's secretive about facts, but well-connected, and seems to find out almost everything about a case. Sandy does not like describing his strategy, even to his client, and he hates making predictions or any other statement that might backfire on him. If necessary, he will take a chance in court. Stern does not always err on the side of caution, but the chances he takes are well-calculated. He speaks in a modulated and almost formal diction that only increases his aura of respectability. He is a raconteur and likes a cigar, but beyond that, this is a man of well-contained pleasures who plays life close to the vest.

## Dan Lipranzer

Dan "Lip" Lipranzer is a police officer and Rusty Sabich's friend and co-investigator. He is an upstanding cop, with no time for colleagues who are bullies, bigots, or on the take. His father was a policeman and Lip left college to join the force after his father died. He has a rheumy-eyed and sulking look and is a loner on the force, but he is also a gifted investigator, skeptical in the way of a good policeman, pragmatic, and not heartless. A scholar of the city's underground life, he is intensely loyal to friends like Rusty, has a dry sense of humor, and is wary of women who have a roaming eye. He is unmarried but sees an older woman on a regular and casual basis. He is cautious, knows the political ropes of being a cop, and is smart without being unusually intelligent. Physically, he is not brave, but he is willing to do what's necessary in a tough situation. Lip is the kind of guy you want to have at your back. He is a stalwart and stouthearted friend.

## Larren Lyttle

Larren Lyttle is the presiding judge at Rusty's trial. A former partner in a law firm with Raymond Horgan, he remains one of Horgan's best friends. Lyttle is a large black man with a face full of guile and majesty. An extremely imposing figure, he treats reporters well and has the gift of captivating a jury with his personality. A former defense attorney, he likes to joke in court at the expense of the prosecution and is not above referring to race as a way of bonding with black defendants who await their turn to face the bench. During the trial, Lyttle displays a nuanced understanding of the law coupled with a fearless penchant to protect defendants against unfair attacks by the prosecution. He can be scathing and preemptory in his judgments. No one would ever confuse Judge Lyttle with an easy mark.



## Nico Della Guardia

Nico "Delay" Della Guardia is the lawyer who wins an election early in the novel to become the county's prosecuting attorney. He earned his nickname early in his career, because he could never complete a brief on time. About forty years old and a trim man of dashing appearance, he is the consummate networker, especially with the media. When he plants news stories that undermine the prosecuting attorney, in hopes of elevating his own chances to assume that post, he is fired by the chief deputy, Rusty. He does not hold an outward grudge toward Rusty and instead projects a brassy sincerity that he applies to everyone. Nico is relentless and confident. He is not particularly smart but he is good-looking, dresses well, and knows how to glad hand. Rusty thinks of Nico as "a pygmy in his soul."

## Tommy Molto

Tommy Molto, another deputy prosecutor, is Nico Della Guardia's righthand man. A former seminarian, he is nicknamed the Mad Monk around the office. He is short, overweight, pockmarked, and driven. He does not have the restraint to be effective in court, but is smarter and more disciplined than Nico, which makes him a good assistant. Tommy's pursuit of Rusty during the trial is singleminded to the point of desperation. Rusty suspects that Tommy is driven by an unrequited love for Carolyn, who treated him as a toady. In effect, Tommy's role in the novel is as the main thorn in Rusty's side.

## Tatsuo Kumagai

Tatsuo "Painless" Kumagai is the county's inept pathologist. His nickname came from a former chief deputy prosecuting attorney who said that after Kumagai bungled an autopsy, that the only person who found working with him painless was the corpse because it was dead. Kumagai has presence and qualifications but ultimately his supercilious manner is overshadowed by his slipshod work. He pays the price for this carelessness in damage to his career. To the reader, this is no great loss because Painless insults and ridicules other people regularly and is one of the novel's most unlikeable characters.

## Jamie Kemp

Quentin "Jamie" Kemp is the junior lawyer who helps to represent Rusty. He acts as "law man," which means he does research but does not speak in court. Jamie is a good-looking guy who made a lot of money in a rock band called the Galactics before going into law. He becomes a big supporter of Rusty.



## Lionel Kenneally

Lionel Kenneally is the commander of special investigations in the county's 32nd District police station. He is tough-talking, opinionated, mean, and an unabashed racist. He also unapologetic about his conduct and is known as a copper's cop.

## Tom Glendenning

Tom Glendenning is the lead police investigator on the Carolyn Polhemus murder case. A big white man who is always quick with a racial crack, he treats everyone like an intruder. His whole identity revolves around being a cop.

