

It's the early sixties, and the wife of Henry Sommers, the leader of the notorious Winter Hill Gang, is brutally murdered in her Boston hospital room, resulting in a gangland war lasting over thirty years and throwing a close-kit Irish family into a whirlpool of violence, deceit, and heartbreak.

On Monster Hill, Henry's first reaction is to launch wholesale revenge against the man responsible for his wife's murder. But his somewhat level-headed lieutenant, Sammy Cunningham, convinces him getting even that way will only make things worse for him. Henry finally acquiesces. The problem is, he's already unleashed the northeast's most ruthless enforcer, Jay O'Malley, who'd do anything to please his boss, and, after discovering Sammy's begun an affair with his seventeen-year-old sister, Claire, to hurt Sammy. Henry steps aside, turns control over to Sammy, the son he never had. Jay is overlooked. While Sammy and Claire's relationship becomes a twister, Jay hurls himself into drug-fueled truculence. His only release? Avenging the killing of Henry's wife. Meantime, the cops figure out who's responsible for mutilated bodies turning up in places like the walkway of a nice, friendly, family-oriented hotel. They make the most of the situation, turn Jay into an informant. But the last thing Jay wants to do is snitch on his cohorts. Even Sammy. When Jay learns the North End crew is going to show up at Henry's barroom to kill Henry and Sammy, Jay has no choice but to tip off his new boss and the gang leader emeritus. Alas, the cops pick the same night to pay a visit.

After fifteen years in witness protection, Jay shows up at Claire's to discover she's married to an attorney. The one she'd sought legal counsel from to get the cops off her back after that fateful barroom shootout. And - unbeknownst to Claire - the son of the cop who'd killed Sammy. Oh, and she'd had a son with Sammy. Revitalizing the old gang, Jay recruits Sammy, Jr. While Jay's fixing a World Series between the Red Sox and the Mets, Junior's reluctantly developing his uncle's drug business, with disastrous results. The FBI enters the picture, Jay's forced back into snitching. His sociopathic deeds reach a new height. Angelo Gargiulo, the North End capo, demands that Jay do in Junior for failing to kill an undercover state trooper who'd infiltrated the Winter Hill Gang. Despondent over his mother's death after a long battle with cancer, Junior decides to confront his uncle. One of Gargiulo's mass-murdering nephews happens to be at the same restaurant wherein Junior meets his associates to discuss what to do about Jay, and a fierce confrontation ensues. Afterwards, Jay, the sociopath that he is, thinks he's survived it all. Until an ill-fated encounter along the Charles River shortly after the massacre at the Eights in Charlestown. Who's responsible? The redneck Sox first baseman Jay had tried to force into throwing the Series? The agent who'd violated FBI ethics by befriendng the vicious gang leader? The North End capo also just plain crazy and capricious? Maybe one of Jay's own? Providentially, a clue is left behind.