

Deadly Decisions Study Guide

Deadly Decisions by Kathy Reichs

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Plot Summary

In the novel *Deadly Decisions*, Dr. Temperance Brennan, internationally renowned forensic anthropologist, tells the story of her role in solving a series of murders amid Quebec's violent motorcycle gang war. In telling the story, Tempe brings both her knowledge as a scientist and her dark sense of humor to the narrative.

The novel opens after the death of an innocent young girl. She is killed during an exchange of gunfire between rival motorcycle gangs, with the battle also involving a premature bomb detonation. In the course of the police investigation into those responsible for the latest violence, the police uncover information about some past murders connected to a local motorcycle gang. Tempe is called in to direct the excavation of some old gravesites. Tempe and the police uncover more than they expect when, in addition to the remains of two adults, they also find the remains of yet another young girl.

The discovery of yet another child victim deeply troubles Tempe, who has a history of working child tragedies. In her effort to track down the killers, she travels from Montreal to North Carolina to gain evidence. Tempe also gets assigned as a special liaison from the medical examiner's office to a law enforcement task force in charge of investigating motorcycle gang related crime. Tempe learns far more about outlaw biker culture than she ever wanted to know, and soon she herself is a target of "les motards," criminal bikers.

To further complicate matters, Tempe encounters disturbing news in her personal life. She learns that her romantic interest, Detective Andrew Ryan, has been arrested for criminal activity, including drug trafficking and possession of stolen property. Throughout much of the novel she tries in vain to contact Ryan to get his side of the story. This hardship is one Tempe has to bear alone, since she has no one else with which to share her pain.

Yet another complication comes in the unexpected arrival of Tempe's teenage nephew, Kit. For all of Kit's life, he and Tempe have had a close relationship, but his arrival comes at a time when Tempe is preoccupied with murder investigations. In addition, it seems Kit has developed an acute interest in motorcycles and motorcycle gang culture as well as having acquired a minor criminal record. When asking if Kit can stay with Tempe, Kit's mother conveniently neglects to mention Kit's recent legal troubles.

The regular obstacles facing a scientist trying to draw clues from old bones is not the only adversity Tempe faces at work. She is often also at odds with her colleagues. Two colleagues in particular present cause for annoyance to Tempe. Detective Claudel consistently treats Tempe with disdain, and his partner Constable Quickwater rarely treats Tempe in any fashion. In fact, he most often completely ignores Tempe.

All of Tempe's obstacles and frustrations remain until the end of the novel when they combine to form an unexpected and exciting conclusion.



Chapters 1 through 3

Chapters 1 through 3 Summary

Deadly Decisions is the story of a forensic anthropologist's role in the investigation of some recent and some past murders connected to a war between rival motorcycle gangs in Montreal. The novel is told in the first person by the forensic anthropologist, and no detail is spared in describing the ghastly nature of death and decomposition. What begins as a search for two victims of a long past murder turns into a child murder investigation that spans many years and two countries.

The novel opens with a nine-year-old girl dead from gunshot wounds to the head.

The narrator works on a Saturday in an autopsy lab. Detective Claudel looks for the narrator's boss, Dr. LaManche. Another detective, Charbonneau, tells the narrator that a child has been killed from stray bullets in a fight between two motorcycle gangs. The narrator, a forensic anthropologist accustomed to death, is troubled by the thought of a dead child.

The dead man on the autopsy table in front of the narrator is also the victim of a biker fight. The narrator refers to self as Brennan. Brennan goes in search of Charbonneau, and Charbonneau says that the name of the dead child is Emily Anne Toussaint. Brennan sees evidence that medical personnel at Montreal Children's Hospital tried hard to save Emily's life, and Brennan thinks it was only yesterday that the telephone call from LaManche reached Brennan in Virginia.

In chapter two, the setting is the previous day in Quantico, Virginia. Brennan teaches a workshop at the FBI Academy, and an agent tells Brennan that an urgent call has come from a Dr. LaManche. Brennan works for medical examiner offices in both North Carolina and in Montreal.

Brennan calls LaManche, and he refers to Brennan as Temperance, and Brennan reveals that most call her Tempe. LaManche tells Tempe that "les motards," what the residents of Quebec call motorcyclists, particularly outlaw bikers, have caused another two deaths. LaManche needs Tempe and Constable Quickwater to come to Montreal as soon as possible.

Rival motorcycle gangs have been fighting over the drug trade in Quebec for more than a decade. In the most recent attack, two members of the Heathens tried to deliver a bomb to their rivals, the Vipers. A member of the Vipers shot the bomb, and it detonated. The two men carrying the bomb were blown to pieces, and LaManche needs Tempe to identify them.

Tempe goes in search of Quickwater, a Canadian law enforcement officer currently working on Operation Carcajou, a large-scale operation to investigate criminal activities associated with biker gangs. Tempe finds Quickwater in a room with many other law



enforcement agents, many of whom know Tempe. Tempe tries to introduce herself to Quickwater, but he cuts her off by saying he knows who she is. After she tells of the call from LaManche, he leaves the room without speaking to her.

In chapter three, during the trip to Montreal Tempe notices that Quickwater is again rude to her. He does not speak to her at the airport and he does not sit near her on the plane. At her office, Tempe meets with LaManche. He says that the two men carrying the bomb are pulverized, and all Tempe has to work with are body fragments. DNA analysis may be useless in separating the fragments because if the men carrying the bomb are who police suspect, they are identical twins.

At home, Tempe receives a message that her nephew Kit will arrive with her cat the following day. Detective Andrew Ryan arrives. Ryan invites Tempe to dinner and then flirts and kisses Tempe. Tempe has known Ryan for years, and recently they have begun dating.

Tempe's friend Isabelle calls. After Tempe tells her of the recent biker killings, Isabelle says why not just let the bikers kill each other. The following morning Emily Anne is killed while walking to ballet class.

Chapters 1 through 3 Analysis

Instances of French in the narrative with no accompanying English translation occur. The text is also dense with anatomical terms.

In the first chapter, the reader knows very little about the narrator besides occupation and a single name. One does not know if the name Brennan is the first or last name, and one does not know the narrator's gender.

In chapter two, the timeline backs up to the previous day. The text is often dense with acronyms for the many different law enforcement and other government agencies. Midway through the chapter, one learns the narrator's first name and can conclude that the narrator is female. One can also conclude that she is good at her job because of another character referring to her as "the great bone doctor."

Quickwater's response to the narrator is confusing. The reader cannot know if he is being intentionally rude, but can know that Tempe perceives it that way.

In chapter three, the reader gets the first bit of dark humor. While working to separate body parts, something that just thinking about makes most people feel ill, Tempe gets hungry and goes to get some take out sushi. Tempe as narrator also has the habit of making comparisons that might be lost on many readers, particularly younger audiences. Her comparisons involving Cal Ripkin and Phyllis Diller are examples.

Upon the arrival of Ryan, the reader can immediately tell that the two are familiar and that Ryan is a significant person in Tempe's life.

Isabelle articulates a question that many might wonder: why not let the criminals just kill themselves? The death of Emily Anne answers the question.



Chapters 4 through 6

Chapters 4 through 6 Summary

Tempe's cat, Birdie, arrives early in the morning, and then Tempe goes to work. Tempe resumes work trying to identify the two bodies killed by the bomb. Tempe finds that she is troubled by the death of Emily Anne. It reminds her of the killing of a twelve-year-old boy years earlier. Tempe vows to do everything possible to help find and convict those responsible. She asks LaManche for permission to assist with the case, and LaManche says he will make inquiries.

Tempe arrives home in the evening, and Isabelle calls. She tells Tempe to turn on her television.

In chapter five, a news broadcast reports that Ryan has been arrested for possession of stolen property and drug trafficking. Tempe is shocked. She tries to call multiple phone numbers to get more information, but she is unable to reach anyone. Tempe waits for hours for Ryan to arrive, hoping it is all a mistake. She waits in disbelief. In her sadness, she thinks about being alone and how her daughter is away on an around-the-world cruise and not due back for months.

The following day, Tempe tries to stay busy. She encounters a newspaper story about Emily Anne's death. The news saddens Tempe further, and she avoids news of Ryan's arrest.

At work on Monday morning, Tempe learns that her request to help in the investigation has been approved. She will serve as a liaison between the medical examiners office and Operation Carcajou. Tempe returns to working to identify the two men killed by the bomb. By examining photos of the men and comparing them to the body fragments and by examining medical records, Tempe is able to identify the two brothers.

Tempe attends her first meeting with Operation Carcajou and learns about the history of outlaw motorcycle gangs.

In chapter six, Tempe attends a presentation on the target of Operation Carcajou, the outlaw motorcycle groups involved in organized crime. The presentation begins with a history of how the gangs began in the United States after World War II. The gangs grew into national organizations and then moved internationally. The motorcycle gangs operating in Quebec fight over territory, primarily for control of the illegal drug trade. The large well-known organizations, such as the Hell's Angels, Outlaws, and Bandidos control smaller local gangs. The Hell's Angels control the Vipers, and the Bandidos control a Canadian gang called the Rock Machine, which in turn controls the Heathens.

