One Wrong Word

by Hank Phillippi Ryan



About the Book

A heart-racing new psychological thriller from *USA Today* bestselling and multiple award-winning author Hank Phillippi Ryan.

One wrong word can ruin your life. And no one knows that better than savvy crisis management expert Arden Ward. Problem is, she's now forced to handle a shocking crisis of her own. Unfairly accused of having an affair with a powerful client, Arden?s life and dreams are about to crash and burn. Then Arden is given an ultimatum. She has just two weeks to save her career and her reputation.

Is Cordelia Bannister the answer to her prayers?

Cordelia needs Arden?s help for her husband Ned, a Boston real estate mogul. Though he was recently acquitted in a fatal drunk driving accident, his reputation is ruined, and the fallout is devastating not only to the Bannisters' lives, but to the lives of their two adorable children.

Arden devotes her skill and determination --- and maybe her final days on the job --- to helping this shattered family. But revelations soon begin to emerge about what really happened the night of the accident. And then another car crash throws Ned back into the spotlight.

This case is Arden?s final chance to protect her own future and clear her name. But the more she tries to untangle the truth, the more she?s haunted by one disturbing question: What if she?s also protecting a killer?

Gossip. Lies. Rumors. Words like that *can* hurt you. And Arden knows the reality. Sometimes one wrong word can kill.

Discussion Guide

1. Have you ever had anyone start an unfair rumor about you? How did you deal with that?

2. Crisis management expert Arden Ward is visited by Cordelia Bannister, who needs her help to rehabilitate her husband?s reputation. Even though Ned has been acquitted of a fatal drunk driving accident, the public still thinks he's guilty. Have you ever disagreed with a jury?s verdict? Has there been a case where someone was found not guilty and you thought, *Oh, they got away with it!*

3. Both Arden and Monelle work for tyrannical bosses. Have you ever had an employer who was difficult to work for? How did you handle it?

4. What did you think about how Arden reacted to the rumor she'd been having an affair? And the fact that she was fired over another woman's "hunch"?

5. Ned Bannister seems like a loving father and a devoted husband. Or does he? Remember, we only meet Ned through other people's points of view: Cordelia's, Arden's and Monelle's. And they all think of him differently, don't they? When we hear about him from Cordelia's point of view, he's self-centered, selfish, work-obsessed and narcissistic. Is that how you felt about him, too?

6. Did you predict how the story would end? Were you right?

7. District Attorney Monelle Churchwood is convinced Ned Bannister is guilty as charged --- and she's determined to have him get what he deserves. An obsessed prosecutor can be dangerous. How did you feel about Monelle at the beginning of the novel? And how did you feel about her at the end?

8. Arden understands the power of the media?and knew when they were on Ned?s trail. And it was a newspaper that dubbed Ned "The Parking Garage Killer.? Do you follow the coverage of high-profile trials? Why are we also interested in those? Do you feel sorry for the families of those charged with terrible crimes?

9. One of the pivotal pieces of evidence might have come from Nyomi Chang. Were you worried about what she might say?

10. The children, Pip and Emma, are caught in the middle of this. How did you feel about them?

11. You may not have liked Cordelia at the beginning of the book --- but she had a solid alibi for the time of the accident. Did your feelings about her change?

12. Whose home did you like best?

13. Who in the book do you think lives happily ever after?

14. Fragrance plays a big role in ONE WRONG WORD. Do you have a favorite perfume? Does someone you know have a signature scent?

15. Have you ever wished you had a crisis management expert?

Author Bio

Hank Phillippi Ryan is the *USA Today* bestselling author of 18 thrillers, including ONE WRONG WORD and ALL THIS COULD BE YOURS, the 2026 Mary Higgins Clark Award winner, and now nominated for the 2026 Anthony Award for Best Novel.

Hank has won every major award in the mystery genre, with her thrillers translated into multiple languages worldwide. Her fiction is inspired by a lifetime of investigating true crime during her storied career as an on-air reporter for Boston?s WHDH-TV, where she was awarded multiple honors for her groundbreaking journalism, including an unprecedented 37 Emmys.

Her work has resulted in new laws, people sent to prison, homes removed from foreclosure, and millions of dollars in refunds and restitution for victims. A TedX speaker and in-demand literary moderator, she has been called ?a superb and gifted storyteller.? (*Library Journal*)

A Chicago native with roots in Indianapolis, Ryan lives in Boston with her husband, a nationally renowned civil rights and criminal defense attorney.

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