## Leon Wells

Leon Wells is a captain in a black street gang called the Night Saints. A powerfully built gay man, he is the one who bribed law enforcement officials as described in the B file that plays a pivotal role in the plot. Wells is discussed in the novel but appears in only one scene.

## Nat Sabich

Nathaniel "Nat" Sabich, is the eight year-old son of Rusty and Barbara. An exceptionally good-looking boy, he is dreamy in nature and a little distracted, but sweet.

## Marty Polhemus

Marty Polhemus is Carolyn's son. A university student when he first appears in the novel, he later drops out of school. He is naïve, trusting, not particularly bright, unconsciously impolitic, and a little lost.

## Miles Robinson

Miles Robinson is the psychiatrist that Rusty sees a few times after Carolyn dumps him. In his mid-sixties and trim, with close-cropped white hair, he has a soft-spoken and dignified manner. He testifies in the trial but the rest of the time, he is more of a voice and listener than a physical presence in the novel.

## Lydia MacDougall

Lydia "Mac" MacDougall is the county's chief administrative deputy. A highly capable person, she became a paraplegic about a dozen years earlier in a car wreck in which





her husband was killed. Lydia, a firm supporter of Rusty throughout the novel, eventually is appointed to a judgeship.

## **Augustine Bolcarro**

Augustine Bolcarro, the city's tyrannical mayor, never appears physically in the novel but is discussed and plays a role as a power broker.

## **Maurice Dickerman**

Maurice Dickerman is a highly polished fingerprinting expert from the police department, who gives detailed evidence during the trial.

## **Mrs. Krapotnik**

Mrs. Krapotnik is Carolyn Pohemus's landlady. A rather absurd person, she testifies for the prosecution, but to laughable effect.

## **Maybell Beatrice**

Maybell Beatrice is a sweet old lady who cleans houses for a living and gives testimony at Rusty's trial that she has seen him before, but as it turns out, where and when is the question. Ultimately, her testimony has no impact.

## **Eugenia Martinez**

Eugenia Martinez is Rusty's former secretary. She is lazy, disloyal, and tries to smear Rusty in court but her testimony is shown to be perjury.

## **Wendell McGaffen**

Wendell McGaffen is a young and emotionally stunted child who was badly abused by his mother in a case that preceded the murder trial of Rusty. Carolyn nurtured Wendell and appears during the trial, which greatly impressed Rusty.

## **Guerash**

Guerash is a young officer in the North Branch who provided files to Carolyn when she was searching for the B file.

## **Lou Balistrieri**

Lou Balistrieri is the police department's commander of special services and has an office in McGrath Hall.



# Objects/Places

## Kindle County

Kindle County is an imaginary county somewhere in the Midwest where the entire action of the novel takes place.

## County Building

The Kindle County Building is a dismal and institutionalized structure of "Dickensian grimness" that houses the office of the prosecuting attorney, where most of the out-of-court action occurs.

## McGrath Hall

McGrath Hall houses the police department headquarters. Rusty goes there on occasion to confer with police officers.

## Nearing

Nearing is the town in Kindle County where Rusty, Barbara, and Nat Sabich live.

## Courtroom

The courtroom is a jewel-like room of beautifully grained wood where the trial takes place.

## Judge's Chambers

Judge Lyttle's chambers is a distinguished room, full of books and photos of the judge with politicians where the lawyers go for conferences with the judge.

## North Branch

The North Branch is the police station in the 32nd District where Lionel Kenneally and several other characters work and where bribery of law enforcement officers takes place.



## **Six Brothers**

Six Brothers is a seedy neighborhood tavern in a rough part of town where Rusty has a meeting with Lionel Kenneally.

## **Skageon**

Skageon is a town outside Kindle County, in the vicinity of which young Nat is sent to a camp for the duration of the trial.

## **Grace Street**

Grace Street is a very dangerous projects area of the city where many of the Nights Saints street gang reside and do business. Rusty and Lip go there to meet Lionel Wells.

## **Pathology Lab**

The pathology lab is a police building that looks like an old high school where Dr. Kumagai works. Rusty goes there to speak with Kumagai.

## **Studio B**

Studio B is a large and open space the size of a gymnasium where Marty Polhemus is doing art at the university when Rusty goes to meet him.

## **Rechtner's**

Rechtner's is an old-fashioned German restaurant near the courthouse where Rusty and Barbara go to dinner one night after court.