Quickwater arrives and the group expects him to offer information he learned from the FBI, but he arrives with other urgent news.



Chapters 4 through 6 Analysis

Tempe has a history of working crimes involving children, and she is particularly sensitive to the matter. The crime involving the twelve-year-old boy also involved bikers. That crime also took place in Montreal, and it caused the creation of Operation Carcajou, the operation to which Tempe wants to become involved.

In chapter five, the shock of hearing about Ryan caused Tempe to contemplate the current overall condition of her life, and the reader learns more about how alone she is. Tempe thinks about her failed marriage and about how her daughter is currently on the other side of the world on a cruise that will keep her away for months.

Chapter six provides another reference that may be understandable only to readers who watched a lot of television between 1993 and 2005. Tempe compares one of the attendees of the Operation Carcajou meeting to a character from a television series called NYPD Blue.

When Quickwater sees Tempe, his "eyes narrow." Of course this could just be a sign that he recognizes Tempe, but it seems more and more like he has some grievance against Tempe in particular.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Tempe and other members of Operation Carcajou go to the Viper's clubhouse. Tempe notices all the security measures, including the fences and barriers constructed to prevent vehicles from parking next to the building. The day before at the meeting of Operation Carcajou, Quickwater had told the group that the man arrested with shooting and detonating the bomb offered to trade information in exchange for a lesser criminal charge. He promised to show police the location of the bodies of two murder victims.

The Viper clubhouse had been built by a man who made a fortune smuggling liquor into the United States during Prohibition. The Vipers purchased the house in the 1980s and added more security measures. To Tempe, it looks like the outside of a fortress.

In contrast to the exterior, Tempe is surprised by the lavish but gaudy interior. As Tempe looks around, she learns that Claudel has a new partner, and it is Quickwater. Tempe is disappointed because she finds working with each of the men unpleasant. Claudel speaks with a biker who was present when police first arrived. Claudel tells him that he can cooperate with the search warrant, or he can be arrested. The biker is angry and shouts that whoever informed to the police will be killed.

Tempe joins Claudel in a car that also contains Rinaldi, the man who claims to know the location of the bodies. Rinaldi tries to intimidate Tempe, but he is not successful. Rinaldi guides the police into the woods, but the vehicles have a difficult time moving through the mud. Rinaldi gets out of the vehicle to look for the location of the bodies. He has not been at the location in along time and is confused. While Rinaldi tries to find landmarks, Claudel harasses Rinaldi and accuses him of fabricating the story. Finally Rinaldi points to a large area of ground and says that is as specific as he can get. Tempe will have to do the rest.

In chapter eight, Tempe and the law enforcement officers prepare to search the area. The area identified by Rinaldi is a square fifty yards by fifty yards. In order to help with the search, Tempe will use Ground Penetrating Radar. She directs the law enforcement officers in how to conduct the procedure, and after an hour she has the entire area mapped. Based on the results of the radar scan, Tempe identifies three areas she believes might contain buried items. Tempe takes a group to one area, Claudel takes a group to the second area, and Quickwater takes the third. Claudel's group unearths a barbecue grill. Tempe finds one boot and then another but no bones. She continues digging, and eventually she finds the remains of two bodies. Quickwater approaches Tempe and says she must come and see something in the area where his group dug.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Quickwater continues to be rude, or at least curt, to Tempe, and though she tries to ignore it, she finds it increasingly annoying. Readers are treated to another example of her sense of humor when she discovers that Claudel and Quickwater are partners. She compares them to the popular MTV cartoon characters Beavis and Butthead. There is also a more revealing insight into Tempe's character when Rinaldi tries to intimidate her. Not only is she not intimidated, but also she manages to leave Rinaldi at a loss for words.

In chapter eight, there is a detailed description of how technology aids law enforcement in the search for buried items, including human remains. Upon recovering the human bones, there is a reference to the title of the novel. Rinaldi comments that the two victims made a bad decision in coming to the Viper clubhouse, and Tempe agrees that they made a "deadly decision."



Chapters 9 through 11

Chapters 9 through 11 Summary

Quickwater has found a third skeleton. Tempe sees evening approaching and knows that they do not have enough time to finish examining the site. She orders the remains sent to the lab and the site shut down for the night.

At home Tempe tries to call Ryan but receives no answer.

Overnight, word of the murder site has been leaked to the media, and reporters are on site when Tempe arrives. Tempe continues working both graves but finds no additional clues except that the second grave, the one Quickwater found, had no insect activity. This makes Tempe wonder if the remains had been buried long after the victim died.

When the excavation is complete and Tempe leaves the area, reporters try to talk to her, and Tempe responds with a tirade full of expletives. When Tempe gets home, Isabelle calls and says that Tempe's reaction to the reports was aired unedited on the evening news. Isabelle then invites Tempe for dinner the following Saturday and tells Tempe to dress well.

Jean Bertrand, Ryan's partner, arrives. He apologizes for not returning any of Tempe's many telephone calls. He says that he has had no idea what to say to Tempe. Bertrand confirms that Ryan was indeed caught with drugs and stolen property, and the evidence was overwhelming. He also says that he worked hard for two days trying to prove Ryan's innocence, but the more he learned the more he understood that Ryan was guilty. Like Tempe, Bertrand is deeply upset. After Bertrand leaves, Tempe skips dinner and cries.

In chapter ten, Tempe attends Emily Anne's funeral and meets the girl's grandmother. The funeral reminds Tempe of her own brother's death. Tempe was only six years old when her brother died of leukemia. Back at the lab, Tempe learns that investigators have identified the remains of the two men, both bikers, but Tempe will still have to separate the bones. Tempe examines the third set of remains and sees something about the skull that surprises her.

In chapter eleven, Tempe discovers that the skull is that of a female in her teens. Tempe finds a hole in the skull, but she does not believe it is a bullet hole. Further examination reveals that inside the skull is a tube with a valve on the end. Tempe does not recognize the device, so she consults with a pathologist. The pathologist says that it is a surgical implant of some sort and gives Tempe the number of a neurosurgeon. Claudel calls Tempe, and she tells him what she knows about the third victim and that she believes the victim was buried twice.



Tempe meets with the neurosurgeon and learns a great deal about surgical implants and the amount of research done in Montreal. The neurosurgeon identifies the implant as one that had been commonly used on the past to treat hydrocephalus.

Chapters 9 through 11 Analysis

No one expected a third skeleton. Tempe is as surprised as the informant and the law enforcement officers.

Tempe cares about Ryan, and the news from Bertrand is the last thing she expected to hear. Until that moment she had held on to hope that it was somehow a mistake and Ryan was innocent.

In chapter ten, Tempe's sensitivity to the death of children is from sources other than her job. Tempe lost a brother at a young age, and so for all her life the death of children has seemed the greatest of tragedies.

In chapter eleven, the meeting with the neurosurgeon provides a great deal of detail about surgical implants and hydrocephalus. It is also yet another example of the author delivering exposition through dialogue.



Chapters 12 through 14

Chapters 12 through 14 Summary

Tempe goes to the Operation Carcajou headquarters for a continuation of the presentation on bikers. She learns that some outlaw biker gangs are sophisticated criminal organizations, and she learns about the gangs' hierarchy. Some gangs even collect intelligence on law enforcement officials. Not all women associated with the gangs are the stereotypical biker chicks. Some use their lack of criminal record and lack of obvious association with the gangs to get jobs where they can help the organizations gain intelligence. After the presentation and while on the way back to her office, Tempe thinks about the bones of the unidentified teen girl, and she thinks about the situation with Detective Ryan. Tempe decides that for the duration of the upcoming weekend she will not think about the case or about Ryan.

In chapter thirteen, Tempe goes home and has a relaxing evening watching basketball. Early the next morning, she is awakened by the unexpected arrival of her nephew Kit, from Texas. Kit goes to sleep, and Tempe goes out for a newspaper. A news story mentions Tempe and the discovery of the remains of the third victim. Tempe has no idea how that information could have leaked to the media.

Tempe calls Isabelle and tries to use Kit's arrival as an excuse to get out of going to Isabelle's party. Isabelle says to bring Kit along. At the party, the arrival of one particular guest shocks Tempe.

In chapter fourteen, the guest whose arrival surprises Tempe is Lyle Crease, the television reporter that Tempe was rude to at the Viper clubhouse. At dinner, Isabelle introduces Tempe as someone working on the recent biker murder cases. Tempe tries to say that she cannot talk about those matters, but her nephew's interest and the enthusiasm of the other guests prompt Tempe to answer a few general questions. After Crease specifically asks about the remains of the unidentified girl, Tempe manages to change the subject to the lives of the other guests.

