



Just One Look

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It does not take long for readers of Harlan Coben’s novel to empathize with his protagonist and think, “Everything you know is wrong,” as a comedy troupe put it years ago. Soon, the innocent person swept up in danger realizes her life was built on lies.

The focus of *Just One Look* is on a woman, Grace Lawson, whose world is upended after a couple of odd—but not earthshaking—incidents. A largely contented artist living a placid existence in suburbia, where kids Emma and Max eat Lunchables and play Game Boy, Grace is exposed to considerable confusion, anxiety, and fear after a peculiar photo comes in a packet of familiar pictures.

Her husband Jack dismisses the old photo, then inexplicably vanishes, so Grace starts to suspect that the picture had been a warning, threat, or lure that took him and jeopardizes their family. Questions and doubts, dread and rage all swirl about her home and life, as mystery and history interweave and overlap like a ragged tarp atop a funhouse mirror. Odd deaths and odd lives are revealed.

Steadily, though, the award-winning author shows Grace to be a survivor, of sorts. After all, she had been at a rock concert fifteen years earlier, when a shooting sparked a panic and riot in which people died.

Through deft pacing, easy dialogue, and unusual-but-natural plot twists, Coben takes readers along for what becomes an exhilarating ride. His other characters—captivating assassin Eric Wu, policeman Stu Perlmutter, mobster Carl Vespa, various friends and indirect acquaintances, and even Grace’s own sister-in-law attorney (who now represents a figure from that deadly rock concert)—all combine to make up a large cast that enriches, deepens, and propels the story.

At its end, *Just One Look* reveals someone who is maybe weak, scared, and dumb—and also strong, brave and wise.

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