

# Hot Six Study Guide

## Hot Six by Janet Evanovich

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# Contents

<a href="#">Hot Six Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Prologue, Chapters 1 &amp; 2.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 3 &amp; 4.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5 &amp; 6.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 &amp; 8.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9 &amp; 10.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 &amp; 12.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13 - 15.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Social Sensitivity.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Techniques.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Adaptations.....</a>	<a href="#">45</a>
<a href="#">Key Questions.....</a>	<a href="#">46</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">47</a>
<a href="#">Literary Precedents.....</a>	<a href="#">48</a>
<a href="#">Related Titles.....</a>	<a href="#">49</a>
<a href="#">Copyright Information.....</a>	<a href="#">50</a>



# Plot Summary

Stephanie Plum is a bond enforcement agent that almost always gets her man. Even if by accident. The bumbling bounty hunter finds herself in the middle of a police investigation, mob entanglements, two enticing men, and a grandmother reliving her youth. Stephanie manages to catch the bad guys and solve the mystery through no fault of her own.

Stephanie Plum works for her cousin Vinnie, owner of Vincent Plum Bail Bonds. She spends her days tracking people who have skipped their court date, otherwise known as skips. Though Stephanie is not the best at what she does, and will freely admit this, she is reliable, and usually manages to retrieve those for whom she is looking without too much trouble. When Ranger, another bounty hunter, is one of those that Stephanie is required to find, Stephanie balks, knowing that Ranger will not be found unless he wants to be. While working at collecting the other skips that Vinnie has assigned her, Stephanie is contracted by Ranger to keep an eye on the Ramos family. Ranger is the last person that had seen Homer Ramos alive and is now trying to piece together the situation before he winds up dead. Stephanie watches the Ramos family, becoming entangled in the Ramos family business more than she had intended. Stephanie is also being followed by two men hired by Arturo Stolle, the carpet king, who hope that she will lead them to Ranger. In addition, Stephanie's sex life is put on hold when her Grandma Mazur moves into her apartment.

Stephanie spends her time hunting people that have failed to appear in court, and avoiding these two men, as well as investigating the Ramos family on her own. Stephanie retrieves one fugitive and gets into a battle of the wits with another, all the while becoming more entrenched in the Ramos family issues with Ranger. Watching the home of Hannibal Ramos, Stephanie notices that someone seems to be living there, even though Hannibal has been staying with his father in Deal. Stephanie keeps an eye on the house while dealing with Morris Munson, an elusive skip who has decided to kill her in order to convince the courts he is insane. She and Lula finally do apprehend Munson, and the two of them decide they should investigate Hannibal's townhouse. The home is empty, but there are signs of someone having been there. Stephanie and Lula also run into Cynthia Lotte, Homer Ramos' former girlfriend, who is looking for her belongings. Stephanie and Lula assist Lotte in removing a body from her car before she leaves. Stephanie alerts Morelli to the body at the townhouse, once again raising the ire of her sometimes boyfriend. Ranger is also concerned with Stephanie's snooping, even suggesting that he lock her up to keep her safe. Stephanie becomes understandably angry; as a grown woman she can take care of herself. Mitchell and Habib, Stolle's henchmen go so far as to kidnap Stephanie in order to get Ranger out in the open, but Stephanie manages to escape. Stephanie begins to realize there is much more to the story than meets the eye, even questioning if Ranger might be more deeply entrenched with the Ramos family than she had thought possible.

Throughout it all, Stephanie still manages to catch the FTA's that have skipped their court dates, keep an eye on her wayward grandmother and stop in for dinner with the



family. When Homer Ramos shows up at her apartment, the story becomes clear at last. Ramos had been acting on his own, dealing in drugs and stolen property. By doing so he had upset the balance between the different criminal organizations in New Jersey. Ranger had been acting as a go between for some of these organizations.

When Homer's life had been threatened, he and his family had decided to fake his death and slip him out of the country. Before doing so, Homer Ramos had scammed Arturo Stolle one last time, taking the money he owed him and providing Ranger with old newspaper in a locked bag instead. Because of this, Ranger was wanted by Stolle, and Stephanie had been drawn into the situation. Stephanie is nearly killed before Ranger is able to save her, and Homer is finally apprehended. Grandma moves back to Plum's parent's house and Stephanie is finally able to reestablish her relationship with Morelli.



# Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2

## Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2 Summary

Stephanie is concerned that her mother's worst fear has come true; she's a nymphomaniac, lusting after lots of men. Though she doesn't have sex with any of them, it doesn't stop her from lusting. Having called one of the two intriguing men in her life, Stephanie waits, unsure if she made the right move. Wearing a sexy little black dress, ankle-strap heels and a fully loaded gun in the cookie drawer, she has all bases covered; she just needs to decide if she should let the man in. Deciding to do so, the man simply pulls her to him and unzips her dress. Joe Morelli, cop in Trenton, had played games with Stephanie since they were seven, and relieved her of her virginity at eighteen. They always seem to come back to each other. Five months later, Stephanie is standing on a bridge in the snow, trying to talk Carol Zabo out of leaping to her death. Zabo had shoplifted panties from Frederick's of Hollywood, then rear-ended an off-duty cop while making her escape. Unwilling to go to jail and be forced to pee without a door for privacy, Carol is going to kill herself. Stephanie tells her that her hair will get ruined if she jumps in the river. Carol agrees, admitting that she'd just had it foiled, and her husband Lubie had liked it. Stephanie offers to speak to Brian Simon, the cop Carol had rear-ended and try and get him to drop the charges. Carol climbs down gratefully. She can always kill herself tomorrow if Simon refuses.

Stephanie goes to the office, and talks with Lula, the file clerk and her sometimes back-up, and Connie, the office manager, wondering if there is anything new. Vinnie appears, offering Stephanie a skip. The bad news is that the skip is Ranger. Ranger is a bounty hunter for Vinnie, but unlike Stephanie, he is good at what he does. Ranger had been arrested by a rookie for carrying a concealed weapon and failed to appear. Vinnie had posted bond and now stood to lose his money if Ranger wasn't found. Stephanie is unwilling to involve herself in looking for Ranger. If he doesn't want to be found, he won't. Connie informs Stephanie that a fire downtown that Sunday had been in a building owned by Alexander Ramos. His youngest son, Homer, had been found dead in the fire, with a bullet wound to the head. Ranger had been seen entering and leaving the building. The police, as well as Vinnie are looking for Ranger for obvious reasons. Vinnie threatens to give the Ranger file to Joyce Barnhardt, Stephanie's archenemy, but that does not even sway her to take the case. Instead, Vinnie gives her three files, one for a murderer, one for a man wanted for domestic violence, and one wanted for public drunk and disorderly. Stephanie takes the folders and leaves to trace the men, and finds Joe Morelli waiting for her in her car. Morelli gives Stephanie information about Homer's murder, and the fact that no one else had been around the scene except Ranger. Morelli needs to talk to Ranger, and asks Stephanie to pass the message along if she sees him.

Stephanie heads out to retrieve her first skip, eighty-two year old Lenny Dale. The man is at home, and Stephanie can hear arguing in the apartment. Dale answers the door, still arguing with his wife, who hits him on the head with a pan. Dale strikes her, and



when Stephanie objects, moves to hit her as well. Before he can, Dale drops to the floor, dead from a heart attack. Stephanie calls Vinnie, who wants her to have the EMS driver stop at the courthouse so the paperwork can be completed on Lenny Dale. Disgusted, she leaves in order to pick up her next skip, Walter "Moon Man" Dunphy. Moon opens the door, and after a few seconds recognizes Stephanie and the fact that he forgot his court date. Moon invites her in to watch a Rocky and Bullwinkle retrospective and have some lunch, but Stephanie decides to have lunch at her parent's house. Agreeing that she will return in an hour, Stephanie leaves, but is stopped by two men who want her to come with them. The two men, Mitchell and Habib are looking for Ranger as well, though they will not tell her for whom they work. When Stephanie does not get in their car, Mitchell tells her that they will be following her in order to find Ranger and not to be alarmed. They warn her that if she contacts Ranger and they are left out of the loop she will not be happy.

Stephanie has lunch with her mother and Grandmother, then leaves to fetch Moon Man. At the police station, Stephanie calls Vinnie to bond out Moon again and stops upstairs to convince Brian Simon not to press charges against Carol Zabo. He agrees, but Stephanie will owe him a favor. Downstairs, Stephanie finds Vinnie, but no Moon Man. They go outside to the parking lot, where four police officers are in the process of extinguishing a fire that had gutted Stephanie's car. Moon had seen a friend being released from jail and had gone outside to share some pot with him. Relaxing in Stephanie's car, he had somehow caused the fire. He apologizes and goes inside with Vinnie to complete his paperwork.