# Themes

## Revenge

Of all the character traits that could be ascribed to the evil at the heart of this murder mystery, revenge is probably the central one. Many people feel wronged in this story, not just the murderer and their various desires to avenge themselves on those who they think mistreated them create most of the misery in the novel. Raymond Hogan, who feels wronged by Rusty Sabich, responds with testimony in court aimed at sending his longtime and loyal employee to prison. At first, Tommy Molto seems to have no motive for his zealous pursuit of the prosecution of Rusty but as the trial progresses and Rusty's innocence seems to become more obvious, it also becomes apparent that Tommy had a crush on Carolyn Polhemus. His attack on Rusty could well be revenge for the affair Rusty had with her, which is something Tommy never had. Tommy's boss, Nico Della Guardia, was once fired by Rusty, which raises the suspicion that the prosecution of Rusty arose from Nico's desire for revenge. Ultimately, this does not seem to be true, yet the mere suspicion of revenge as a motive still has power to disrupt and disconcert people.

In a lesser sense, the treachery of Rusty's former secretary, Eugenia, in testifying against him is a form of revenge. Eugenia is the sort of career bureaucrat who feels repressed by the system and blames her boss for it, whoever he or she may be. The novel's central vengeance, of course, is that of Barbara. Her reasons are complex and so subtle that it could be overlooked. It seems that she simply wants to get rid of Carolyn as a rival for Rusty's love. In reality, she wants revenge on Carolyn for stealing Rusty and she wants revenge on Rusty for straying. Rusty may be right in surmising that Barbara simply wants him to be aware that she committed the murder or Lip may be right that she really wanted to frame Rusty. In either case, revenge on Rusty is her motive. She wants him to suffer because his actions have caused her to suffer.

## Keeping Secrets

Secrets are a stock in trade among this society of lawyers. Even so, the keeping of a secret is always a moral choice and not just a strategic one. Often in this novel, secrets are kept for the wrong reasons, although in some cases it is hard for the reader to decide if the keeping of a secret was right or wrong. The first secret of which the reader is aware is that Rusty had an affair with Carolyn. This secret, which proves to be vital to Rusty's defense in the murder trial, is echoed by the ones kept by both Horgan and Lytle of affairs they also had with Carolyn. Horgan also tries to conceal his removal of the B file from the paperwork Carolyn had before her murder but that effort fails. The secrets contained in the file, concerning who was accepting bribes, eventually are revealed as well.



Rusty and his lawyer, Sandy Stern, keep a number of secrets from one another as the trial progresses, a situation that could well lead to disaster but turns out okay. Perhaps the implication is that people who are wise in their choices of secrets to keep have better results when keeping them. At any rate, the atmosphere in this novel is rife with confidences kept and betrayed, offering plenty of opportunities for rumination on whether or if keeping secrets is advisable. The biggest secret of all concerning who killed Carolyn is also among the most problematic ones. It causes two good men to compromise their integrity. Rusty has to compromise his integrity to protect his wife, and Lip, tells no one that he has hidden the crucial piece of evidence in order to protect Rusty. Keeping secrets almost always has a cost and as this novel shows, that cost can be life-changing.

## Overweening Ambition

The sacrifice of ethics and good judgment to the demands of ambition is a theme almost as old as literature. In a novel full of lawyers, it is perhaps not surprising that the dangers of blind ambition are frequently in evidence. It would be hard to say who is the most ambitious character in the book but certainly the one most severely punished for it is Carolyn Polhemus. With her talent, looks, and compelling personality, it seems quite possible that she could have reached her goals without compromising herself. However, she initiates several sexual entanglements with the apparent objective, in each instance, of advancing her career. Unsurprisingly, this leads to a general perception in the office that she "gets around," which in turn damages her credibility. It is almost certain that a male engaging in the same activity would be unlikely to suffer the same degree of criticism, but such unfairness is also irrelevant. Carolyn's murder, at the hands of another woman, could be read as punishment for a heartlessness driven by ambition.

Even so, many of the men with whom she works are easily as ambitious as she is. Raymond Horgan is willing to make all sorts of dubious deals and concessions if they will help him to stay in office. Larren Lyttle's desire to protect his judgeship leads him to ask Horgan to suppress trial evidence that could damage his career, and Horgan complies, because to be reelected as prosecuting attorney he needs the black vote that Lyttle commands. The ambitions of Nico Della Guardia and his assistant, Tommy Molto, drive them to hasty and potentially unethical decisions concerning the prosecution of Rusty. The mayor, a minor character who does not physically appear in the novel, is portrayed as a ruthless, tyrannical politician. Even Rusty's defense lawyer, Sandy Stern, uses a subtle form of coercion in court on Judge Lyttle to secure an acquittal in the high-profile trial, which Stern knows will elevate him to a lawyer of national standing. An underlying message in this book that is not clearly articulated but still evident is to beware of the damage to one's soul that can be caused by excess ambition.

