

**2006 One Book One Nebraska
One False Move by Alex Kava
Discussion questions**

Please feel free to use any of these questions or come up with your own.

1. Melanie's relationship to Jared is central in the novel. Do you sympathize with/understand Melanie's motivation to help Jared? Does her relationship with her brother change over the course of the novel?
2. How does Charlie view his uncle? Does this change during the novel? Describe Charlie's relationship with his mother.
3. How does each character's past affect their current actions?
4. Who is the main character? Why? Is this character heroic?
5. What impact does this experience have on Andrew Kane? What's in his future? What do you think he will do about Melanie's secret?
6. Do you think Jared had future plans for Grace?
7. Did you find qualities of Jared that you liked?
8. Describe Melanie's positive and negative traits.
9. What role does Max Kramer have in the story? Tommy Pakula? Grace Wennington?
10. What is the significance of Grace's daughter, Emily's conversations with her imaginary friend about the "shadow man"?
11. Melanie often saw omens (crows, clouds, signs) – discuss a few instances.
12. Did the short chapters add to or detract from the story?
13. If there was a sequel, what storylines would continue?
14. What did the gnomes thread symbolize? Backpack? Others?
15. What is the climax or turning point of the story?

16. A line from an Emily Dickenson's poem was used, "Hope is the thing with feathers." Do you agree with Andrew's interpretation? Why or why not? Why is this included in the story?

Andrew's interpretation:

Hope is the little bird inside us that won't be silenced. It's what sustains us. It's the thing that keeps us from giving up, even when everything is looking pretty fucking hopeless. It takes something massive to stop that relentless song. Something like watching a plane fly into your tower or knowing an innocent woman was killed because of something stupid. Hope is the thing that sells lottery tickets and enters the Olympics and gets us through illnesses or deaths. That's what it means.

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

17. Jared discusses another poem with Andrew, *Richard Cory* by Edwin Arlington Robinson. What does Jared's knowledge of this poem tell us about his motivations?

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything

To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

18. Does the action/violence taking place in a locale that is familiar to most Nebraskans change the way you are involved with the novel? If so, how?
19. Does the news media somehow play a part (good or bad) in the coverage of the crimes?

In the Author's Note at the end of the novel, Alex Kava ponders some questions that she has pursued throughout her writing:

1. Why and how could anyone do something like this?
2. What pushes some of us to do evil while others will never cross that line?
3. If it's human nature to fight for survival, to what extremes are we willing to go?