Stephanie refuses a ride from Mitchell and Habib and calls Lula for a ride. Lula is amazed that Stephanie has destroyed yet another car, something she does on a regular basis. Lula informs Stephanie that Joyce had been given the Ranger file and had an orgasm right in the office, she was so happy. The two women discuss Ranger and his involvement with the Ramos family, and Lula drops Stephanie at her apartment. Her mother calls looking for Grandma. Grandma and Stephanie's father had gotten into an argument, and Grandma said she was moving out. While they are on the phone the doorbell rings. Grandma has arrived. Stephanie tries to convince Grandma to move back home, but Grandma is firm. She will live with Stephanie until she finds her own apartment. Morelli arrives with fried chicken, at first shocked to find Grandma Mazur there, then barely able to contain his laughter at Stephanie's predicament. When Stephanie pulls him aside and explains that Grandma living with her might put a crimp in their sex life, he begins to understand that the predicament is his as well. Grandma asks Joe if she would make a good cop, since she'll have to get a job to get her own place. Joe tells her there is an age limit, so Grandma thinks she might be a better bounty hunter. After dinner Grandma falls asleep, and Joe leaves, telling Stephanie that there has been no word from or about Ranger. The next morning Stephanie goes out to buy a paper so Grandma can look for an apartment. The elevator door opens revealing Ranger, dressed casually. He pulls Stephanie into the elevator, stating that they need to talk.



## Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2 Analysis

Stephanie Plum is a bounty hunter, though not a very good one. It does not seem that anything in Stephanie's life is as easy as she would like it to be, including her love life. At the outset the reader is left to wonder which man she has called to her apartment, until it is revealed that Joe Morelli is who she waits for nervously.

The novel jumps five months in time to Stephanie trying to talk Carol Zabo out of jumping off a bridge. Though Carol seems to be dead set on killing herself, Stephanie is sure that she will not, based on the leather jacket Carol is wearing. In Stephanie's eyes you would not kill yourself wearing such a jacket; you would give it to your sister first. Stephanie is successful in talking Carol down, if only temporarily, proving that despite her faults as a bounty hunter, at least she can negotiate.

At the office, Stephanie's relationships with those she works with are revealed. Lula, a former prostitute, is the file clerk and sometimes helps Stephanie when she is trying to apprehend a skip. Neither of them are very adept at what they do, sometimes making it more of a keystone cops affair. Vinnie is Stephanie's cousin and owns the bond agency. Vinnie is more interested in retaining his money than anything else and wants Stephanie to find Ranger. Ranger also works for Vinnie, but as Stephanie will readily admit, Ranger is good at catching skips. Most of the difficult cases go Ranger's way. Stephanie is unwilling to try and find Ranger, knowing that whatever he is involved in is not something in which she wants to be involved. Vinnie threatens to give the file to Joyce Barnhardt, but that does not even sway Stephanie. Joyce is her sworn enemy, having tormented Stephanie from the time they were seven until Stephanie caught her having sex with Stephanie's new husband Dickie on their dining room table.

Stephanie is concerned about Ranger and what he may be involved in. Alexander Ramos is a gun dealer with three sons, one of which is now dead. Ranger is the last person known to be seen with the deceased son. Homer was found dead in a burned office, with a bullet to the head. Neither Stephanie nor Lula believes that Ranger would be stupid enough to be caught on video leaving the scene of a murder. Regardless, Ranger is in the wind and has not contacted anyone. Joe Morelli, Stephanie's on-again-off again boyfriend, also a Trenton cop, wants Stephanie to have Ranger contact him. Morelli is aware that there is a sexual attraction between Stephanie and Ranger and knows Ranger will most likely contact Stephanie at some point. Stephanie's odd career is also in focus as she hunts for skips. The first skip she tries to bring in dies of a heart attack, and Vinnie tries to convince Stephanie to have the ambulance stop at the courthouse so the body can be documented as apprehended. The next skip is Moon Man, a stoner with whom Stephanie went to high school. Stephanie is much more comfortable with Moon, and is willing to work with him. She goes to lunch at her parent's house and the reader is given the first glimpse into Stephanie's odd family. Her father is out driving a cab which he does part time, and her mother and Grandmother are there to greet her. Stephanie's Grandma Mazur is a handful that her mother seems to have trouble dealing with. Stephanie picks up Moon after lunch and brings him to the police



station, but while she is speaking to Brian Simon about Carol Zabo, Moon burns her car to the ground.

This also appears to be typical of Stephanie's luck, judging by the comments Lula makes when picking Stephanie up later. It is clear to the reader that Stephanie had trouble keeping a car for a long period of time.

Life is further complicated for Stephanie by Mitchell and Habib, two comical characters that have been hired to follow her because she might lead them to Ranger. The two men refuse to reveal who they work for, but make it clear that it is not Alexander Ramos. Another complication, though it seems clear that she does not need anymore, is her grandmother leaving home and moving in with her. Stephanie loves her grandmother, but living together will make her already dry sex life a desert. Morelli thinks the situation is funny until Stephanie explains the sex part of the equation to him as well. On top of all of the other 'daily' things that Stephanie is dealing with, Ranger turns up in her elevator, dressed like a typical casual male, and tells her they need to talk. Stephanie is obviously sexually attracted to Ranger as well as Morelli, making things that much more intriguing.





# Chapters 3 & 4

## Chapters 3 & 4 Summary

Stephanie and Ranger stand in the elevator and Ranger tells Stephanie about the situation. Ranger had a meeting with Homer, and after leaving, someone had killed Homer. Ranger had not shot him, or set the fire. Ranger had not appeared in court because he was looking for someone and could not continue looking if he was in jail. There was also the chance of someone trying to kill him in retaliation for Homer's murder if Ranger appeared in public. Stephanie tells Ranger about Mitchell and Habib following her. Ranger tells her that the work for Arturo Stolle, the carpet king. Ranger warns Stephanie away from Stolle, and asks her to do some light surveillance of the townhouse where Hannibal Ramos is staying while in town. Ranger warns Stephanie to be careful of the Ramos family and disappears as quickly as he had turned up.

Stephanie gets ready to leave for work and finds Mooner sitting with Grandma. Mooner still feels bad about burning Stephanie's car and has brought her a loaner from his friend, "the dealer." As Stephanie does need transportation, she accepts the loan of the Rollswagen. The rear of the car is a Volkswagen; the front end is a Rolls Royce. The car is painted silver with blue swirls to simulate wind. Stephanie quickly fetches a hat and dark glasses before driving the car across town to find Morris Munson. Munson had skipped his court date, after running his wife down with a car, beating her with a tire iron, raping her and trying to set her on fire. Munson is not the type of person with whom Stephanie would normally deal, but with Ranger on the run, she has no choice.

Stephanie finds Munson at home and explains who she is and that they need to reschedule his court date. Munson seems agreeable at first, but when he tells Stephanie he will not ride in her car, she gets upset and Munson accuses her of behaving like all women, expecting men to jump through hoops. Munson tells her he will follow her downtown in her own car. Stephanie is pleasantly surprised when Munson actually pulls out in his own car, but shocked when he rams into the Rollswagen. Munson leaps from his car with a tire iron screaming angrily at Stephanie, who wisely leaves. On the way to the office Stephanie sees Mitchell and Habib again, who are following her hoping that Ranger will contact her. She also drives through the neighborhood where Hannibal Ramos is staying, attempting to get the lay of the land. Stephanie calls Ranger who tells her to keep an eye on things and see if Hannibal has any visitors.

At the office, Lula is impressed with the Rollswagen and angry at Munson for being difficult. She offers to go with Stephanie to retrieve him. The pair takes Lula's firebird and returns to Munson's home. Lula knocks on the front door and Stephanie stakes out the back door. Munson tries to sneak out the back way and is angry when he finds Stephanie waiting. They scuffle and Munson sets her shirt on fire before escaping. The two women leave, agreeing to try another day. At the office Joyce Barnhardt mocks



them, and in retaliation Stephanie sends her on a wild goose chase to Staten Island to track Ranger.

Stephanie drives to Mooner's house to explain the damage to the Rollswagen. She meets with "the dealer," who turns out to be Dougie Kruper, who she had gone to school with. Kruper offers Stephanie another car, not at all upset about the damage to the Rollswagen. Stephanie declines as the cars all seem to be of questionable ownership and instead drops by her parent's house to get her Uncle Sandor's 1953 Buick. The car is indestructible, and she hates it, but has no choice other than to drive it. On her way home she runs into Mitchell and Habib yet again, who think that Stephanie is changing cars in order to confuse them. At her apartment Stephanie is pleasantly surprised to find dinner waiting, home cooked by Grandma. After Grandma leaves to head to a viewing at Stiva's Funeral Home, Stephanie watches a bit of television, then heads over to Hannibal Ramos' house to spy for Ranger. At Hannibal's townhouse, Stephanie finds a jogging path and circles the property. A tree stands next to the privacy wall and she climbs it to see into the house. After an hour she grows tired and gives up and starts climbing down, only to fall into the backyard. Ramos emerges, and Stephanie pretends that she had been in the tree looking for her cat. Ramos is cautious but lets her leave. Around the block near the Buick, Stephanie sees a black BMW drive in. Too curious to leave, Stephanie goes back to the jogging path. In the tree once again, she sees Hannibal in the house opening an envelope. To her shock, Hannibal then exits the house and shines a flashlight into the tree, catching her. Stephanie scurries down the tree, rushing to her car as she hears a gunshot behind her.