Kit mentions that the previous year his father bought him a Harley Davidson motorcycle, and Kit impresses the other guests with his knowledge of motorcycle history.

After dinner, Tempe finds an envelope on her car addressed to her. Inside is something that shocks and revolts both Tempe and Kit.

Chapters 12 through 14 Analysis

Given her past in working on biker related murders, much of the information from the presentation at Operation Carcajou headquarters is not new to Tempe, but it is useful for the reader in understanding the nature of biker gangs. Despite everything else going on in her life, Tempe is still saddened and troubled about the situation with Ryan.



In chapter thirteen, the information regarding the third victim that has been leaked to the press is troubling. Tempe can understand how the details of the first two victims could have been released through official channels, but she told few people about the third victim. Yet the newspaper contains specific details. Tempe wonders if this situation will jeopardize her case. She decides that the news story might help her case if someone comes forward with information.

In chapter fourteen, it seems unforgivable that Tempe's friend Isabelle would take liberties with Tempe's trust just for the sake of entertaining her guests, but Tempe behaves in a gracious manner. The level of Kit's knowledge about Harley Davidson motorcycles is impressive. The reader might wonder if this knowledge might be significant later in the novel.



Chapters 15 through 17

Chapters 15 through 17 Summary

Inside the envelope is a jar containing a human eye. The envelope also contains a note that reads, "On te surveille," or "we're watching you." Kit wants to know if the eye is really a threat or just a joke that one of Tempe's friends, perhaps a coworker, is playing on her. Because she does not want to frighten Kit, Tempe lies and says that it is probably a joke. Tempe puts the eye in the refrigerator and plans to take it to the lab on Monday. The next morning, Tempe is still troubled about the eye, but she spends the day rollerblading with Kit.

On Monday morning, Tempe takes the eye to the lab for analysis. In her office, Tempe searches for past cases involving partial female skeletons. She compiles a list and then goes to the records department to request additional information. At the records department, Tempe encounters a woman she has never seen before. Tempe introduces herself, and the young woman says her name is Jocelyn and that she is a temporary employee. Tempe also notices Jocelyn's cold demeanor. Tempe explains that she needs multiple files, and she particularly needs the photos that go with each file. Later Jocelyn brings the files, but none of them contain photos. Though reports in the file refer to photos, none are present. Seemingly at a dead end, Tempe breaks for lunch.

In chapter sixteen, Tempe receives a call from Crease, the reporter. He invites her to dinner. Tempe declines, and Crease asks if she minds if he invites Kit. Tempe says that he is free to ask Kit himself.

Quickwater arrives, followed by Claudel. They need her to fill out forms so they can access additional criminal databases. Tempe fills out the forms, and then Quickwater retrieves them without saying a word. Tempe briefly considers telling Quickwater and Claudel about the eye that she found in the package on her car, but she decides against it.

Claudel believes he has identified the female skeleton. He believes it is Savannah Claire Osprey who has been missing from North Carolina since she was sixteen in 1984. Claudel found the girl by searching missing persons cases involving people with surgical implants. Savannah was not retarded, but problems with her implant sometimes caused her to be confused, and one theory about her disappearance was that she simply wandered away and did not return. Savannah's mother initially reported the case but then stopped pressuring law enforcement. Another popular theory with law enforcement involved the father. He had a lengthy criminal record, including a record of family abuse.

In chapter seventeen, Tempe calls her friend and colleague Kate Brophy in North Carolina. When Tempe asks about Savannah, Kate is surprised. She says that Savannah was one of her first cases and one that has troubled her over the years. It



has troubled her so much that she has kept what were suspect to be Savannah's bone in her lab all these years. Tempe asks if the remains include a skull, and Kate answers no, they never found the skull. Tempe tells Kate about the skull found at the Viper clubhouse, and then Tempe decides to go to North Carolina. That evening as Tempe prepares for her morning flight, she learns that Kit has gone to dinner with Crease.

Chapters 15 through 17 Analysis

Tempe's reaction to the eye is surprising. For one who spends so much time around severed body parts, Tempe does not seem to be a likely candidate for getting nauseous at the sight of a human eye. Perhaps the added element of fear is what makes her feel ill.

Though Tempe's narration does not focus on it, the missing photographs from the files must have some significance. She went to a great deal of trouble in explaining that she needed them, but they are not present in the files despite being referred to in the reports.

In chapter sixteen, Quickwater continues in his cold treatment of Tempe. Because the only time the reader encounters him is when he interacts with Tempe, the narrator, one cannot know if the curt demeanor is his usual manner or if he dislikes Tempe specifically. The coincidence concerning the origin of the missing girl being North Carolina and that being the state of Tempe's second residence is intriguing.

In chapter seventeen, the coincidence that began in the previous chapter concerning Savannah's origin deepens when Tempe finds out that a personal friend and colleague has worked on Savannah's case. Kate should be able to understand Tempe's drive to solve the case and find the person responsible for the death of a vulnerable girl.



Chapters 18 and 19

Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

Kate meets Tempe at the airport and from there they go to Kate's lab. They arrange the bones and see that they appear to be a match, even though some are still missing. Tempe uses the bones from the arms and legs to calculate height, and she compares these results to photos of Savannah when still alive. Tempe is certain she can prove that the skull found in Montreal is Savannah's, but she is unsure about the other bones that were found in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Tempe knows that getting DNA from bones that are so old is unlikely, but she wants to try anyway.

Tempe and Kate break for lunch, and Kate tells Tempe what she knows of Savannah's last day. Savannah told her father that she was planning on walking to the drug store, but she never returned. Savannah's mother was helpful to police the first few days after she reported Savannah's disappearance, but then she stopped talking. Some police officers believed that her husband, Savannah's father, had threatened her. Savannah's father died five years after her disappearance, and the investigation stopped. Some police had suspected possible gang involvement in Savannah's disappearance because there had been a large biker gathering at Myrtle Beach the same week that Savannah disappeared.

Back at the lab, Tempe and Kate examine all existing documents. Police had been thorough in the investigation but found nothing until nine months later, when bones were found in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina about forty miles from Savannah's home in Shallotte, North Carolina. No positive identification of the bones was ever made, and Savannah's case was never solved.

At dinner, Tempe and Kate continue to discuss the case. Tempe decides that if Savannah was killed in Montreal, then the bones found in Myrtle Beach are not hers. If Savannah was killed in Myrtle Beach, then the skull and the few other bones found in Montreal could have been transported north and buried at the Viper clubhouse. Tempe and Kate go back to Kate's lab and work through the night until Tempe receives a call from Montreal at 5:23 a.m.

In chapter nineteen, having arrived back in Montreal, Tempe visits an apartment that contains a dead body. Police are present, and they believe the murder was gang related. The dead man was a known biker named Yves Desjardins. The body sits in a chair, and Tempe sees that the skull has been shattered and the torso is charred where someone tried to set it on fire. Detective Charbonneau shows Tempe some tattoos on the dead man. Tempe sees tattoos of fifteen skulls. Some skulls have red eyes and some skulls have black eyes. The ones with black eyes mean that the man killed a male, and the ones with the red eyes mean that the man killed a female.



Tempe learns that the police have a suspect in custody. A man was seen leaving the victim's apartment, and when the police visited the man, they found a leather jacket covered in blood.

Tempe tells Claudel that the scene does not look like an assassination carried out by bikers. She says it looks too sloppy and amateurish. Claudel does not appreciate Tempe's input.

Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

Tempe feels even greater sadness after she learns more about Savannah's life. It seems that Savannah's life was filled with misery. Somehow this makes Tempe feel like the tragedy is even greater. A vulnerable person was killed. According to the way Tempe feels about life and society, vulnerable people should be protected, not targeted as prey. Kate feels the same way. Perhaps in looking at the photographs of the awkward teen, they see portions of their younger selves and traits of all children.

In chapter nineteen, Tempe is called back to Montreal because of yet another biker related murder. There seems to be no end to the carnage. In analyzing the scene, Tempe perhaps forgets that she works for the medical examiner's office, and her job is to examine bodies. When she voices her impression of the murder scene, she crosses into the realm of the homicide detective, and Claudel is not at all appreciative of her input. In fact, she angers Claudel by infringing on his professional territory.



Chapters 20 and 21

Chapters 20 and 21 Summary

Despite what the other investigators think, Tempe is not ready to classify the murder as just another biker assassination. At her office, Tempe receives a call from Kit. He says he has spent the last two days with Crease, and Crease has also invited him to come to the studio and watch the television news being filmed.

Tempe meets with LaManche and reports the results of her trip to North Carolina. During the conversation, and for no apparent reason, LaManche says that Claudel is often abrupt in speaking to people, but he is a good investigator. After leaving LaManche's office, Tempe encounters Jocelyn, the temporary employee. Tempe tries to be friendly, but Jocelyn does not respond in kind.