# Style

## Point of View

The entire novel is told from the viewpoint of the protagonist, Rusty Sabich, who uses the first-person perspective throughout it. Rusty is either present or is the narrator in every scene, which is a convention that makes point of view quite easy for the author to negotiate. The reader is never allowed inside the mind of anyone else in the novel. Sometimes, Rusty postulates what someone else might be thinking but everything that happens in the book is seen through his eyes. If he wasn't in a place where something happened, then that activity is reconstructed through Rusty's dialogue with someone who was there, or through an investigation that reveals what happened at the time and place.

For at least two reasons, this choice of viewpoint is probably a good one. This was the author's first novel, which means he was still new at the tricks of the trade. Much could potentially go wrong in writing the book, so a simple point of view is a sensible strategy because it reduces the risk of confusing or aggravating the reader. Also, telling the whole story through Rusty's eyes allows the author to reveal information at the pace of his character. In other words, the mystery can be maintained because Rusty does not have to reveal to the reader everything he knows right away. This is useful in a murder mystery, which conventionally ends with a denouement that explains exactly what the killer did and why. That is precisely what happens in this book with Rusty explaining it all to his friend, Lipranzer.

## Setting

The whole novel is set in the fictional Kindle County, in an unnamed Midwestern city. The county and city themselves play only marginal roles in the story. Place description is minimal, particularly concerning the landscape or cityscape. Interiors are given more attention. Almost everything happens indoors or in a vehicle, except for one or two minor encounters on sidewalks or when Rusty goes to his son's baseball game. Indoors, the main setting is the courtroom where Judge Larren Lyttle presides over the murder trial of Rusty Sabich. Many of the scenes in the second half of the novel take place there. The author gives a brief but clear description of the courtroom, which needs little embellishment, simply because virtually all readers are familiar with the appearance of a courtroom and will fill in details from their own imaginations or memories.

Other settings around the city, such as the offices of the prosecuting attorney in the County Building and the police department headquarters at McGrath Hall, are given cursory descriptions. An adjective or a general observation is about all the reader gets but this does not create a sense of dissatisfaction or incompleteness, because the real setting of this story is inside the mind of Rusty Sabich. In the end, this is a psychological





novel as much as it is a mystery. How Rusty responds to the events around him, how he figures things out, and how he rationalizes, grieves, and rejoices are central to the story. While the events themselves occur in the interiors of buildings, the meaning of them is explored inside the walls of Rusty's head.

## Language and Meaning

As would be expected in a courtroom drama, the language of this novel is flavored with legal jargon but not in an excessive or intrusive manner. The diction is unpretentious with an emphasis on clarity, but the author is not afraid to use unusual words if they are appropriate. Occasional allusions to physics, art, or music help to create the impression of a broad familiarity with learning that one might associate with the legal profession. The most lyrical passages often are the start of chapters, when the protagonist is ruminating about life or encounters a new character in the book. Descriptions of people are often vivid and while they do include physical traits, their concentration is on the personal style and the psyche of the individual. Speech often is used as defining attribute of a character. For example, someone speaks with an accent, someone else uses bad grammar, another talks in the argot of the streets, and yet another has a formal, courtly style of expression.

Most of the novel is told in present tense, although a number of chapters in the first half of the book use past tense. In those chapters, Rusty is speaking to a psychiatrist that he began seeing after his affair with Carolyn ended. Those sessions with psychiatrist happened in the past because Carolyn has already been murdered when the novel begins. This is perhaps the only technique in the book that is in any way unusual or daring. Generally, the language and its presentation are straightforward, practical, and easy to read, while at the same time being intelligent and requiring full attention. Those who maintain that the novel is a virtual textbook for writing a smart and absorbing best seller have a strong argument.

## Structure

Like the other stylistic aspects of the novel, its structure is clean and direct. It takes no undue chances and avoids the possibility of confusion. The book has 40 chapters that are subdivided into three sections. The first section, "Spring," has 17 chapters preceded by a two-page "Opening Statement." The second section, "Summer," is the longest, covering chapters 18 to 36 and preceded by a one-page legal document that formally charges Rusty with murder. The third section, "Fall," is the shortest one, covering chapters 37 to 40 and followed by a three-page "Closing Argument." The time covered over the course of the novel is one year. It opens in April and ends at Christmastime, but events preceding April are recounted in the story. Each section, therefore, is named after the appropriate time of year and the author periodically mentions the weather to further emphasize the passage of time that the structure indicates.