Back at her apartment, Morelli waits in her parking lot, amused that Stephanie is once again driving the Buick. Stephanie tells Morelli that she had been doing surveillance when he asks her about the pine branches and sap in her hair. Stephanie asks about Hannibal Ramos and Morelli warns her about the danger and asks if she has told Ranger that he needs to speak to him. Stephanie assures him that Ranger has been getting his messages and will call when he wants to. Morelli suggests that they go back to his house, and though Stephanie is tempted, Grandma chooses that moment to open the window and yell down that she had bought some cake and that a man named Brian is on the phone. Though yearning for Morelli, Stephanie goes to her apartment for some cake and to return Brian's phone call. The police officer wants Stephanie to watch his dog for a few days and will bring him over in the morning. Tired, Stephanie goes to sleep only to be awakened at 3 A.M. by Ranger sitting next to the couch. Stephanie gives him the information about Hannibal and his visitor, not even bothering to ask how Ranger had gotten into her locked apartment.

## Chapters 3 & 4 Analysis

Stephanie's attraction to Ranger makes it difficult for her to concentrate in the small confines of the elevator. Ranger usually dresses in all black, like the former member of Special Forces that he was, but now is dressed like a "normal" man, or as normal as Ranger can be. Ranger explains to Stephanie that he is trying to blend in to avoid detection. Stephanie knows Ranger can take care of himself, but worries anyway. The



fact that Ranger is in hiding makes it clear that he is involved with dangerous people. Mooner now seems to be a permanent part of Stephanie's life, turning up at her apartment for breakfast with Grandma Mazur. Stephanie takes his presence in stride, as though it is normal for people that she had to capture for work are part of her extended family. The opposite is true of Morris Munson. Though Stephanie is willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, she is shocked when he tries to run her down and then attempts to hit her with the tire iron. Making her escape to the office, Lula illustrates her easy understanding of Plum, appreciating the car in one breath, and becoming angry at Munson's treatment of her. Her willingness to return to with Stephanie to apprehend Munson also demonstrates her faith and friendship.

That evening, Stephanie does as Ranger asks and stakes out the home of Hannibal Ramos. Though she is unsure of what is going on, Plum believes in Ranger and is willing to wait for answers, though it is very difficult for her. Stephanie demonstrates her quick thinking, when after falling into the yard and being discovered by Hannibal, she manages to come up with a plausible story to explain her presence. Plum also demonstrates her impulsiveness when she returns to the same location and is shot at as she makes her escape. Once again, Ranger lets himself into Stephanie's locked apartment while she sleeps in order to gather information. This will be a recurring theme throughout the novel, whether the visitor is Ranger or someone else.



# Chapters 5 & 6

## Chapters 5 & 6 Summary

Stephanie tells Ranger about her night watching Hannibal and asks if she should continue. Ranger tells her to do so, but only if she can do it without getting shot at. Ranger kisses her and leaves. The next morning over oatmeal with Grandma, Brian Simon turns up with his dog Bob for Stephanie to watch while he is out of town. The dog is large and appears to be part Golden Retriever. Though Stephanie is put off by his size, she had agreed to watch the dog in exchange for Simon not pressing charges against Carol Zabo. Grandma and Stephanie prepare to leave after finishing their breakfast and the dog eating the cake, but the dog howls, so Plum takes the dog to work with her. At the office Lula is impressed and accepting of Bob, and Stephanie calls a friend at the motor vehicle department to get information on the car she had seen at Ramos' house the night before. The car belongs to a former girlfriend of Morelli's, who works for a known criminal.

Lula and Stephanie head back to Munson's house to try and bring him in again, but his neighbor tells them that he is not home. Back at the office Stephanie drops Lula off before heading back to Hannibal's house. Mitchell and Habib are there waiting, and prepare to follow Stephanie, but Munson appears and runs his car into the Town Car driven by Mitchell. Stephanie drives to Hannibal's house, and though it looks as if no one is at home, she is surprised when Hannibal pulls out of his driveway. Stephanie follows as discretely as she can in the Buick and trails Ramos to Deal, an Oceanside town outside of Trenton. Stephanie parks and takes Bob for a walk and is able to see the arrival of Alexander Ramos the patriarch of the family. Plum is shocked when the senior Ramos greets Hannibal by slapping him in the head.

Stephanie leaves the area and shops for ingredients for dinner, then calls Ranger to report what she had seen. Ranger questions who was present, and Stephanie tells him about Hannibal and Alexander, as well as the second brother, Ulysses. Ranger questions whether she is sure of his identity, and she is, as sure as she can be having never met him. Grandma returns happy about the meatloaf Stephanie made and even happier that they have to eat pie before dinner, as Stephanie had used the pie plate to cook the meatloaf in. Stephanie walks Bob and returns to find Grandma asleep. Unable to stop thinking about the Ramos family, she drives back to the townhouse recently vacated by Hannibal. Calling Morelli, Stephanie tries to get some information from him about the Ramos family. Morelli tells her that Ranger probably has her watching the empty townhouse to keep her out of the way. He also tells her that Brian Simon was not out of town, that he had tricked her into taking Bob off his hands. As she leaves the fence behind the townhouse, Stephanie is shocked to hear a toilet flush. Someone is at home after all.

At home, Stephanie goes to sleep, only to be awakened at two in the morning by Ranger once again. He shows her pictures of the Ramos family to see if she can



identify the people she saw at the house in Deal that afternoon. Stephanie does her best, and also recognizes her ex-husband's secretary in one of the photos. Awake early the next morning, Stephanie takes Bob for a walk and runs into Mitchell and Habib. They inform her that Ranger has something that their boss wants and if he returns it, bygones will be bygones. Stephanie drives to her parent's house in order to ask for her mother's help with her grandmother. Her mother is sympathetic, and tries to give her daughter tips on dealing with Grandma. As Stephanie is leaving her mother follows to discuss dinner the following night. Spotting Mitchell and Habib in front of the house, Stephanie's mother asks who they are and becomes irate that they are following her daughter. Her mother threatens the two men with a gun from the house and tells them she will call the police if anything happens to her daughter.

## Chapters 5 & 6 Analysis

After giving Ranger the small bit of information that she has, Stephanie is a bit stunned by his soft kiss goodbye. With all that is going on in her life, she is still confused by her feelings for Ranger. Bob the dog adds another wrinkle to Stephanie's life when it becomes apparent she can not leave him in her apartment, so she takes him to work with her. The dog will spend more time with Stephanie as the days pass, and will factor into events to come in several ways. That evening after preparing dinner for her grandmother, Stephanie is once again surprised by Grandma and how little she really knows about her. Eating dessert before dinner seems like a small thing, something Stephanie does on a regular basis, but her grandmother's joy at such a little thing makes Stephanie happy as well. She also questions her family history, wondering if Grandma might be trying to find more joy in life now that she can live freely without a husband to answer to.

After her grandmother is asleep Stephanie drives to Hannibal's townhouse, unable to quiet her mind regarding the Ramos family. She speaks with Morelli who is not happy about her location but seems more unhappy that her grandmother is still living with her and the temporary stop of his sex life. Preparing to leave the area, Stephanie hears noises in the house, shocked that someone is in residence. Once again Ranger makes an appearance in the middle of the night and Stephanie tells him what she knows, as well as looking at pictures of the Ramos family. Ranger makes a leading remark before he leaves, making Stephanie question the attraction that they seem to feel for each other. Mitchell and Habib are also becoming regular visitors, this time in an upholstered car from Art's Carpets. Though Mitchell makes some threats, at this point Stephanie does not really take them seriously. As she gets more used to seeing them, they appear to be losing the edge they might have had at one time.

Stephanie's mother also proves that she is a force to be dealt with where her family is involved. Though at times Ellen seems to spend each day trying to get to the next day, when her daughter's safety is in question, she is willing to threaten those that might be causing a problem.



# Chapters 7 & 8

## Chapters 7 & 8 Summary

Mitchell and Habib follow Stephanie to the office where she leaves Bob for an hour while she runs some errands. Stopping first at the dealer's house to check on his liquidation of stolen property, then continuing downtown to visit Cynthia Lotte at her ex-husband's office. Stephanie attempts to get information from Lotte regarding the Ramos family, but Cynthia is as rude to Stephanie as ever and drives Stephanie away in embarrassment. Stephanie stops at Radio Shack to buy an alarm for her door to catch Ranger entering in the middle of the night, then returns to the office with chicken nuggets for lunch. Stephanie checks to see if there is any information on file regarding Lotte, and complains about her life, from the large pimple on her chin to the men following her. Those at the office decide to fill a large bag with dog poop and set it on fire near the Mitchell and Habib's car. When they get out to put out the fire, Stephanie will drive away without them following her.