The following day in Tempe's office, she reads a newspaper report that contains a photo of her at the Viper clubhouse and discusses the three bodies found, including naming Savannah.

Tempe continues to examine the files she brought from North Carolina, and then she receives a call from a man identifying himself as George Dorsey, the man arrested for the murder of Yves Desjardins. Tempe tells Dorsey that he should speak to one of the investigating officers, and she tries to explain that she is not a police officer. Dorsey says that the police will not listen to him, and he insists that he must speak to Tempe. Dorsey also says that bikers do not kill that way. He says that the killing of Desjardins was too sloppy to have been done by outlaw bikers. Dorsey asks Tempe to come to speak with him in jail, and Tempe agrees.

In chapter twenty-one, Tempe visits Dorsey in the jail, and while he will not say who killed Desjardins, he will say that the work was too sloppy to have been done by bikers. Tempe says that she already knows that much and if that is all that Dorsey has to say, he is wasting her time. Tempe begins to leave, and Dorsey says that he can tell her who killed Savannah if she will help him. Tempe tells Dorsey he is lying, and she leaves.

When Tempe arrives at her office, she finds it odd that no one is at the reception desk. She finds people crowded in groups in the hall. The receptionist is crying, and another employee is comforting her. The scene causes Tempe to remember a time many years earlier when she arrived home to find neighbors crowded around her house and upset. Tempe had immediately worried that something had happened to her daughter, but she learned that her dog had been killed by a car. Tempe approaches the people in the hall and learns that LaManche collapsed while working and is in the hospital.

Chapters 20 and 21 Analysis

Tempe is tired after her long trip and having had no sleep. She is annoyed that Kit has not answered any of her several calls, she is overwhelmed by the number of murders, and she is certainly still upset after the recent exchange with Claudel. When Tempe hears about Kit's recent activities and his future plans, she is understandably suspicious that Crease is using her nephew to get information about her work on the murder cases.

During the telephone call from Dorsey and again in her meeting with him in the jail, he echoes her assessment of the Desjardins murder scene. Perhaps it is this aspect that appeals to her ego that convinces her to go against her better judgment and agree to meet Dorsey.

In chapter twenty-one, Tempe knows that Dorsey could have learned Savannah's name from the newspaper article, and she is not willing to become involved further when he does not disclose additional significant information.



Chapters 22 and 23

Chapters 22 and 23 Summary

Tempe awakes and finds clutter throughout her home that has been left by Kit, and she thinks that is the natural way of a teenager. When she arrives at work she learns that LaManche is stable but still in a coma. Tempe shares her impression of the Desjardins murder scene with Ronald Gilbert. She says that it looked too sloppy, too chaotic to have been done by professional bikers, and she wants Gilbert's opinion. Gilbert gives a lengthy verbal description of the work he does with blood-spatter analysis. He explains that by examining the pattern of blood on walls, ceilings, and any place else it lands, experts can tell a great deal about a murder scene.

To further show Tempe what he does with blood-spatter analysis, Gilbert takes Tempe to his lab where he experiments with beef blood. He uses various means of spreading the blood, such as striking a puddle of blood with a stick, to demonstrate how blood lands on walls and leaves distinctive patterns. Based on Gilbert's detailed presentation, Tempe is more convinced than ever that the murder was not a biker assassination.

In chapter twenty-three, Gilbert continues his demonstration by showing Tempe how all of the information is entered into a computer in an attempt to gather additional information, such as the location of the assailant in relation to the victim. Based on the data, Gilbert believes that Desjardins was beaten before he was shot, and Gilbert also believes Desjardins was beaten elsewhere before being placed in the chair and shot. Tempe is impressed with the analysis and tries to call Claudel and Quickwater but cannot reach either of them.

Tempe receives a telephone call from her sister Harry, who is about to leave on a vacation to Mexico. Harry says that Kit got in an argument with his father during their fishing trip, and that is probably why he came to stay with Tempe. Harry asks if Kit can stay with Tempe a little while longer.

Claudel comes to Tempe's office, and he is visibly angry. He says that Tempe is not a detective, and she has no business meeting with a prisoner that is under investigation. Tempe says that she is a member of Operation Carcajou, and Claudel says he is doing everything he can to get her removed from the operation.

When Tempe arrives home, she is still upset about the argument with Claudel. She finds a note from Kit, saying that he will be out for the evening. She also hears a message on her telephone machine intended for Kit that frightens her.

Chapters 22 and 23 Analysis

The description of blood-spatter analysis is detailed and informative, but it is a little hard to believe that Tempe does not already know all of this information. Though she works



as a forensic anthropologist, she has been working with law enforcement for many years and is surely aware of the work of the various other experts. This lengthy bit of exposition under the guise of two experts comparing methods is a way for the author to get the information to the reader.

In chapter twenty-three, during the telephone conversation between Tempe and her sister Harry, it seems that Tempe is accustomed to her sister dumping responsibility on others. This matter is small in significance compared to the growing conflict between Tempe and Claudel. Both are highly respected in their fields, and alienating Claudel will not help with Tempe's goal of assisting in finding the murderers. Tempe is quick to say that Claudel underestimates her, but she fails to acknowledge that there may be elements of the ongoing investigation she does not know about and her visit to Dorsey may have harmed that investigation.

Tempe feels more isolated than ever, and this makes her feelings of loss concerning Ryan more acute.



Chapters 24 and 25

Chapters 24 and 25 Summary

The telephone message for Kit is from someone named Preacher. Tempe believes Kit might be associating with bikers, and she is worried. Tempe gives in and tries again to call Ryan. She is unsuccessful, and she goes to bed. During the night she hears Kit come in late, and she hears sounds to indicate that he is intoxicated.

The next morning, Tempe reads the newspaper and then goes to work on the files she has brought from North Carolina while waiting for Kit to wake. She gives up on waiting for Kit to wake on his own. Tempe wakes Kit and says that they must talk. She notices that he has gotten a tattoo.

Tempe expresses her concern about Kit associating with bikers, and Kit is offended that she regards him as a naïve child. He says that he is not being secretive, unlike Tempe, who never talks to him about her life. Tempe considers Kit's statement, and she invites him to go for a walk.

In chapter twenty-five, Tempe and Kit take a walk to a point overlooking the city. Tempe tells Kit about the work she is currently engaged in, and she gives Kit a history of the biker war in Quebec. Kit is captivated by the story, and in his enthusiasm to hear about his aunt's work, he gets carried away and begins to speculate about the case. He suggests that perhaps LaManche did not simply fall ill but perhaps was poisoned by a mole working inside Tempe's lab. Tempe appreciates Kit's enthusiasm, but she tells him his theory is extremely unlikely.

As the two continue to walk, Tempe tells Kit interesting facts about the history of Montreal. Kit asks about Ryan, and Tempe tells what little she knows. Tempe suggests that they return home and grill the fish that Kit brought when he first arrived, and then they will go out for a few beers.

Chapters 24 and 25 Analysis

Despite being his aunt, the conversation between Tempe and Kit reveals that their feelings for each other are more akin to a mother-son relationship, and this has been true for many years. Tempe provided the emotional support and interest that Kit's own mother, Harry, never gave. Tempe correctly acknowledges that she should be flattered that her teenage nephew is even interested in her work, and she takes the opportunity to share.

In chapter twenty-five, Kit's enthusiasm for his aunt's story is touching. The reader can learn more about Tempe's state of mind from this conversation, particularly her current feelings about Ryan. Despite her earlier denials, Tempe has come to believe the worst.



Chapters 26 through 28

Chapters 26 through 28 Summary

At home, Tempe and Kit examine the files Tempe brought from North Carolina. They pay particular attention to photos. Kit is particularly fascinated with one photo that contains a very unusual customized motorcycle. Kit shows Tempe all of the various ways the owner customized the motorcycle, and he says that it is truly one of a kind.

As Tempe and Kit begin dinner, Kit receives a telephone call from one of his biker acquaintances wanting him to come out. Kit declines the invitation, and Tempe thinks she hears a bit of an argument before Kit gets off the telephone. Kit receives another call from Crease, asking if Kit and Tempe would like to accompany him to a flea market the following day. Tempe declines the invitation, but Kit accepts.

After dinner, Tempe and Kit go to an Irish pub. Though Tempe does not drink alcohol, she enjoys going to pubs to hear music.

The following morning, Crease arrives to pick up Kit. While Kit is getting ready to leave, Crease tries to be friendly to Tempe. Tempe has left the photos from the North Carolina files out and Crease sees them. He asks about progress on the Desjardins murder investigation, but Tempe does not answer.

After Kit and Crease leave, Tempe goes to get a haircut. When she is back at home and unhappy with the results of her haircut, Tempe receives a telephone call from Claudel. He says that George Dorsey has been murdered in jail, and it was a result of Tempe's meddling in the investigation.