Except for the chapters that recount events preceding the opening of the novel, the book is chronologically linear. Its only other deviation from a straightforward march in time is in accounts the protagonist gives of his own upbringing and the backgrounds of a few other characters. This linear structure certainly helps to make the story easier to follow than if it jumped back and forth in time because the details of the murder case require concentration to master. As is the case with other aspects of the storytelling, the structure seems to have been deliberately kept simple, so that the reader can concentrate on psychological aspects of the characters and on the complex facts of the case.



## Quotes

"Life in the workplace: so many signs of the hidden world of meanings elude me in a day, bumps on the surface, shadows, like creatures darting by" (Spring, Chapter 1, pg. 20.)

"Analyzing politics or witnesses or cops, she showed you just how firm a purchase she had on what was going on. And that was very exciting to me, to meet a woman who seemed to really have the lowdown, who was moving through the world at Carolyn's speed, and who was so many different things to different people" (Spring, Chapter 2, pg. 34.)

"Lip has his customary OPV—official police vehicle—a gold Aries, unmarked but for the blackwall tires and the license plates, which, like those on every other OPV, begin with ZF, thus forming a code recognized by every minor hoodlum in the city" (Spring, Chapter 8, pg. 74.)

"In a big-city police department, at least in Kindle County, there is no such thing as playing by the book. The book got trashed many years ago" (Spring, Chapter 10, pg. 97.)

"Sooner or later, I believe, I will see a woman of good humor, of blazing intelligence, full of quirky insight and sly wit, who is keenly interested in me. That is the person I still think of as my wife" (Spring, Chapter 14, pg. 126.)

"Life is simply experience; for reasons not readily discerned, we attempt to go on. At instants I am amazed that I am here" (Summer, Chapter 18, pg. 157.)

"For better or for worse, there must be truth in the bitter words that she will sometimes hurl at me in the heat of quarrels: that I am the only one, the one person, save Nat, whom she has ever loved" (Summer, Chapter 20, pg. 189.)

"I know Nathaniel as the hot mass of my feelings for him; I behold him as something no smaller or more finite or reducible than my passions. He will not piece or parse" (Summer, Chapter 25, pg. 227.)

"She does not say what Mr. Krapotnik died from, but it is hard to believe that Mrs. Krapotnik was not partly the cause" (Summer, Chapter 27, pg. 261.)



"Hedged in by the formalities of the rules of evidence, our truth-finding system cuts off the corners on half of what is commonly known" (Summer, Chapter 31, pg. 300.)

"I discover that, as a defendant, you experience the lows in the courtroom far more acutely than as an advocate" (Summer, Chapter 31, pg. 306.)

"Tommy has become the kind of prosecutor that the P.A.'s office too often breeds: a lawyer who can no longer make out the boundaries between persuasion and deception, who regards the trial of a lawsuit as a series of gimmicks and tricks" (Summer, Chapter 32, pg. 325.)

"My society has judged; no punishment is due. Every sticky cliché is right: an enormous weight has been lifted; I feel as if I could fly, like million bucks, ten feet tall" (Fall, Chapter 37, pg. 395.)

"Every life, like every snowflake, seemed to me then unique in the shape of its miseries, and in the rarity and mildness of its pleasures" (Fall, Chapter 38, pg. 408.)

"What is harder? Knowing the truth or finding it, telling it or being believed?" (Fall, Chapter 40, pg. 428.)

## Topics for Discussion

Good mysteries provide misdirection. The reader is led toward identifying one character as the guilty party and then another and another. The objective is to take the reader's eye off the real murderer. Did the author achieve that goal? When did you know who the killer was?

Rusty Sabich is a complex man. He can be loyal and unfaithful, loving and distant, honest and manipulative. Do you think the reader is supposed to like him? Does it matter? Do you like him?

Many words were expended in this novel on Rusty's fascination with Carolyn. Why do you think that was so important to emphasize? Would it have made any difference if he was not so obsessed with her?

Carolyn has affairs with several of her coworkers, all of whom have the potential to help her career. Why do you think a woman as smart and capable as she is would bother with trying to "sleep her way to the top?" Carolyn is damaged in some way. What do you think is wrong with her?

Near the end of the book, Rusty said he thought Barbara wanted him to know that she had committed the murder. Lipranzer disagreed, saying Barbara wanted to frame Rusty. Which explanation do you think is right and what does each one say about Barbara?

In the novel's highly realistic courtroom scenes, attorneys often take witnesses down verbal paths that end in traps. Considering such scenes, do you think the novel portrayed the legal system as an effective or ineffective way to pursue truth and justice? Why?

The world of lawyers, judges, and police in Kindle County is full of cynicism and mistrust, yet many of these characters also seem to feed on the thrill of law enforcement. Even so, they never talk about catching and prosecuting criminals to keep the city safe. What do you think is driving them? Are they good people?