Bob is unable to deliver, and Lula and Stephanie attempt to buy some poop from a woman in the park. She argues with them, but Lula makes off with the goods. Returning to the office, they set the bag on fire and when Mitchell attempts to put the fire out, a spark ignites the upholstered car causing it to go up in flames. Stephanie drives to Deal to check out the Ramos house from the beach for Ranger. When she gets ready to leave the area, she is flagged down by an older man that turns out to be Alexander Ramos. He jumps in her car and she drives him to get cigarettes, then to a bar so he can smoke and have a drink. At the bar Stephanie finds Alexander an interesting character, and before she drops him off, he asks her to come back tomorrow to help him again.

At her apartment Stephanie finds her grandmother setting the table and Mooner watching TV. Grandma had bought a red Corvette from the dealer, and Mooner delivered it. Retreating to the bathroom, Stephanie tries not to cry. Her cars are destroyed regularly; she is driving a car she hates and her grandmother who has no license now owns a Corvette. Morelli calls and Stephanie asks him about Lotte and the Ramos family. Homer seems to have been a womanizer and Alexander is a Greek gun-runner. Stephanie invites Morelli to dinner at her parent's house for the following night and takes Bob for a walk. Returning home Plum reviews the details of the Ramos family and hears someone entering her apartment. Mooner has returned with the spare key to her grandmother's new car. When he leaves, Stephanie is getting ready for bed when her door starts to open again. Thinking it is Ranger at her door, Stephanie is surprised by Morris Munson who has plans to kill her. Munson has decided to convince the courts he is insane by pretending that Plum is his ex-wife. Stephanie manages to get to her gun and shoot Munson in the foot. He escapes leaving Stephanie out of sorts and upset. Finally falling into a fitful sleep, she is awakened once again, this time by Ranger. Startled from sleep Stephanie leaps off the couch and tackles Ranger. He kisses her, but before things can go any further, Grandma wakes up and comes into the room.



Stephanie bluffs that Ranger is teaching her self defense. Stephanie gives Ranger the diagram she has drawn of the house in Deal.

The following morning Mitchell and Habib have returned, driving Mitchell's wife's minivan. Plum drives to the office and tells Lula about Munson being at her apartment the night before. The two women drive to Munson's home to try and apprehend him again. There is a sound of running water inside the house. The women split up, and Lula picks the lock on the front door. They tiptoe upstairs, and stop outside the bathroom door.

## Chapters 7 & 8 Analysis

The hectic and comical life of Stephanie Plum continues with Mitchell and Habib once again factoring into her day. The eclectic group at the office come up with the idea of a flaming bag of dog poop to distract the two men. Though all present are adults, they seem to be a bit immature at times. The car winds up in flames, and the fire department is called. Stephanie's reputation with destroying cars is evident when the police assume that the car is hers, and if not hers then at least she is responsible.

Stephanie proves herself to be a woman at heart when she flees her ex-husband's office after his secretary draws her attention to a large pimple on her chin. As tough as she would like to be, Stephanie is embarrassed by Lotte. Her night does not get any better when it occurs to her that her unlicensed grandmother has a red sports car, and Stephanie is driving a 53 Buick. Things get worse when Munson breaks in, explaining that he is going to stab Stephanie, cut her nipples off and set her on fire. The plan is to appear insane so that he will not have to return to jail. Stephanie manages to shoot him and he flees. When Ranger turns up later that night, Plum reacts quickly surprising both Ranger and herself. When Ranger kisses her, there is no doubt this time of his attraction to her. At this point her grandmother who had slept through the entire incident with Munson wakes up and spoils the moment.

The following morning Stephanie is still angry about the Munson incident and decides that this is the time to apprehend him.



# Chapters 9 & 10

## Chapters 9 & 10 Summary

Lula and Stephanie burst in on Munson in the shower and he escapes and runs outside. Stephanie tackles him and kicks him in the testicles, ending the chase. Lula goes to the house to get a blanket while Mitchell and Habib help Stephanie wrestle Munson to the car. The two women take Munson to the police station where he is booked into custody. Stephanie goes home to change and prepares to return to Deal. Outside her apartment Joyce Barnhardt waits looking for information on Ranger. Mitchell and Habib are unwilling to follow Joyce, as they have orders to stick to Stephanie. Joyce plans on following Stephanie, but Plum rams Joyce's SUV with the Buick, disabling it. In Deal, Stephanie gets a phone call from Ranger telling her once again to be careful around the Ramos family. Alexander leaps into the Buick at the same time and tells her to take him to Asbury Park. At the local bar Stephanie talks to Ramos about his family. Ramos states that Hannibal is a big shot and Homer had killed himself. When Stephanie asks Alexander if he had killed Homer, he simply states that he had been in Greece. After dropping Ramos back at his house, Ranger calls again, and Stephanie tells him about her conversation with the patriarch.

At home Stephanie gets ready for dinner at her parent's house. Grandma arrives from her driving lesson, followed by her date, Martin Landowsky, an elderly man who lives in the apartment building. Morelli arrives next, dragging Stephanie into the hall to kiss her and ask when they can be alone together. The four of them head over to Stephanie's parent's, where Grandma informs everyone else that she has purchased a Corvette. While discussing the car purchase, the subject turns to the Ramos family. Grandma had heard two men talking about Homer Ramos while she was at the dealer's house buying her car. Grandma does not like Homer after hearing that he had cheated on his wife. While dinner is taking place in the dining room, Bob the dog is eating the cake meant for dessert in the kitchen. Ellen simply applies more frosting and adds coconut to the outside edge.

Stephanie is almost convinced to return to Morelli's house with him that evening, but his pager goes off and he has to return to work. Unable to sleep, Stephanie drives back to Hannibal's townhouse to check things out. As she watches, lights visible from the bike path go out. Getting ready to leave, she sees Ranger leaving the property. Unsure what to think anymore, Stephanie returns home to sleep. Waking the next morning, Stephanie finds Mooner and Dougie the dealer waiting for her. Dougie is upset about what direction his life is headed in and they thought Stephanie might have some ideas. The conversation turns once again to Homer, and Plum discovers that Ramos had been involved in drug trafficking as well. Mooner tells Stephanie of a conversation he had overheard at Art's Carpets between Homer and Arturo. Mooner had heard the two men discussing a package worth a million dollars contained in a rug





Morelli arrives and Stephanie relates the story that Mooner told her. Stephanie speculates that Stolle and Ramos were working together to deal drugs. Morelli explains that when one family, namely the Ramos', in this case actually just Homer, step outside their designated areas of business, the other crime organizations become angry. The different factions of crime in Trenton needed to re-establish boundaries rather than start a turf war. Morelli would like to have sex since Grandma is sleeping, but Stephanie falls asleep. The next morning she is thrilled when her grandmother informs her that she will be moving home. Stephanie's apartment is too crazy. Stephanie calls Morelli to apologize for falling asleep and asks him to watch Bob. She then calls Lula and asks for her help. Stephanie is going to break into the townhouse and see exactly what is going on there.

## Chapters 9 & 10 Analysis

Stephanie finally gets her man, capturing Morris Munson with Lula's help. Stephanie was finally able to apprehend Munson because she was angry that he had tried to kill her the night before. Mitchell is impressed with her abilities, and promises to wear a cup if he should ever get an order to get rough with her. Stephanie returns to Deal to meet Alexander Ramos despite Ranger's warnings to stay away. She is still not convinced the man is dangerous, instead seeing him as an aging gentleman. She is proved wrong when talk turns to his family and the anger that he expresses borders on crazy. Stephanie is happy to return the man to his home, but is still intrigued by him. At dinner when her family talk turns to Homer Ramos, it gives the reader the idea that everyone in the Burg knows every else's business. Stephanie is able to gather more information over dinner than she had been able to obtain from both Ranger and Morelli. This happens again when she meets Mooner and Dougie Kruper in her apartment. Within the space of one evening, Stephanie discovers that the youngest Ramos had branched out of the family gun-running business into stolen cars and drugs. Morelli confirms this when Plum questions him later, but he is more interested in sex than in keeping the secrets of the police by this point. Stephanie enlists Lula when she decides to get some answers on her own by entering Hannibal's townhouse.



# Chapters 11 & 12

## Chapters 11 & 12 Summary

Stephanie and Lula enter the townhouse and search. The master bedroom is neat and tidy, but the guest room is in disarray with clothes strewn about. Searching the kitchen they find recently purchased food in the refrigerator. As they discuss this, the front door opens and Cynthia Lotte enters the home. Lotte has come searching for her jewelry and car. Homer had broken up with her two days before his death and had taken back the gifts he had given her. Stephanie tells her they had not seen any jewelry, but in the garage they find Cynthia's Porsche with a dead man inside. Unwilling to leave her car behind and only a little concerned about the bloodstains from the gunshot victim, Cynthia enlists Stephanie and Lula to help her remove the man. They do so, and Cynthia leaves. Stephanie and Lula feel bad about leaving the dead man on the floor, so they prop him in a lawn chair. When he falls forward on his face, they return him to the chair only slightly damaged from his fall to the floor, and tie him there with a cord, then leave quickly.

