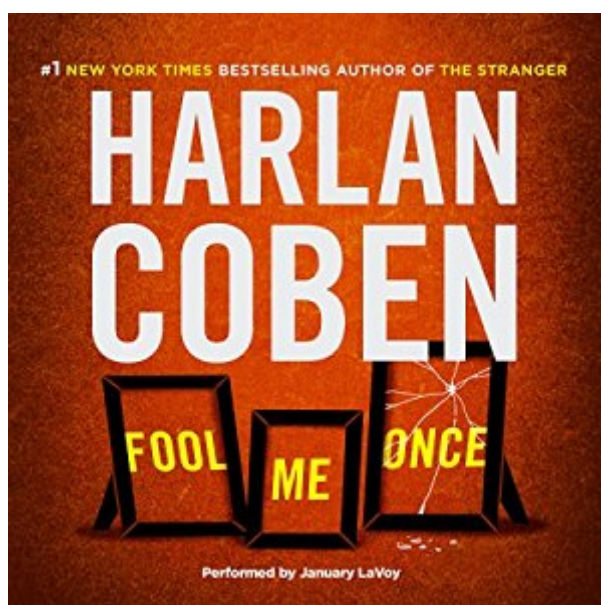


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Fool Me Once



Synopsis

#1 New York Times bestseller Harlan Coben delivers his next impossible-to-put-down thriller In the course of eight consecutive #1 New York Times bestsellers, millions of readers have discovered Harlan Coben's thrillers, filled with his trademark edge-of-your-seat suspense and gut-wrenching emotion. In Fool Me Once, Coben once again outdoes himself. Former special ops pilot Maya, home from the war, sees an unthinkable image captured by her nanny cam while she is at work: her two-year-old daughter playing with Maya's husband, Joe - who had been brutally murdered two weeks earlier. The provocative question at the heart of the mystery: Can you believe everything you see with your own eyes, even when you desperately want to? To find the answer, Maya must finally come to terms with deep secrets and deceit in her own past before she can face the unbelievable truth about her husband - and herself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Anyone who has read a number of Coben's books knows that his books are heavily based on a formula -- a formula which has resulted in many enjoyable books and in Coben becoming a major bestselling author. I, personally, have read all but one or two of his books and enjoyed all of them, albeit to varying degrees. Then I read his latest book, Fool Me Once, which I not only disliked, I thought it was terrible. I won't take your time describing the book's plot, as the Description above does a good job in providing this. Rather, my review will describe why I was so dissatisfied with Fool Me Once; which, in turn will, hopefully, be helpful to you in deciding if it is a book for you. To be fair,

Fool Me Once is written in a fast-paced style that makes it a very quick read. Unfortunately, that's the one and only good thing I can say about it. The heart of my dissatisfaction centers on my feeling: 1) that all of the characters are paper thin, not to mention unlikeable and lacking in credibility; 2) the plot requires a suspension of disbelief well beyond my willingness to do so (and I am generally very liberal in this area); 3) the main female character comes across as a person that makes Wonder Woman seem like just an average woman; 4) the motivations for the actions taken by the various key characters were mostly implausible to me, and lastly, 5) the ending was ridiculous, and left me shaking my head in disbelief. I know my critical review runs the risk of it getting a large number of "not helpful" votes, especially since most reviews for this book have been positive. But, if my review helps even a handful of people in deciding that Fool Me Once is not for them, I'll be satisfied.

I read my first Harlan Coben novel about 4 years ago, a book titled *Caught*. I loved it! Great story, great writing, great characters and endless plot twists and turns. I read a second Coben novel and yet again, was floored. Great story, great writing, great characters and endless plot twists and turns. A third novel by him moved him into my *every exclusive* list of Top 5 authors. A fourth novel moved him into my top three. I read a fifth novel. It was when I was reading my sixth novel by Harlan Coben when it dawned on me: It's the same story and same plot over and over and over and over again. Simply put, if you've read one Coben novel, you've read them all. There are SEVEN things that are in EVERY SINGLE COBEN NOVEL. Every damn one. One) It always relates back to something that happened 20 years ago. Two) There is always someone who died under *mysterious* circumstances. Three) It always relates to something that happened at a school, be it college or a private academy. Four) The protagonist's best friend always seems shady, can never be trusted and usually appears to be involved in some sort of conspiracy. Five) There's always a strip club involved. Six) A loved one *husband, wife, sibling, parent* always had lived a double-life the protagonist knew nothing about. And Seven) The protagonist always *ALWAYS* ends up seeing a dead loved one and now wonders if they are really dead. Dead mother, dead father, dead brother, dead sister, dead husband, dead wife. It doesn't matter. And this novel, *Fool Me Once* has the exact same 7 things. Same old tired, worn-out, rehashed storyline. For anyone who has never read any of his novels, go to your local library, pick up any Coben novel and read it. I guarantee you will LOVE it. Then, do yourself a favor. Don't read another one. If you've read, you've read them all. Once you're acquainted with his books, you immediately know what's coming. *spoiler* This book opens with the protagonist,