In chapter twenty-seven, Tempe goes to work early and resumes examining Savannah's bones. Claudel comes into the lab. He says Dorsey was murdered in the jail shower with a screwdriver. He also says that Dorsey did not die right away. On the way to the hospital, Dorsey said the word, "Brennan."

Claudel explains that by Tempe even going to the jail she could have inadvertently let bikers know that Dorsey was an informant. Claudel says there is something else he needs to speak to her about. He shows Tempe photographs of bikers, and in each photo Kit is also present. Some of the photos were taken in Montreal, and some were taken in Texas. In one photograph from Texas, Kit is standing next to a member of the Bandidos Motorcycle Club. Tempe tries to dismiss the photos as merely proving that Kit is interested in motorcycles, but Claudel says that Kit also has an arrest record in Texas. He was arrested for possession of drugs.

Tempe seems angry that Claudel has gone to this amount of trouble to investigate her nephew. Claudel explains that the word "Brennan" was not all that Dorsey said as he was about to die. What he actually said was, "Brennan's kid." Claudel says that he and



Quickwater are in agreement, and after Tempe says something insulting about Quickwater's behavior, Claudel explains that Quickwater is deaf.

Claudel shows Tempe the DNA report on the bloodstained jacket found in Dorsey's apartment.

In chapter twenty-eight, Tempe thinks about how there is no way to refute DNA evidence. The blood on the jacket found at Dorsey's apartment is certainly that of the murder victim. Tempe feels dazed, and she begins to doubt her judgment on everything pertaining to the case. She receives the DNA analysis of the human eye that was left in the package on her car and learns that it belonged to one of the two brothers killed by the premature explosion of the bomb. She thinks one of the Vipers must have found the eye and decided to use it to scare her.

When Tempe enters her office, she sees that Jocelyn is there. Jocelyn says she came to deliver a request form. Tempe notices that Jocelyn has a runny nose and red eyes with dark circles under them. Tempe asks if Jocelyn is all right, and Jocelyn says she suffers from allergies.

Kit arrives for a lunch date that Tempe has forgotten. During lunch, Tempe asks Kit about his impression of Crease. Kit says he likes Crease a great deal. Tempe does not mention her recent conversation with Claudel. After lunch, Kit accompanies Tempe back to her office, and the two pass Jocelyn. Kit says that Jocelyn looks like "a head full of slash and burn."

At the end of her workday, Tempe is about to leave when she notices a photo on her desk. She has no idea who put the photo on her desk. Using a magnifying glass, Tempe examines the photo and sees Savannah with a group of bikers. Tempe recognizes one of the bikers, and she reaches for the telephone.

Chapters 26 through 28 Analysis

The one-of-a-kind motorcycle that Kit sees in one of Tempe's surveillance photographs captivates his attention. This is more than his usual interest in motorcycles, and Kit emphasizes that this motorcycle is unique.

In the description of Tempe deciding to get a haircut, the author makes another reference to popular culture that might not be understood by many readers. The author refers to a once famous advertising slogan for a particular brand of beauty products, L'Oreal brand's slogan "Because I'm Worth It."

In chapter twenty-seven, in addition to the shock of learning about Kit's situation, Tempe feels fury toward her sister, Harry, for not telling her about Kit's recent past when asking if Kit could stay in Montreal. Tempe is justified in feeling like her sister has used her once again. To further confuse Tempe's emotions, she feels guilt at having judged Quickwater's behavior. He hadn't been ignoring her or being intentionally rude. He simply communicated as best he could.



The author's choice to break from the discussion of possible danger to Kit to discuss at length Quickwater's current state and the incident that caused his loss of hearing is confusing. Perhaps this is a method the author employs as a means to heighten tension, but it seems unlikely that a caring aunt would willingly halt conversation of the welfare of her nephew to calmly listen to a lengthy story about a coworker's use of devices designed for the hearing impaired.

In chapter twenty-eight, Tempe doubts all of her current beliefs in connection with the case and those around her. She wonders if Kit really found the envelope containing the eye on her car. Though DNA analysis proved that it came from a bomb victim, that does not explain how it got on her car. The encounters with Jocelyn are becoming increasingly suspicious. The symptoms that Jocelyn attributes to allergies could also be attributed to drug abuse. Tempe herself says that she wished she had paid more attention when Kit made his comments about Jocelyn, and this statement can be taken as overt foreshadowing.



Chapters 29 through 31

Chapters 29 through 31 Summary

Tempe calls Claudel and says she believes that she sees Desjardins in the photo, and she says she is sure the photo was taken in the Myrtle Beach area. Claudel agrees to come by the next day. On the way home, Tempe wonders who put the photo on her desk, and she also decides to confront Kit about the information she learned from Claudel. When Tempe arrives home, Kit is cooking dinner. After dinner, Tempe questions Kit, and the discussion quickly turns to an argument.

The following day, Claudel arrives to examine the photo. After both examine the photo, neither can be absolutely certain that the man in the photo is Desjardins.

In chapter thirty, Tempe and Claudel use computer enhancement to examine the photo further. Soon they are both certain the man in the photo is Desjardins, and they discuss the implications, the most significant of which is that it appears that he knew Savannah.

At an Operation Carcajou meeting, Tempe thinks she recognizes the same motorcycle that Kit was fascinated with in chapter twenty-six. She requests a print of the photo. When Tempe arrives home, Kit is on the telephone with his mother, Harry. Tempe looks for the photo that she and Kit saw of the unusual motorcycle, but she cannot find it. She remembers that the last time she saw it was the time that Crease came over. In chapter thirty-one, Tempe is outraged at the thought that Crease stole one of her file photos.

Later that evening after dinner, Kit receives a telephone call that seems to anger him. He tells Tempe that he is going out, but he will not give her any additional details. After Kit leaves, Tempe receives a call from Kit's mother. Tempe demands information, and Harry does not understand why Tempe is so angry. After speaking with Harry, Tempe rushes out of the house and drives to a rough part of town. She enters a biker bar in search of Kit. When a fight breaks out she attempts to leave, but a large man seizes Tempe. Two other men, Tank and Pascal, drag Tempe out of the bar. Pascal holds a knife against her neck.

Chapters 29 through 31 Analysis

The conversation between Tempe and Claudel regarding the photo reveals Tempe's aggressive nature and her dark sense of humor.

When Tempe confronts Kit about his recent legal troubles, her intense maternal love for him is apparent. She loves her nephew and cannot bear the thought of him being in any danger. To the reader, Kit's story might seem less than believable, but Tempe's main concern is Kit's safety.



In chapter thirty, Tempe's microscopic examination of the bones does not confirm that those found in Montreal and those found in Myrtle Beach come from the same person, but they do show that it is possible. Tempe needs the DNA test results to conclusively prove that both sets of bones belong to Savannah. When Tempe realizes that Crease might have stolen one of her photos, her anger prevents her from contemplating his motives. At this point all she feels is rage.

In chapter thirty-one, the relationship between Tempe and her sister Harry, Kit's mother, is further revealed. Harry thinks nothing of dumping problems on others, and when someone needs to discuss the issue, Harry cannot be bothered to deal with something so tedious. Given Tempe's tenacity in arguing with others, one can assume that she might have had more to say to Harry if she was not preoccupied with Kit's immediate safety. Her efforts to save Kit seem to have done nothing more than put herself in danger.



Chapters 32 through 34

Chapters 32 through 34 Summary

Pascal and Tank push Tempe out of the bar into an alley and throw her into a car. When they arrive at their destination, the two men take Tempe from the car and force her into a house. Tempe fights back and escapes from Pascal. She runs through the house into a room with a pool table and a bar. Two men sit at the bar. When Pascal comes into the room seeking Tempe, one of the men at the bar commands him to stop. Tempe recognizes the other man as Andrew Ryan.

Ryan insults Tempe while he explains to Pascal the trouble he could cause by assaulting a police officer. Ryan pours ketchup over Tempe and pokes her in the chest while he calls her Shakespeare. Tempe is released and told to forget the incident ever happened.

Once safely back at her car, Tempe thinks about what to do. If she files a report and Ryan is working undercover, the report could endanger Ryan. When Tempe arrives home, she hears music from Kit's room.

In chapter thirty-three, Tempe awakens the next day with only a few bruises and a minor cut on her neck. When she treats the ketchup-stained shirt before placing it in the washing machine, she sees the number "66" emerge. Tempe remembers that Ryan was referring to her as "Shakespeare" while he poked her in the chest, and she remembers that Ryan is fond of Shakespeare's sonnets. Tempe looks up sonnet number sixty-six and sees a line with the words "wrongfully disgraced." Tempe knows that Ryan is undercover.

Tempe shows the photos she got from the Operation Carcajou meeting, and Kit is certain he sees the same motorcycle, but he is more shocked to see one of the people in the photo. Tempe enlarges the photo and reveals Crease.