Stephanie returns home and angrily calls Ranger. She demands to know what is going on and why people seem to turn up dead wherever he goes. Ranger refuses to give her any information, telling her it is best that she know nothing. Frustrated and angry, Stephanie drives to Morelli's house to get Bob. Realizing that the police need to know about the dead man, Stephanie tells Morelli that she and Lula had found the man at Hannibal's house. Morelli is angry that she is still involved but calls in the anonymous tip. Feeling a bit better and very needy, Stephanie attempts to have very quick sex before Morelli gets called to the scene. Unfortunately, the police had been close to the house, and he gets summoned before they are able to do much more than strip in the kitchen. At home that evening, Morelli stops in with Bob, to tell Stephanie that the dead man had worked for Stolle.

Tired of being at home, Stephanie takes Bob for a walk. Mitchell and Habib are still in her parking lot and have been joined there by Joyce Barnhardt. When Stephanie walks around the corner, Ranger pulls up in a Mercedes. In the car, Ranger tells her that he is terminating her employment and does not want her near the Ramos family anymore. Stephanie knows that Ranger must have talked to Morelli and that the two of them had decided what was best for her, to her annoyance. Ranger tells her it was his idea, as Hannibal and Alexander Ramos have both seen her, and half of Trenton knows that she had been in Hannibal's house with a dead man. Resigned, Stephanie returns to her apartment and decides to head out just to be alone. Before she can get far, Mitchell pulls a gun and takes her to Arturo Stolle.

Stolle admits that they hadn't counted on Stephanie leading them to Ranger, but tired of waiting, he is now going to use her as bait to bring Ranger to them. He tells Stephanie to encourage Ranger to meet with them, or Mitchell and Habib might hurt her...or her dog. Stephanie leaves and realizes she needs to keep the two men as well as Joyce



from tailing her. She enlists Carol Zabo to help and drives down the narrow alley behind her house. As Stephanie drives past Zabo's house, Carol pulls out in her car, blocking Mitchell and Habib as well as Joyce from following Stephanie. Driving through Deal looking for Ranger, Stephanie is startled when Alexander Ramos leaps into her car. Heading to the bar so that he can smoke, Alexander tells Stephanie that no one will find him there, as there are big problems in Trenton and everyone is busy trying to fix them. He had done his part; the problem would be on a boat next week, and he would be returning to Greece. Ranger calls in the middle of the conversation and tells her that three cars had just left Ramos's compound and they were probably looking for Alexander. Before they are able to leave the bar, two men enter, saying Ramos is needed back at the house. No one has been able to find the cargo that was be loaded on the ship to Greece. Ramos leaves and Stephanie gets another call from Ranger. He wants to take her to a safe house, but she refuses, telling him to solve his problems fast.

Stephanie returns home to find Grandma gone and a message from her mom on the answering machine. Mom invites her to dinner and delivers a message from Grandma that Bob ate two boxes of prunes. Stephanie rushes the sickly looking dog outside where Mitchell and Habib are waiting. Mitchell knocks Stephanie to the ground and grabs Bob, stuffing him in the car. The car speeds away, but before Stephanie can react they stop suddenly and both men leap from the vehicle in disgust. Bob had pooped and puked all over the back seat. Praising the dog, Stephanie loads him in the Buick and goes to her parent's house. Morelli stops in for food and to pick up Bob. Stephanie will be more comfortable if Bob is somewhere safe. Lula calls to say Cynthia Lotte has been found dead in her car, and Vinnie has a skip that Stephanie needs to collect immediately. Stephanie grabs some food to go, hugs Bob and gives Morelli a quick kiss good bye. Stephanie picks Lula up outside the office and is informed that they are looking for Elwood Steiger, who had been making drugs in his mom's garage. Information is that Elwood is at a Star Trek convention, so the two women head to the location. Coincidentally, Trekkarama, is the new business of Dougie Kruper, who welcomes Stephanie and Lula with offers of hors d'oeuvres.

## Chapters 11 & 12 Analysis

Stephanie's suspicions are proved correct when she and Lula find evidence that someone has been staying at Hannibal's townhouse. Cynthia Lotte's appearance at the scene gives the women a deeper look into the type of character that Homer Ramos is. Comedy ensues when Lotte finds her car, along with a dead man inside. None of the three women seem especially upset over the body, perhaps because Stephanie and Lula have seen dead people before. Lotte is more concerned with the bloodstains on the seat. Lula demonstrates her casualness over the man by simply giving Lotte tips on removing blood from the upholstery. After Lotte leaves, Stephanie and Lula continue the comedic affair by propping the man in a chair so that he is no longer uncomfortable.

Stephanie's frustration over the situation becomes evident when she calls Ranger and yells at him. More frustration is revealed over the lack of a sex life when she is willing to



have sex on Morelli's kitchen table to save time before he is called to the scene of the murder at Hannibal's house. Having Grandma living with her has taken its toll on her sleep as well as her libido.

After little more than playful bickering with Mitchell and Habib throughout the novel, things become a bit more serious when Stephanie is taken at gunpoint to see Arturo Stolle. Stolle wants something Ranger has, and had hoped Stephanie would lead them to him. As she hasn't they are going to use her to get to Ranger. Threats to her safety and her dog's are made and Stephanie leaves the carpet store, more than a little shaken. Back in Deal to find Ranger, Stephanie once again runs into Alexander Ramos, who wants to smoke and drink. Ramos tells her that the problems in Jersey are being worked out, and that he had done his part by arranging to remove something by ship next week. His bodyguards arrive before Stephanie can get anymore information. Ranger angers Stephanie again by threatening to lock her up for her own safety if she will not stay out of things. Though her nosiness had gotten her into the situation more than she would have liked, Stephanie is rightfully upset with Ranger. It has gotten to the point that his life has intruded on hers, and she has no idea what is going on. Comedy arises again when Mitchell and Habib dognap Bob in an attempt to make Stephanie cooperate. Unfortunately for the two men, Bob had eaten two boxes of prunes and destroys their car relieving himself. It once again demonstrates that Stephanie seems to get out of situations one way or another. Morelli's information that the dead man works for Stolle and Lula's news that Cynthia Lotte has been found dead in her car lead Stephanie to believe that things are coming to a head, but she is still unsure of how Ranger is tied into everything, as well as how she can stay out of things safely.



# Chapters 13 - 15

## Chapters 13 - 15 Summary

Stephanie and Lula find Steiger at Kruper's house. Lula tries to use her stun gun to subdue Steiger but misses and stuns Mooner instead. A food fight follows, with the two women being pelted by egg rolls and cheese puffs. Stephanie turns Steiger in at the police station and heads for home where she encounters Ranger in the parking lot. Ranger tries to handcuff Stephanie and take her to a safe house since she won't listen to him and stay away from the Ramos family. As they argue, Mooner and Dougie turn up looking for a place to stay. It seems after the food fight the VCR had stopped working and the trekkies had turned violent.

The next morning Morelli calls to find out what had happened to Stephanie the night before and to ask her to talk Carol Zabo off the bridge again. She was arrested after she and her friends had left Joyce Barnhardt tied to a tree naked when they had stopped her from following Stephanie. Plum drives to the bridge and talks to Carol and they both leave, Carol for home and Stephanie for the office. While there, Joyce storms in telling Stephanie if she doesn't hand over Ranger within 24 hours she will press charges against Carol for kidnapping. At home Stephanie cleans her apartment and tries to figure out how to get Ranger to Joyce, and then free him from her before Joyce can turn him over to the police. Making a trip to the dumpster, Stephanie is grabbed by Mitchell and Habib, who take her to a deserted warehouse. They have been instructed by Stolle to cut off her finger and send it to Ranger. Stephanie convinces them to run to the store for bandages and Tylenol before they maim her, and then kicks her way through a water damaged wall, breaks a window and escapes.

Stephanie makes it to an office where she calls Lula for a ride. She then calls Morelli and asks her to go to her apartment and get Rex, her hamster, as well as her gun. Morelli calls a while later to tell her that her apartment had been ransacked, but Rex was safe. Stephanie is hiding out at Dougie's house, since no one will think to look for her there. She then calls Ranger and makes arrangements to meet him that night behind the office. At the meeting Ranger finally tells Stephanie of his part in the Stolle-Ramos business. Stolle had always dealt in human trafficking, smuggling people in from Asia to work and provide high priced babies for adoption. Stolle decided to have them smuggle drugs as well, but had no connection with which to distribute the drugs. That was where Ramos had come into the picture. Ranger had been acting as an arbitrator between the crime factions, trying to avoid a war in New Jersey. Ranger handcuffs an outraged Stephanie in order to keep her safe but winds up releasing her when she tells him about Carol Zabo and Joyce. He gives her until 9AM to solve the situation. Stephanie goes to Lula and they come up with a plan. Lula calls a former pimp friend of hers who resembles Ranger and they make arrangements to hand him over to Joyce. Joyce is indeed fooled by the phony Ranger and loads him into her car, only to have Mitchell and Habib drive up and grab the fake Ranger at the end of the block.