Maya, at her husband's funeral. Knowing full well how all his novels are the same, I immediately said to myself, "Oh, she'll see him alive." Sure enough, by about page 35, she did. By about page 65, we learn that her husband, Joe, had a brother. Joe and the brother were out at sea when the brother fell overboard. This was 20 years ago, just prior to Maya and Joe meeting. Again, knowing that all his novels are the same, I said to myself, "Joe killed his brother." Sure enough, with about 40 pages left, we are told that yep, you guessed it, Joe killed his brother. ***end spoiler*** It always feels that Mr. Coben has a template and when it's time for him to release a new book, he just plugs in characters names. So, you're probably wondering, "If you feel this way, why read his books?" Well, as funny as it sounds, I think Harlan Coben is a very gifted and very talented novelist. He is one of only 3 authors whose words have literally moved me to tears. He is one of a few authors who have actually had me burst out laughing. (Who doesn't love Little Pocahontas and Myron Bolitar?) His writing is great! His stories and plot? Not so much. And that's what makes it frustrating. That's why, I guess, I'm venting. Mr Coben is way too talented a writer to write the same old hackneyed novels year after year. I guess, since he is a best-selling author, why change? His fans will buy his books, his fans will read his books, he will make millions, his publisher and agent will make millions. Everyone will be happy "except for those of us who believe he is wasting his talent." Fool me Once is the 14th Coben novel I've read. With the exception of Michael Connelly, one of my 2 favorite authors, this is the most novels I've read by any one author. So, why do I keep reading Coben books when I'm not a fan? Or more importantly, why do I finish every Coben novel I start? Simple. I not only like his writing style a lot but I love his characters. His books are fast-moving, easy reads. He writes in a conversational tone. It feels as if Mr. Coben is actually telling you a story, not writing a book. Plus, his characters are real people. They are funny, flawed, down-to-earth. You connect with them. You identify with them. So, even though I find his books identical, I've always finished his books simply due to the fact that I want to know what happens to the characters. However, Fool me Once even ended that. I found Mr. Coben's style off. Gone was the personal touch. The wit and humor felt forced. I can't help but feel that Mr Coben simply needed to fulfill his contract to churn out another book and put very little effort into this one. It seemed like his heart wasn't in. The dialogue was forced and stilted and not real. I also could not AT ALL identify with Maya, the main characters. Or connect with any of the secondary characters. Maya served overseas, She suffers PTSD. She is a single mom raising her 2 year-old daughter. She is the type of person you want to root for. Yet, she was cold, aloof and

downright boring, maybe even rude to people trying to help. We are told she loved her husband, Joe. Yet, we see no flashbacks of something that shows they were in love. She has a 2 year-old daughter, Lily. Yet, Maya seems uninterested in her daughter, almost inconvenienced when her daughter wants to hear a bedtime story. We are told Maya is great friends with a fella named Shane. Yet, she continually is rude and short with him, hanging up the phone on his numerous times and we see no evidence of their friendship. I make it a practice to never give 1 star to a book I finish. If I finish it but don't like it, I will give it two. However, *Fool Me Once*, to me, is worthy of just one star. 14 novels I've read by Harlan Coben and this was the worst. I strongly doubt I will read any more of his.

Maya is a former special ops pilot who has had too much tragedy in her life. Not only was her sister Claire murdered four months ago, but her husband Joe has also been killed in front of her. Maya is shattered, suffering from PTSD and is trying to hold herself together for her two year old daughter. Then one day she sees her daughter on the nanny cam sitting on her father's lap. But Joe is supposedly dead - how can this be possible? It's an intriguing premise but it's also one which will feel very familiar to Harlan Coben readers. I can think of at least five of his books which have supposedly dead people (or long missing and thought gone for good) suddenly showing up in people's lives: *Tell No One*, *Gone for Good*, *The Woods*, *Play Dead* and *Missing You*. So when I started reading *Fool Me Once*, I felt like it was going to turn into a book that I've read before. It doesn't. Coben has come up with some brand new twists and there is an ending you almost certainly won't see coming. But despite that, it's not one of his best books. It's just one long investigation with no significant sub-plots or evil villains in sight. While there is a pay off, it drags along the way (and stretches credibility to its very limits. As a mother, I had major issues with some of Maya's parenting decisions). It's an okay thriller which trots along at a steady pace but it isn't as strong as some of the earlier Coben novels that it resembles. My thanks to Net Galley and Random House for supplying an ARC for review.

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