



One False Move

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ONE FALSE MOVE, Harlan Coben's fifth mystery novel featuring former basketball player Myron Bolitar who has become a big-time sports agent and sometime private eye, marks the author's hardcover debut. Since previous Coben paperback originals won Anthony, Edgar, and Shamus awards, this move upward into the mainstream of publishing was anticipated.

Bolitar's latest case begins when he agrees to look after star professional basketball player Brenda Slaughter—whose life may be in danger—because he hopes thereby to become her agent. In the event, being her bodyguard becomes more than he bargained for, when he starts looking for her parents and into other aspects of the girl's past. The job lasts just two weeks, but he tracks people and events spanning decades. Brenda's parents, one missing for twenty years and the other more recently disappeared, and aunt—the family's putative font of stability—become key figures in Bolitar's investigation, which includes a confrontation with mobsters and a climax involving one of New Jersey's leading families, whose current scion is running for governor. In addition to his standard supporting cast of Esperanza Diaz, former wrestler and now Bolitar's office factotum, and patrician attorney Win Lockwood, Coben includes tidbits of Bolitar's New Jersey upbringing and family. By showing the private eye's relationships with these people, Coben creates a more fully realized character and also adds verisimilitude, thus raising the novel above the typical formula driven whodunit.

His narrative method recalls that of Ross Macdonald, in whose intricately plotted mystery novels private eye Lew Archer exposes generations old family secrets to solve his cases. This is not the first book in which Coben utilizes such a multifaceted scheme, but it is his most successful.

In sum, ONE FALSE MOVE offers a carefully delineated puzzle with unremitting suspense, an intriguing group of credible characters, a dollop of tension-relieving humor, a rapidly paced narrative, and an engaging private eye. It is an entertaining read and a fine addition to a deservedly popular series.

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