The next day Stephanie meets Morelli for lunch to go over her ideas in the case. Stephanie believes Homer is still alive. Morelli confirms that the police and Ranger suspect the same thing. The theory is that Hannibal ordered Homer to stop dealing with Stolle when it became clear that Homer was angering the crime families in New Jersey and New York. The bag that Ranger had delivered to Stolle was supposed to contain Arturo's money but had contained newsprint instead. Hannibal had set Ranger up to be blamed for the murder and the fire that followed.

Stephanie leaves a frustrated Morelli and returns home to find Homer Ramos in her apartment. It has been Homer that had ransacked her apartment, looking for the missing money. He had left it in his Porsche, and now it was missing. Homer had killed Cynthia believing that she had hidden the money. Stephanie has a gun but doesn't know how to fire an automatic, so she throws it at Homer, hitting him in the head. He fires at her, grazing her arm, then demands to know where his money is. Stephanie sees Ranger enter the apartment behind Homer and stalls until Ranger hits Ramos with the stun gun. Stephanie gets patched up at the hospital and has Lula drive her by Dougie's house before heading to her parent's. Mooner and the Dealer are watching a brand new TV. They were able to purchase the TV because while they were at the car wash a blond in a Porsche had pulled in to clean out her car and had tossed a bag filled with money into the garbage.

At her parent's house, Stephanie explains things to her mother and grandmother and sleeps until Morelli arrives. He takes her to his house and tells her that Ramos had talked, giving up his entire family. The police had also apprehended Mitchell and Habib, who had in turn, given up Arturo Stolle. Pleased with the outcome of the day, Morelli feels romantic, but they are interrupted once again, this time by Morelli's mother and grandmother. The two women are not happy about the idea that Stephanie and Morelli might be living in sin, when Morelli angrily replies that they are going to get married. Stephanie is stunned and starts to argue, which makes Grandma Bella suspicious. When the two women leave, Stephanie quickly forgets her arguments when Morelli kisses her and begins to remove her clothes.

## Chapters 13 - 15 Analysis

Events are coming to a head for Stephanie. Ranger tries to force her into his protection, which only angers her. It is Ranger's fault for involving her in the case to begin with, and she does not believe it fair that he wants her to mind her own business now. Ranger is really just concerned for Stephanie's safety but by telling her to stay out of things, just incites her further.

The situation with Mitchell and Habib escalates further, when they actually kidnap Stephanie with intentions of harming her. Comedy returns once again when Stephanie is able to convince the two men that they will have to shop for supplies before cutting her finger off, giving her the opportunity to escape. Problems with Joyce continue as well, and Stephanie and Lula come up with a plan to get Joyce off their backs. The fake Ranger plan seems to fool not only Joyce, but Mitchell and Habib as well.



Stephanie finally gets information about Homer Ramos from Morelli, after she lays her ideas out on the table, and from Ranger before he attempts to hold her again.

Homer is the black sheep of his family and causes trouble for all. By involving himself with Arturo Stolle and his drug business, Homer had almost caused a drug war. Hannibal had used Ranger as a go between to Stolle, and then set Ranger up for the fake murder of Homer. Ranger did not belong to any family in the drug business, so Hannibal did not have to worry about retaliation.

Homer's arrival at Stephanie's apartment proves her theory correct. Hannibal is looking for the bag of money he had stolen from Stolle. Ranger saves Stephanie, and the rest of the story falls into place. Homer had been taking drugs himself, which had caused his behavior to be more erratic than usual. The money was still missing, but the police thought Homer had simply hidden it in a drugged state and could not remember where it was. Stephanie's life begins to get back to normal, but normal for her is not normal for anyone else. Morelli announcing his intentions to marry her simply to get rid of her mother and grandmother round out an interesting day.



# Characters

## Stephanie Plum

A bond enforcement agent or bounty hunter, Stephanie Plum works for her cousin Vinnie hunting criminals or "skips" that have failed to appear in court. Laid off from the women's underwear plant in New Jersey, Stephanie now hunts bad guys, sometimes with the help of Lula, the former prostitute and file clerk. Stephanie spends her days tracking several quirky characters, from Moon, the pot smoking, but well-meaning couch potato, to Morris Munson, arrested for vehicular manslaughter. Along with Lula, Stephanie stumbles through apprehensions, returning those who have jumped bond, so that Vinnie can retain his money.

Stephanie is a smart and funny woman, who goes through life dealing with things as they come. This includes her grandmother moving into her apartment, being followed by the henchmen of a local drug lord, and becoming the taxi for an aging gun runner. The sometime girlfriend of a Trenton cop, Joe Morelli, Stephanie also longs for a normal sex life, something that is hard to accomplish with her grandmother snoring in the bedroom. Stephanie is also attracted to Ranger but knows she will never have a normal relationship with the former member of the special forces. Morelli is on the right side of the law, and Ranger is a law unto himself. Though Stephanie finds herself in many strange situations, usually because of her own actions, she manages to avoid true danger in most cases, and at times even manages to help the authorities solve their case and get their man.

## Ranger

Ranger, whose real name is Carlos Manoso, is a bounty hunter for Vinnie at the bond agency, as well as a very mysterious man. Though Ranger operates on the right side of the law when working as a bounty hunter, he also sometimes strays outside the boundaries of law when freelancing. Stephanie is very attracted to Ranger but is unsure where a relationship with him would lead. Ranger is wanted for questioning in the apparent murder of Homer Ramos and enlists Stephanie to watch the townhouse of Hannibal Ramos while Ramos is in town. Ranger had been acting as a go between for the Ramos family and Arturo Stolle, a local drug dealer and carpet store owner. Ramos had double crossed Stolle, and Ranger had been blamed for the problems. In order to clear his name and avoid the police, Ranger investigates on his own, tracking the Ramos family with the assistance of Stephanie and his employees. When the danger to Stephanie grows because of her relationship with Ranger, he attempts to brow-beat Stephanie into backing off, with no success. Ranger saves Stephanie's life when Homer Ramos turns up at her apartment looking for the money Homer had stolen from Arturo Stolle.





## Joe Morelli

Joe Morelli is a New Jersey police officer and the the on-again, off-again boyfriend of Stephanie Plum. The two have known each other since they were children. Stephanie lost her virginity to Morelli when she was eighteen. Morelli loves Stephanie, but not necessarily her job or her relationship with Ranger. However, when he can not get in touch with Ranger after the murder of Homer Ramos, Morelli feels comfortable enough to ask Stephanie to relay a message for him.

Morelli is a tough, no nonsense type of man, who is drawn to Stephanie, though there are times when she exasperates him. Despite his job, Morelli frequently looks the other way when Stephanie gets involved in situations that might compromise police procedure. Morelli is also a frequent guest of Stephanie's parents and seems to be looked on as a member of the family already. Morelli finds the situations that Stephanie becomes involved in humorous for the most part, though he does try to keep her safe when he can, despite the sometimes overwhelming talent that Stephanie seems to have for finding trouble.

## Lula

A former prostitute, Lula is a file clerk for Vinnie at the bond agency, and sometimes assists Stephanie with apprehensions. Lula is a very large black woman who uses her weight to intimidate people, as well as the gun that she carries. Lula is a true friend to Stephanie, not only backing her up when hunting down fugitives, but also when dealing with anyone who wishes Stephanie harm. Lula appears to be street smart and tough but often shields her fear with tough talk rather than action.

As Stephanie's faithful friend and sometimes partner, Lula often finds herself in difficult situations herself, but she deals with things as they arise with humor and quick thinking. Lula is a big talker but is usually willing to try whatever it takes to get the job done.

## Grandma Mazur

Stephanie's Grandma Mazur is a tough, New Jersey Grandmother with a mind of her own. Grandma normally lives with Stephanie's parents, but after a fight with her son-in-law, moves into Stephanie's apartment. Having Grandma living with her makes Stephanie's life more interesting than usual. Grandma is a free spirit who likes to get together with friends at Stiva's Funeral Home to see who is laid out and how they look. Grandma spends her time trying to get her driver's license and looking for love, to the sometimes horror of her daughter, Stephanie's mother, Ellen.



## Alexander Ramos

The Greek head of an arms distribution ring, Alexander Ramos is a loose cannon that is working hard to maintain control of his empire despite his sons' interference. Alexander and Stephanie cross paths when Ramos jumps into Stephanie's car trying to evade his body guards. Stephanie keeps an eye on Ramos for Ranger, learning small pieces of information from the patriarch of the Ramos family while helping him evade his family so he can smoke and drink at the local bar.

## Hannibal Ramos

The oldest son of Alexander Ramos, Hannibal usually lives in California but has been in New Jersey lately. After his brother is murdered, Hannibal returns to New Jersey, to help with family responsibilities. Hannibal meets Stephanie when she falls out of a tree onto his property while spying on Ramos for Ranger.