In chapter thirty-four, Tempe tells Kit not to say anything about their recent discovery. Tempe calls Isabelle and asks what she knows about Crease, and Tempe learns that Crease went to college at the University of South Carolina.

At her lab, Tempe reviews the video of the Desjardins murder scene. She sees a cap with the University of South Carolina logo. Tempe goes to the evidence room to examine the cap, and she finds dandruff.

Chapters 32 through 34 Analysis

Tempe has narrowly escaped a vicious assault and perhaps even death, yet she thinks of Ryan and how she must act to protect him in case he is undercover. Perhaps Tempe has held on to hope that Ryan is somehow not guilty of crimes all along.



In chapter thirty-three, Tempe receives what she regards as proof that Ryan is not a criminal and that Ryan saved her life. Despite the horrific events of the day before, Tempe is incredibly happy with the revelation that Ryan is not the criminal as portrayed in the news media.

In chapter thirty-four, Tempe shares her suspicions of Crease with Charbonneau, but at this point she does not have any definite suspicions except that Crease is somehow involved with outlaw bikers. Tempe seems to have made a significant discovery in the cap with the sports logo, but she does not explain the significance of the dandruff on the cap.



Chapters 35 through 37

Chapters 35 through 37 Summary

Tempe speaks to Gilbert and learns that Desjardins could not have been wearing the cap at the time of his murder. Gilbert believes the cap was worn by the assailant and lost in the struggle. Charbonneau calls and says he found more information on Crease. Crease began a master's degree at the University of South Carolina, but disappeared for six years. Crease resurfaced working in Canadian television. Tempe explains that the dandruff proves that neither Desjardins nor Dorsey could have worn the cap found at the murder scene.

In chapter thirty-six, Jocelyn comes into Tempe's office and tells her she was present at the time of Desjardins's murder. She also gives Tempe a photo that Desjardins's murderer dropped. Tempe calls Claudel, and Claudel agrees that Crease should be questioned. Before leaving the office, Tempe makes airline reservations for Kit to return to Texas.

At home, Tempe tells Kit about the airline reservations, and an argument follows. The following morning Tempe goes to wake Kit and finds his room empty.

In chapter thirty-seven, Tempe finds a note from Kit saying not to worry and that he is with friends. Frantic, Tempe calls Claudel, who tries to reassure her. Tempe receives a call on her cell phone from Jocelyn saying that Kit is in danger and asking Tempe to meet her at a subway station. Tempe meets Jocelyn, and as Jocelyn tells Tempe who was responsible for Emily Anne's death, Jocelyn is shot. Tempe runs out of the subway station in search of Kit.

Chapters 35 through 37 Analysis

The reader learns the significance of the dandruff on the sports cap, and it is much simpler than many readers might have suspected. Two of the men suspected of wearing the cap could not have done so because they had no hair.

In chapter thirty-six, Jocelyn's admission explains some of her suspicious behavior, and though her role is far less sinister than might have been suspected, the story she tells is shocking. After so much discord it seems that Claudel and Tempe are starting to agree on many important aspects of the investigation.

In chapter thirty-seven, though the note from Kit says not to worry, the use of the word "friends" certainly makes Tempe worry even more, because she realizes that aside from herself, the only people in Montreal that Kit knows are Crease and bikers. In the case of Crease, Kit may be associating with a murderer. The killing of Jocelyn confirms that both Tempe and Kit are in mortal danger.



Chapters 38 through 40

Chapters 38 through 40 Summary

Tempe arrives at the cemetery, and a police officer stops her from entering. Claudel tells the officer to let Tempe pass. Claudel tells Tempe where to stand and tells her to fall to the ground immediately if he commands. The funeral procession of hundreds of motorcycles arrives. Tempe sees Crease and Kit entering the cemetery, and Claudel and Quickwater try to think of a way to get to Kit. Gunfire erupts, and despite Claudel shouting at her, Tempe rushes toward Kit. A biker aims a gun at Crease, and Crease hides behind Kit. Kit is shot, and then Crease is shot. As the gunman is about to shoot Tempe, Ryan appears and kills the gunman. Quickwater pushes Tempe and Kit to safety.

In chapter thirty-nine, a week has passed, and Tempe has found the answer to many mysteries. The DNA proves that both sets of bones belong to Savannah. According to Crease, who is recuperating in the hospital, Savannah went with Desjardins voluntarily to Myrtle Beach, but sometime during the night she was strangled. Desjardins hid her body in the woods, and then on a return visit to the location, Desjardins collected the skull and some other bones because he thought they would make good decoration for the clubhouse in Montreal.

Kit is in the hospital, and the doctors expect him to make a full recovery. He still refuses to believe that Crease could be guilty of anything.

Claudel shares details of a letter from Jocelyn. Jocelyn killed Desjardins, and she was the person responsible for leaking investigation details to the press.

In the brief chapter forty, Tempe thinks about how nearly everything has been solved and worked out. For her, the only remaining worry concerns Ryan's safety. Tempe decides that no matter how long it takes she will wait for Ryan.

Chapters 38 through 40 Analysis

The location of the climax is fitting for a novel full of so much death. All of the major characters are present at the cemetery, and even Ryan makes a surprise dramatic appearance. Quickwater, the man that Tempe found so rude throughout much of the novel, turns out to be a lifesaver.

In chapter thirty-nine, all of the remaining questions in the complex mystery are answered. Jocelyn's account of Desjardins's murder is compatible with Gilbert's blood-spatter analysis. Everything looks positive for Tempe's future, and even Claudel says he hopes she will continue to be a part of his team.

In chapter forty, when Tempe thinks about the risk Ryan took to save her life, she hopes that his actions are not the result of another "deadly decision."



Characters

Dr. Temperance Brennan

Tempe is the main character and narrator of the novel. She is also an internationally renowned forensic anthropologist. Many years before the opening of the novel, Tempe began her career as an anthropologist, working mainly at archeological sites. She lent her expertise to a law enforcement investigation and discovered a new career. At the opening of the novel, Tempe works for both the state of North Carolina and the province of Quebec as a forensic anthropologist, and she teaches at the University of North Carolina.

Because of the nature of her work, Tempe is a rather solitary person. As a scientist, she spends long hours alone examining human remains and compiling data. Also, the logistical demands of her work make familial or romantic relationships difficult. Having to travel from Quebec to North Carolina or elsewhere at a moment's notice and for an indefinite period of time puts strenuous demands on a domestic arrangement.

As narrator, Tempe's dark sense of humor and her vast knowledge of American popular culture make her narrative interesting. Frequently, she finds humor in the most unlikely places. Once when examining a mass of human tissue, she took a break to go and get take out sushi. While Tempe is skilled at detailed analysis and description, she is rarely content to give a dry description of a person. Most often she finds some figure in American television or cinema to compare the person to.

It is difficult to classify Temperance Brennan according to any general type. She is analytical yet funny. She is tough yet feminine. She is supremely confident except in areas where she is insecure. Most of all, she is an interesting and complex character.

Kit

Kit is an overgrown boy who speaks in a Texan drawl. He is also the object of his aunt's adoration. Kit in many ways embodies the stereotypical young man in his late teens. He has a full sized body but has yet to acquire the wisdom and experience of adulthood. Tempe alternates between being impressed with Kit's social skills and being pleased to see his still childish wide-eyed enthusiasm.

Tempe and Kit share a relationship much closer than most aunts and nephews. This is due to Kit's own mother being less than a fully maternal and nurturing person. Not all in Kit and Tempe's relationship is happy and lighthearted fun. Prior to coming to visit Tempe, Kit acquired an interest in the biker culture. Given the current situation in Montreal, Tempe believes that this interest of Kit's, which may have begun with a healthy interest in motorcycles, is putting him too close to danger. Tempe wants to believe the best about her nephew. Despite police surveillance photos, an arrest record, and the warnings of her colleagues in law enforcement, Tempe wants to believe her



nephew is not involved in anything criminal or dangerous. It is not until he is in a hospital bed that he confides in her that the people he associated with were not even real bikers.

Despite the worry Kit causes Tempe, his presence is valuable to her during this trying time. If it were not for Kit, Tempe would be completely alone after the arrest of Andrew Ryan.

Sergeant-Detective Luc Claudel

Claudel is a talented detective whose most noticeable outward traits are his curt manner and his impeccable style of dress. Tempe frequently comments on his ability to perform his job and not get a speck of mud on the whitest, crispest shirts she has ever seen. However, it is not Claudel's gold cuff links that preoccupy Tempe most. It is his brusque manner. He seems to constantly treat Tempe with a lack of professional regard, and she never hesitates to seize the opportunity to share her views when the two get into verbal clashes.

Constable Martin Quickwater

Quickwater is a Native American and a Canadian law enforcement official that Tempe first meets at the FBI facility in Quantico, Virginia. She immediately notices his cold manner, and though she tries not to let it bother her, Quickwater's habit of not speaking to her except when absolutely necessary and not replying to many of her questions is a source of irritation throughout much of the novel.

