



# The Hard Fall

## Brenda Chapman

**Reading Level: Grade 3**

**Interest Level: Adult**

### Book Summary

Paul Taylor, a wealthy business man, is in jail for the cold-blooded murder of his lover Laura Flint. She is found dead in his bed one hot August morning. Taylor's wife, a former swimsuit model, is the only one to stand behind him, but even she has doubts. Taylor is about to go on trial—and he is the only suspect. Anna Sweet of Storm Investigations agrees to take on his case with little hope of winning. The trail of clues is about to lead her into a hornet's nest of ugly secrets. Will Anna find new evidence to clear Taylor's name? Or is she working to free a killer?

### Chapter One

1. Do you think Anna Sweet should agree to take on the Paul Taylor case?
2. How are private investigators different from police detectives?
3. What type of person do you think makes a good PI?
4. Would you enjoy working as a PI?

### Chapter Two

1. What kind of man is Paul Taylor based on newspaper accounts?
2. Do you think that his wife should stay with him from what you've learned so far?
3. What does the following expression mean: *Never show your underbelly*? Do you believe these are good words to live by?

**Chapter Three**

1. What does Paul reveal about his relationships with the murdered Laura Flint and his wife?
2. Has your opinion of Paul Taylor changed after Anna's visit with him?
3. Do you think that Anna is right to say that she has little faith in freeing Paul Taylor?

**Chapter Four**

1. What does Anna mean when she says that she and Katie Taylor will never be 'soul sisters'?
2. Does Katie Taylor appear to be a person you would have sympathy for?
3. Why does Anna feel that Katie really believes her husband could be guilty of killing Laura Flint?
4. Can you think of a time when you have said one thing but believed the opposite?

**Chapter Five**

1. What does Anna mean when she says that this case is a 'hot potato'?
2. How does Detective Johnny Shaw compare to younger police officers today?
3. Why would Shaw ask Anna if she's going to make it look like Laura Flint 'deserved what she got'?
4. Do you think that Anna has misjudged Shaw based on what he does before leaving his office?

**Chapter Six**

1. Do you believe, as Jada does, that you have to spend money to earn money?
2. Why do you think Anna tells the older couple and her dad that her fall was an accident?
3. Why do you think Anna speaks about leaving town again at the end of the chapter?

**Chapter Seven**

1. Maddie Ringer remembers Laura as a needy kid who didn't fit in. How much influence do you think a painful childhood has on an adult?
2. Do you find that childhood friends always think of you the same as when you were kids?
3. Would you say that your childhood friends know you better than friends you made as an adult?
4. Do you have more or less sympathy for Laura Flint after learning about her past?

**Chapter Eight**

1. What does Anna mean when she thinks, "Shove in the knife and then turn the handle"?
2. How does the author create a feeling of unease or menace in the story?
3. At this point in the story, who do you think could have killed Laura Flint?

**Chapter Nine**

1. How do you know that Anna and Jimmy are still attracted to each other?
2. Do you think that anything will happen between them?
3. Would you blame Anna if she cheated on her sister?

**Chapter Ten**

1. What does Anna mean when she says, 'call me jaded'?
2. Could Laura Flint be 'the evil one' or do you believe she's an innocent victim?
3. Once you make up your mind about somebody's character, how easy is it to change your opinion?

**Chapter Eleven**

1. Anna calls the models 'tall and underfed'. Do you think the fashion industry is harmful to young girls or nothing to worry about?
2. What does the expression 'she got cold feet' mean? Has this ever happened to you?
3. Who do you think has more reason to lie about Katie's out-of-town work?

**Chapter Twelve**

1. Does your opinion of Katie Taylor change after Anna speaks with her this time?
2. Anna thinks about quitting the case. Do you think that she should?
3. Have you ever thought about quitting something because you didn't feel that you could do a good job?
4. How can you stop negative feelings from holding you back?

**Chapter Thirteen**

1. Why is the photo of Laura Flint with Alex Dowd in New York the key to solving the case?
2. Anna tells Paul Taylor that he was 'set up'. Who do you think was in on the plot?
3. Is Anna wise to set a trap with herself as bait?

**Chapter Fourteen**

1. Why do you think that Laura Flint became the person she did?
2. Why was she murdered?
3. Do you think that she deserves what she got?
4. The book's title *The Hard Fall* is taken from this chapter. Explain.

**Chapter Fifteen**

1. Anna's father doesn't tell her that he loves her. How does she know that he does?
2. What problems or concerns in Anna's life are still going on at the end of the book?