## Joyce Barnhardt

Stephanie's nemesis, Joyce is also a bounty hunter for Vinnie. Joyce has been tormenting Stephanie since they were in kindergarten, up to and including sleeping with Stephanie's husband, Dickie Orr. Joyce is assigned the task of finding Ranger and bringing him in, as Stephanie refuses to trace Ranger for Vinnie. Joyce is the victim of sabotage by Stephanie and Lula, who are unwilling to help her when it comes to finding Ranger.

## Morris Munson

A bond jumper, Morris Munson has been released on bond for killing his ex-wife and had failed to appear in court. Munson avoids Stephanie and Lula for quite a bit, at one point attempting to kill Stephanie in order to establish himself as insane. The plot fails, and Munson is eventually apprehended by Stephanie and Lula and returned to the police.

## Homer Ramos

The youngest son of Alexander Ramos, Homer is believed to have been murdered, possibly by Ranger at the outset of the novel. As it turns out, Ramos had faked his death to avoid a contract that the mafia had put on his life. Homer breaks into Stephanie's apartment looking for the drug money he had stolen from Arturo Stolle and is finally apprehended with the assistance of Ranger after shooting Stephanie in the arm.



## Arturo Stolle

Stolle, a drug dealer, is also known as the carpet king. Stolle had been dealing with Homer Ramos, until Homer scammed him and took his money. Stolle knows Ranger is one of the last people seen with Ramos so decides to use Stephanie to find Ranger. Stolle first has two of his henchmen follow Stephanie, and when he becomes impatient, has them kidnap her.

## Mitchell

A hired thug for Arturo Stolle, Mitchell and his partner Habib follow Stephanie, hoping that she will lead them to Ranger. Though at the outset Mitchell seems harmless, he eventually kidnaps Stephanie on the orders of his boss.

## Habib

The second thug working for Stolle, Habib is new to the country and at time struggles with American culture. Habib also seems to be a somewhat bumbling bad guy but takes part in the abduction of Stephanie when his boss becomes impatient.

## Moon Man

Walter "Moon Man" Dunphy is a well-meaning burnout. Stephanie picks him up as an FTA, and Moon becomes involved in Stephanie's life on an almost daily basis.

## Dougie Kruper

Dougie Kruper is known as "the dealer." Kruper is friends with Moon and provides Stephanie with the Rollswagen after Moon destroys her car by fire. Kruper also deals in other stolen goods, including Metamucil, and sells Grandma Mazur a red Corvette. Kruper and Moon wind up with the money that Homer Ramos had stolen from Arturo Stolle.

## Cynthia Lotte

The ex-girlfriend of Homer Ramos, Cynthia works for Stephanie's ex-husband, Dickie Orr. Cynthia unwittingly tosses the gym bag containing Arturo Stolle's money in a garbage can at the car wash, leaving it for Moon and Dougie Kruper to find. Lotte is killed by Homer Ramos when she is unable to disclose where the money is.



## **Connie Rosolli**

The office manager at Vincent Plum Bail Bonds.

## **Vinnie Plum**

The owner of the bail bond agency and Stephanie's cousin.

## **Brian Simon**

A Trenton cop, Simon is the officer who was rear-ended by Carol Zabo. Simon does not press charges against Zabo at Stephanie's request. Simon also asks Stephanie to dog sit for Bob, as an excuse to abandon the dog with her.

## **Bob**

The mixed breed dog that Brian Simon drops off at Stephanie's apartment, supposedly for the weekend.

## **Carol Zabo**

A suicidal Jersey girl, who would rather jump off a bridge than spend any time in jail. Zabo's biggest concern with serving time is having to use the bathroom while other people can see her.

## **Elwood Steiger**

A skip that Stephanie traces to the home of the dealer, Dougie Kruper. Steiger is attending a Star Trek social gathering.

## **Ellen Plum**

Stephanie's mother, Ellen deals with the trouble her daughter and mother get into by ironing. Ellen struggles to maintain some sort of normalcy in the life of her family and ignore situations but is usually unsuccessful.



## Objects/Places

### The Burg

The neighborhood in New Jersey where Stephanie Plum grew up and her parents still live.

### Vincent Plum Bail Bonds

The Bond agency where Stephanie works. The agency is owned by her cousin, Vinnie.

### Big Blue

The indestructible 1953 Buick that Stephanie drives after her own car is destroyed by fire.

### Stiva's

The funeral home frequented by Stephanie's Grandma Mazur and her friends.

### Trenton

The city in New Jersey where Stephanie lives and works.

### Giovicchini's Market

A shop frequented by people who live in the Burg.

### Rollswagen

The car that the dealer loans Stephanie. The front half of the car is a Rolls Royce; the rear half is a Volkswagen. The car is painted silver with swirls of paint to simulate wind.

### Trekarama

Dougie Kruper's new business venture after being busted for selling stolen property. Star Trek fans gather at Kruper's home in a social setting to watch videos of the old television show.



## **Art's Carpets**

The carpet store owned by Arturo Stolle. Moon overhears Stolle and Homer Ramos discussing a possible drug deal while shopping for carpet.

## **Deal**

A suburb of Trenton and the location of the home where Alexander Ramos is staying while in town.



# Social Sensitivity

Hot Six is Janet Evanovich's sixth novel about Stephanie Plum, a former lingerie buyer, forced through redundancy to take on a job as a bail enforcement agent, which is a polite way of saying a bounty hunter. The setting for all six of Evanovich's Stephanie Plum novels is a part of Trenton, New Jersey, known as the Burg. In Hot Six, the Burg is described thus: The Burg is a residential chunk of Trenton with one side bordering on Chambersburg Street and the other side stretching to Italy. Tastykakes and olive loaf are staples in the Burg. "Sign language" refers to a stiff middle finger jabbed skyward. Houses are modest. Cars are large. Windows are clean.

The Burg is a very close community, based on extended families. As Evanovich writes in High Five: "no one ever really leaves the Burg. You could relocate in Antarctica, but if you were born and raised in the Burg, you're a Burger for life." Due to Evanovich's focus on the closeness of the community, and its influence on Stephanie's character, it is impossible to analyze the specific social concerns in one work without first analyzing the Burg and its inhabitants.

The Burg is a second and third generation Italian-American immigrant community that, while proud of its Italian heritage, fiercely asserts its naturalization as American. This attitude is best represented in the work by Stephanie's father's assertion of the superiority of American goods over foreign imports, a superiority that takes on almost a moral aspect: American equals good, foreign equals bad. Stephanie says: "My father was a second-generation American, and he loved bashing foreigners, relatives excluded." This moralizing tone extends to the level of daily routine: Burg meals are always ready at six in the evening, prepared and served by women, and the kind of food that is eaten is dictated by the man of the house. In this patriarchal society, there is a pressure on couples to get married early and a pressure on daughters to provide their mothers with grandchildren, a pressure that sometimes drives Stephanie insane. Finally, there are many people who suggest to Stephanie that she should get a more feminine job. In Hot Six, the unattractive prospect suggested by Stephanie's mother is a packing job at the Personal Products Plant.

The closeness of the community inevitably means that the Burg gossip mill, or grapevine, soon broadcasts any and all goings on. This is mostly presented in the series as being an irritation and a hindrance to Stephanie's sex life. But there is a sense of claustrophobia in the novels, however humorous Evanovich makes it. The upshot is that everyone knows everyone else's business. It is in this closed space that Hot Six takes place.

The work deals specifically with organized crime and the ways in which the criminal underworld very much represents a hidden government and economy beneath the surface world of the Burg. Stephanie is drawn into this as she finds out that her friend and mentor Ranger, Trenton's finest bounty hunter, has himself skipped bail on a minor charge, one step ahead of being called in for questioning about the murder of Homer Ramos, a son of Alexander Ramos, an international arms dealer. As Stephanie's



investigations continue, she discovers that this seemingly isolated incident has come close to starting a crime war over control of Trenton. Evanovich paints a picture of a hidden criminal government and criminal economy, thinly veiled beneath the law-abiding community. While the existence of a criminal underground is no surprise to any reader, Evanovich does not simply focus on the most noticeable elements of this underground, like the street gangs, which get so much publicity. They are strictly minor players, and it is the major players, the families who control various areas of crime on a city-wide or a statewide level, that are examined. Evanovich describes an unwritten policy document dividing crime by type amongst the rival families and organizations in this government of crime. This division of criminal territories that allows these organizations to run crime as an effective business must be strictly respected. Only in this way can the families avoid wasting time and resources by embarking on wars of mutual annihilation. This balance is threatened by Homer Ramos who, in an attempt to recoup his gambling losses, has been poaching outside his family's territory of gun smuggling by running drugs. Consequently, he risks starting a war with the Mafia, whose criminal territory includes the drug trade.

Evanovich has Stephanie stumble around in this increasingly tense situation as she attempts to determine Ranger's innocence, which she eventually manages to do. What Stephanie also stumbles upon is the fact that both the police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are in contact with the various crime families in order to prevent just such a war that seems to be in the offing. At the same time, Joe Morelli, Stephanie's on again/off again lover, is serving as an intermediary with Vito Grizolli, the local Mob boss, in order to get assurances that Homer's poaching will not start a major underground crime war. Morelli eventually explains to Stephanie the role that he is playing—and which he has been hiding from her.