Lieutenant-Detective Andrew Ryan

Ryan is the closest thing that Tempe has to a love interest. Her affection for him is genuine and so is her heartbreak at the news that he has been arrested for drug trafficking and possession of stolen property. Except for two brief occasions when Ryan actually takes part in the action, his presence is only in Tempe's mind as she thinks about him and wonders about his situation. However, since Tempe constantly thinks of Ryan, his presence in the novel is also constant.

Dr. Pierre LaManche

LaManche is Tempe supervisor and the man who hired her. He thinks a great deal of Tempe. LaManche's presence in the novel is brief because he falls ill and is confined to the hospital.



Michael Charbonneau

Charbonneau is an occasional partner to Claudel. Whereas Claudel is abrupt and seemingly rude, Charbonneau enjoys a warm relationship with Tempe. He shares her sense of humor and often provides a trusted coworker for Tempe to share ideas with.

Kate Brophy

Kate is a colleague and long-time friend of Tempe's. She works for the state of North Carolina and has worked on a case that overlaps with Tempe's current investigation. Tempe first met Kate when Tempe first began consulting for law enforcement.

Isabelle Caille

Isabelle is another long-time friend of Tempe's. Isabelle used to have a career in the theater, and she is still fond of drama in her interpersonal relationships, including a fondness for gossip. Tempe finds Isabelle a warm and amusing person.

Jean Bertrand

Jean Bertand is a former partner of Andrew Ryan. He informs Tempe that the criminal charges against Ryan are likely true.

Jocelyn Dion

Jocelyn is initially one of the more mysterious characters in the novel and later one of the more tragic. She works as a temporary employee at Tempe's place of work, and she harbors a dark secret.

Ronald Gilbert

Gilbert is an expert in blood-spatter analysis. He shares a good working relationship with Tempe, and he teaches her many things.

Rinaldi

Rinaldi is a police informant. He is charged with the shooting that detonated the bomb that killed two men, and he trades information on the location of the graves of two murder victims in exchange for a lighter charge.



Pascal

Pascal attacks and kidnaps Tempe at knifepoint.

Tank

Tank assists Pascal in kidnapping Tempe.

Birdie

Birdie is Tempe's cat.

Yves Desjardins

This person is a retired biker. When Tempe encounters him, his face has been blown away by a shotgun.

George Dorsey

This man is charged with the murder of Desjardins, and this man is killed while in jail.

Savannah Claire Osprey

This sixteen-year-old girl disappeared from her home in North Carolina in 1984. Tempe spends much of the novel trying to determine if bones recovered from a clandestine grave belong to Savannah.

Emily Anne Toussaint

This nine-year-old girl's death marks the opening of the novel.

Lyle Crease

This television reporter begins a friendship with Kit and is a source of suspicion for Tempe.

Harry

This is Tempe's sister and the mother of Kit.



Objects/Places

Vipers

This is the name of a motorcycle gang located in Montreal. The Vipers are in a war with the Heathens. Tempe directs the exhumation of human remains from a site near the Viper clubhouse.

Heathens

This is the name of a motorcycle gang located in Montreal. The Heathens are in a war with the Vipers.

Montreal, Quebec

This is the largest city in Quebec and where the main character Tempe resides and works.

Pathologist

This type of doctor studies the nature of diseases and also determines the cause of death. Tempe often works closely with pathologists.

Forensic Anthropologist

This type of scientist applies the knowledge of anthropology to legal or law enforcement investigations.

Quantico, Virginia

This is where the Federal Bureau of Investigation has training facilities and where Tempe teaches yearly courses.

Charlotte, North Carolina

This city is where Tempe sometimes lives and where she teaches at a university.

Les Motards

This is what the residents of Quebec call outlaw motorcycle gangs.



Operation Carcajou

This is a large-scale Canadian law enforcement investigation of outlaw biker activity. Tempe is assigned as the operation's liaison from the medical examiner's office.

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

This resort town is where part of Savannah Osprey's remains are found.

Hells Angels

This is one of the largest and oldest outlaw biker organizations. In this novel, the Hells Angels are allied with the Vipers.

Rock Machine

This is a Canadian crime organization that became an outlaw biker gang. In this novel they are allied with the Heathens.

Bandidos

This large outlaw biker gang is a rival of the Hells Angels and tentatively allied with the Rock Machine.



Themes

Life versus Career

Temperance Brennan is a highly respected professional in forensic anthropology. Her reputation is international and so is her employment. She is simultaneously employed by the province of Quebec and the state of North Carolina. She also teaches at a university. It is clear that Tempe is accustomed to being called to court proceedings as an expert witness by some of the questions she asks herself when contemplating what she can prove. All of this professional acclaim has come at a price. Tempe has had to make some sacrifices in her personal life.

At work and away from work, Tempe spends a great deal of time alone. Frequently her only companion is her cat. When Tempe receives some disturbing news about a colleague and romantic interest, she has no one to turn to. Her only child is currently on the other side of the world on a ship, and Tempe has no other relatives she confides in.

Tempe does not seem to have many leisure activities. It is true that during the course of the novel she is busy with a case, and this may not be the best time to take an accurate assessment of her preferred leisure activities, but aside from a few references to golf, there does not seem to be much evidence of leisure. Her apartment does not contain artifacts that would provide evidence of a favorite hobby. It seems that Tempe's most frequent form of recreation is television. Throughout her narrative, one can see evidence of the amount of television she watches in her explanation of events and people by comparing them to programs, characters, and commercials on television.

Protecting the Innocent

Some believe that any and all death is tragic. Others, such as many of the characters in the novel *Deadly Decisions*, believe that tragedy occurs in degrees of severity and not all death is a tragedy. Multiple characters in the novel do not understand why Tempe and her law enforcement colleagues work so hard to find those bikers of suspected of killing other bikers. They have the attitude that if "les motards" want to kill each other, then it is of no great consequence to the law abiding society. Tempe understands something they do not. She knows that the only victims are not fellow criminals. Some of the victims are innocent bystanders, and some of those innocents are the young, the people we should protect the most. These are the deaths that Tempe and others in law enforcement find the most tragic.

The novel opens with the death of an innocent girl on her way to ballet practice. This event deeply affects all of Tempe's colleagues. This, combined with subsequent discoveries of crimes against a young girl years ago, reminds Tempe of other cases she has worked involving children, and even the death of her brother when she was a child. To Tempe, and to most people, the death of a child is the greatest tragedy. When that



tragedy occurs because of intentional evil on the part of an adult, the ensuing emotions can be volatile. This tension and this drive to protect the innocent run through the course of the novel.

Personal Mysteries

In addition to the larger mystery concerning the murder of a young woman, the main character and narrator, Temperance Brennan, experiences several mini, or personal, mysteries. These smaller mysteries involve her interaction with other characters and her struggle to interpret their behavior.

When Andrew Ryan is arrested for criminal activity, Tempe is stunned into disbelief. Throughout much of the novel she is torn between the seemingly irrefutable evidence and what she wants to believe. Only through a strange and deadly circumstance does she learn that he is really working deep undercover.

Time and time again Tempe encounters what she believes to be cold and rude behavior from Constable Quickwater. He rarely speaks to her, and unless she is looking him directly in the eye when she speaks, he does not answer her. Tempe believes Quickwater has something against her personally until late in the novel when a colleague informs her that Quickwater is deaf and must read lips.

The colleague who vexes Tempe the most is Detective Claudel. He always treats Tempe with what she interprets as disdain, and she shows no restraint when in verbal confrontations with the man. Tempe believes that Claudel has no regard for her value as a coworker until the close of the novel, when after an impassioned speech about the need to keep trying to eliminate the criminal biker gangs, Claudel says that of course Tempe will be on his team. In this case and in all the others, Tempe's personal mini mysteries and the solutions are a surprise to the reader, too, because of the first person narration.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of *Deadly Decisions* comes entirely from the first person perspective of the narrator, Temperance Brennan. All of the defining traits of the narration can be attributed to the character and personality of Tempe. At no time does the reader get narrative input from any other character. Tempe is both a trained scientist and a person with an active imagination and sense of humor.

Her background as a scientist, a forensic anthropologist, allows Tempe to present the story in clear, often vivid detail. Ambiguity is never a problem with Tempe's description of characters and events. Her description of forensic procedures and processes are thorough. The reader will come away with a great deal of knowledge of the scientific elements of crime scene investigation.

Despite the scientific detail, the narration is not always dry and clinical. Tempe is also capable of humor. Her interest in popular culture and her knack for classifying things and people in comparison to known figures in entertainment is often the source for laughter. Rather than say that she did not look her best early one morning, she says that she looked like Phyllis Diller before her makeover. Once she compared two of her colleagues to Beavis and Butthead.

The first person narrative also generates several smaller mysteries in the realm of character interactions. Because the reader can see things only from Tempe's perspective, one is just as confused and surprised by the actions of other characters. A good example can be found in the Quickwater character. Because one knows only as much as Tempe knows about the character, the reader feels the offense at what seems to be rudeness. Later, the reader can also share Tempe's feelings of guilt when it is learned that the man has a physical handicap that explains his behavior.

Setting

The physical setting of *Deadly Decision*, in a geographical sense, is almost entirely the city of Montreal. Tempe, the main character and narrator, makes two brief excursions to locations in the southeast United States, but the majority of the novel occurs in Montreal. The tone of the narration reveals that Tempe holds the city in high regard. She goes to great lengths in describing its cosmopolitan nature and its many spots of beauty. Tempe's knowledge of the history of the city is also impressive.

Within Montreal the setting can be divided between two types of settings: the lab and the field. Within the category of the lab, there is, of course, the actual autopsy rooms and forensic labs where Tempe works, and there is also the conference rooms where she attends law enforcement meetings complete with slide shows of surveillance. Tempe's apartment can also be considered part of the former category of setting



because she examines files at home, and home is also where she often ponders facts in the case and finds some of her better ideas. The setting of the novel refers to actual scenes of investigation. The two most detailed of these are the wooded area where Tempe and her colleagues exhume the remains of three bodies and the apartment where they analyze the aftermath of a shooting.

Setting also includes the time, and time is a significant factor in *Deadly Decisions*. The novel takes place around the beginning of the twenty-first century. The reason this is significant to the setting of the novel is because *Deadly Decisions* is in some ways similar to real events. Though the novel is a work of fiction, a deadly violent conflict raged between rival biker factions in Canada at the time the novel is set.

Language and Meaning

The language of *Deadly Decisions* is varied and lively, which is not what most readers might expect from an account of events that comes from the perspective of a scientist. Certainly there are detailed accounts of forensic examinations, and often these passages are lengthy and full of medical terms and their definitions. Readers can learn a great deal of factual information, such as how blood-spatter is analyzed at murder scenes and in forensic labs and how bones are cleaned after being exhumed from muddy graves, but not all of the language is dry and technical.

The main character is an American living in Montreal, and she often notices peculiarities in how French and English work to express similar concepts. Also through the use of these two languages, she makes humorous observations. Examples include how after living in Montreal for years she still feels odd when she orders a hot dog and fries in French or how one of her French speaking colleagues is baffled as to why anyone would name a grocery store "Piggly Wiggly."

Another aspect of the language in *Deadly Decision* can be attributed to the nature of the narrator. Temperance Brennan is a keen observer of American popular culture. In describing the appearance of other characters, she sometimes compares them to characters on American television programs, and sometimes in describing her own appearance she refers to characters and actors from American movies. Once in describing how she began to feel a little ridiculous in allowing herself to be concerned about her hairstyle, she referred to a once famous advertising slogan for a line of hair care products.

Structure

The Structure of *Deadly Decisions*, like most mysteries and certainly one told from the perspective of a scientist, is told in chronological order. The novel begins with the outbreak of new violence in the ongoing biker war and proceeds through the resolution of the investigation of the main murder investigations. The final brief chapter serves as a sort of epilogue tying up all loose ends.



The one deviation from a linear chronological progression involves the first three chapters. The novel opens at the time of the bombing and the unintended shooting of young Emily Anne. Chapter two backtracks one day to Tempe's activities in Quantico, Virginia. By the end of chapter three, the narrative has reached the night before the opening of the bombing, and chapter four picks up on the same day that chapter one began.

There are a few similarities in many of the chapters. Most notably, many chapters end in a cliffhanger. Often this is a mysterious or shocking event that the narrator mentions but does not describe fully to the reader. A good example occurs at the final sentence of chapter twenty-three when Tempe says, "As I listened, the small hairs rose at the back of my neck, and my breath froze in my throat." In the opening paragraph of chapter twenty-four, one learns that the message was from someone Tempe suspects of being a biker. This pattern of ending a chapter on a note of tension and then explaining in the opening of the following chapter is common throughout the novel.



Quotes

"Being a forensic anthropologist, I've developed some immunity to violent death. Since the medical examiner turns to me to derive information from the bones of the mutilated, burned, or decomposed, I've seen the worst. My workplaces are the morgue and autopsy room, so I know how a corpse looks and smells, how it feels when handled or cut with a scalpel."

Chap. 1, p. 13

"In the final photos the flesh lay in rows, like meat arranged in a butcher's case. I spotted pieces of skull, a fragment of tibia, a femoral head, and a portion of scalp with a complete right ear."

Chap. 3, p. 28

"Vipers could kill Heathens, and Outlaws murder Bandidos. Or Pagans. Or Hells Angels. But they must not kill the innocent. I pledged to myself that I would apply every forensic skill I could muster, and however many hours I was able, to develop evidence to identify and convict these homicidal sociopaths. Children had a right to walk the streets of the city without being cut down by bullets."

Chap. 4, p. 34

"I got my calipers and took a measurement from one of the bones that lay in the drainboard. The femoral head is a ball-like structure that fits into a socket in the pelvis to form the hip joint. This one had a diameter of thirty-nine millimeters, placing it squarely in the female range."

Chap. 11, p. 85

"As I stared at the wan little face, I ached inside. What could have prompted an attack on someone so fragile? Did a stranger force her at knifepoint, then strangle and leave her to the dogs? When did she realize she was going to die? Did she scream in terror, knowing no one would hear her cries?"

Chap. 18, p. 138

"While I hated to admit it, Claudel still intimidated me. And I still sought his approval. Though I thought I'd gained ground in the past, the man obviously continued to regard me with disdain. And it mattered. And that irked me."

Chap. 23, p. 191

"I slammed my palms on the blotter and shot to my feet. Weaving through clerical staff carrying papers and folders and technicians pushing specimen carts, I strode down the



hall, took the stairs to the thirteenth floor, and went straight to the DNA section. I spotted my target bending over a test tube at the far end of the lab, and closed in."

Chap. 28, pp. 231-32

"I rehung the sweater, dug out a magnifying glass, and sat down to examine the image. Within seconds I found confirmation on a gorilloid oaf in denim vest and fingerless leather gloves. An arm wider than a state highway reached across his chest, displaying swastika, lightening bolts, and the poetic acronym 'F.T.W.'"

Chap. 28, p. 236

"What had just taken place? Had I stumbled onto Ryan in his new life? Was he there as a member of the pack, or did he have other motives? What did his actions mean? Had he humiliated me as a message that his past life was done and he now belonged to the other side, or had he done it as part of a scene designed to get me out of there safely? Had he put himself at risk?"

Chap. 32, p. 271

"Questions. Had Kit been lying when I asked about visitors? Why? Who was the goon in the baseball cap? Why did the man provoke such a strong reaction in me?"

Chap. 34, p. 282

"From the day of Kit's arrival his apathy had puzzled me. While Katy would have craved constant peer contact, my nephew seemed satisfied with limited sight-seeing, video games, and the company of an aging aunt and her aging cat."

Chap. 36, p. 302

"I could not have stopped those deaths, nor had I done anything to bring them about. And I could do nothing for Jocelyn. But I would not allow my nephew to be the next casualty. I would not permit that. Death dealt out by bikers would not happen. Not to Kit. Not to Harry. And not to me."

Chap. 37, p. 309

Topics for Discussion

Discuss where Dr. Temperance Brennan fits on the spectrum of fictional detectives. On one end of the continuum are the hard-boiled, wisecracking detectives from the works of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, or Hollywood film noir. On the other end are the magnifying glass carrying Sherlock Holmes types. Where does Tempe fit?

Tempe's work as a forensic anthropologist seems similar to what many of us think of when we think of archeologists. Describe these similarities.

In describing characters, events, and feelings the narrator frequently refers to television programs, music, or events. Are all references to things like NYPD Blue, rock music lyrics, or the Rose Bowl clear to all readers? What comparisons of this type did you encounter that not all readers might understand?

Kathy Reichs has written other novels featuring the character Dr. Temperance Brennan. If you have read any of those other novels, how does *Deadly Decisions* compare? If you have not read any of the others, how likely are you to read others based on your enjoyment of *Deadly Decisions*?

Part of the enjoyment of reading a novel in the mystery genre is in attempting to solve the mystery before the author reveals the solution. Describe points prior to the conclusion of the novel where you had correctly predicted an outcome or where you had been far from understanding the eventual outcome.

Many times throughout the novel, the author presents exposition as dialogue. Explain your opinion of this method of presentation. Is cloaking exposition in dialogue tedious and a way to ensure stilted dialogue, or does it make for more interesting reading than straight exposition?

During an argument about Tempe having visited George Dorsey in jail, Tempe says to Claudel that he underestimates her. If true, is Claudel alone in this fault? Has Tempe been guilty of failing to appreciate a coworker's professional expertise?