"[Drug smuggling] was an extracurricular activity for Homer Ramos," Morelli said. "Drugs, extortion and numbers go to organized crime. Guns go to the Ramos family. Alexander Ramos has always respected that."

Except, in Trenton, it was more like disorganized crime. Trenton fell in the middle of New York and Philadelphia. No one cared a whole lot about Trenton. Mostly Trenton has a bunch of middle-management guys who spent their days running numbers through social clubs. The numbers money helped give stability to the drug trade. And the drugs were distributed by black street gangs.

Here, Evanovich demonstrates the importance of etiquette in respecting the division of the crime pie. Also, she shows the interlocking layers of the underground economy and the problems posed by border areas in the geographical territory break down: many major criminal players have marginal interests in Trenton, so any crime war could swiftly escalate to encompass New Jersey and even the surrounding states.

In this explosive situation, the figure of Ranger is a vital one.

Ranger is presented throughout the series as a man of mystery, a man who knows the underworld of the underworld, in Evanovich's words. Ranger can shift instantly from the





speech of Stark Street, the poorest street and the area with the worst crime rate in Trenton, to the speech of Wall Street, speaking of his investment portfolio.

In addition to being the best bounty hunter in the area, Ranger has a small army of employees, most ex-military, to aid him in his various "almost-legal" enterprises. Ranger is almost an extra-legal force, capable of dealing with almost any situation. The police know of him, but turn a blind eye.

Ranger's actions are always governed by a strict sense of ethics, and thus he is valuable as a peacemaker who, unlike the police, is not obliged to go through legal channels.

He is perhaps the only figure who can be said to have a foot planted firmly in both the criminal underworld and the world of legitimate business and politics. Fittingly, Ranger has been serving as a go-between in this crisis, attempting to reestablish the division of territories. In his words: "[I was an] arbitrator. I was acting as liaison between the factions. Everyone, the feds included, would like to avoid a crime war."

Like any other corporation, every criminal organization wants to avoid a war over trade. This would adversely affect their profits and put their assets—in this case personnel—in jeopardy. But even Ranger, the man who slips effortlessly from the criminal world to that of legitimate business, is here caught in the middle of a criminal power struggle. Homer Ramos, in his drug-addled weakness, has allied himself with Arturo Stolle. Stolle sees a possibility to add to his organization's allotted territory by means of a hostile take-over of Mafia controlling interest in the drugs market. Together, Stolle and Ramos set up Homer's faked death in such a way as to implicate Ranger, so as to muddy the waters and buy themselves more time to set up their drug operation.

Thus, Evanovich presents the reader with a legal world, the Burg, which is based on extended families, and implicitly parallels this with the criminal underworld, which is controlled by a group of extended families.

In both instances, there is a sense of claustrophobia, of boundaries being firmly drawn, and in the underworld, Evanovich describes a pressure building that threatens to explode, upsetting the underworld's fragile division of crime. Amidst this tension walks Stephanie Plum, bounty hunter extraordinaire.

# Techniques

Evanovich's technique in *Hot Six* is characterized by slapstick and parody. Written in the first person singular, so as to increase the immediacy of events for the reader, Evanovich describes fantastically disastrous events that spiral out of Stephanie's control, as opposed to the usual first person detective protagonists, who control events through their proficiency and stoicism. Evanovich raises the reader's expectations by lavishly describing recognizable stock vignettes of detective fiction, such as the aforementioned standoff between protagonist and villain, only to frustrate those expectations with disaster. This frustration of reader expectations serves to heighten the almost manic humor. An even more ludicrous example is Habib and Mitchell's attempted kidnaping of Stephanie's dog, Bob, who, like her hamster, is like the child that Stephanie has never had. Evanovich describes Stephanie's horror as she watches the villain's car race away only to have the car stop dead. The doors burst open, Habib and Mitchell stagger out, followed by a happy and unharmed Bob. But it is not the protagonist's quick thinking that has thwarted the bad guys: it is the cumulative laxative and emetic effects of the two boxes of prunes that Bob had eaten, which puts their car out of commission.

Evanovich, however, does not rely solely on slapstick and parody. She provides a detailed narrative framework on which to mount the hilarious vignettes described above, a combination that has earned Evanovich a long list of crime fiction accolades and awards. She deftly manipulates her swift-paced plot to pull her readers into the story. By making her protagonist a bounty hunter, Evanovich can spin multiple subplots around the various people that Stephanie has to track down in the novel, which Evanovich neatly dovetails together with the main plot. The complexity is further increased by the fact that the author has Ranger and Morelli investigating the same case as Stephanie. By keeping these parallel investigations as hidden plot lines which Stephanie is seldom party to, Evanovich skillfully draws a complex whodunit.



# Themes

## Crime

Crime is central to the novel *Hot Six* by Janet Evanovich; however, the novel is comedic in nature, and the criminals within the story are written as such. Stephanie Plum is a bond enforcement agent or bounty hunter, and the people that she comes in contact with for her job vary from petty criminals to murderers and drug dealers.

A main plot in the novel is murder of Homer Ramos. Ranger, a co-worker of Stephanie's, is wanted by the police as a person of interest for the murder. The Ramos family is well known in the area as gun dealers. Stephanie has several run-ins with Alexander Ramos the patriarch of the family, as well as with Hannibal, the oldest son. Though Ranger tries to keep Stephanie in the dark regarding the situation, her natural tendency to snoop winds up getting her involved. Another character, Arturro Stolle drags Stephanie into the situation by having his henchmen follow and eventually kidnap her in order to bring Ranger out into the open.

Bumbling Dougie Kruper, The Dealer, is also a criminal, trafficking in stolen goods. Stephanie does not seem to have any problem associating with criminals; it seems that almost everyone she knows is tied to crime in some way. The only time Stephanie takes offense is when the criminals are "bad guys" or they interfere with her personally.

## Love

Stephanie Plum appears to both need love, and be afraid of love at the same time in *Hot Six* by Janet Evanovich. Stephanie had been married to Dickie Orr, an attorney. Very early in the marriage Stephanie arrives home to find her husband and her sworn enemy, Joyce Barnhardt, having sex on her dining room table. Stephanie is naturally cautious about giving her heart to another after this, though it does not stop her from trying to find love again.

Stephanie has an on-again off-again relationship with Joe Morelli, a police officer in Trenton New Jersey. Stephanie has known Joe since she was young, and the two have been experimenting with the depth and commitment they have for one another for years.

Stephanie also obviously loves her family. Though her grandmother has moved into her apartment and is disrupting her sex life, Stephanie does appreciate having her. Grandma shares bits of her married life, and Stephanie begins to understand her a bit more. Stephanie's mother also demonstrates a mother's love when Mitchell and Habib are outside her house in the Burg waiting for Stephanie, Though Ellen frequently has trouble dealing with the violence that Stephanie deals with daily, she has no trouble threatening the two men when it appears to her that her daughter may be in danger.



## Family

Family is an important part of Hot Six. Stephanie Plum is the main character, but her family is central to who she is as a person. Stephanie's family is very close, with Stephanie visiting her parents' home several times a week. Stephanie is also close to her grandmother, Grandma Mazur, who usually lives with Stephanie's parents, but after a fight with her father, moves into Stephanie's apartment for a brief time. While Grandma is living with her, Stephanie begins to understand her grandmother a bit more. Young and married, Grandma had not had much opportunity for fun. Her priorities were her children and her husband. Widowed, Grandma is only now living her missed youth, to the horror of her daughter, Ellen.

Stephanie's extended family are her co-workers. Lula is a true friend upon whom Stephanie can always depend. Lula seems to develop Stephanie's opinions of people and situations, and though there are times she might not agree with Stephanie, Lula will usually go along with her anyway. There is an almost sisterlike bond between the two women. They come together as a unit to accomplish things that they might not be capable of alone and choose to work together, though they are not required to do so.

## Significant Topics

In her characterization of Stephanie, Evanovich parodies a stereotype that dates back to the 1930s. Through absurd humor, Evanovich asserts that the traditional depiction of the private investigator and bounty hunter as hard-boiled heroes is both naive and sexist. From film noir to the novels of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Mickey Spillane, the audience is presented with a brave hero who faces corrupt police officers and vicious criminals alone, and ensures that justice prevails against all odds.

The critic Sally Munt, writing in *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel* (1994), describes this hero perfectly: The low-lit, monochromatic, American film noir of the 1940s springs to mind, with its city of mystery and shadows, violence and vengeance. Through the mist steps the messianic "man in the mac," dispenser of commonsense justice, alone in his mission. The image is archetypal—the warrior knight, the tough cowboy, the intrepid explorer—he is the representative of Man, and yet more than a man, he is the focus of morality, the mythic hero. He is the controlled centre surrounded by chaos, and an effective reading must involve identification with this mediator of action, truth, and finally pleasure and relief through closure.

Against this mythic hero, Evanovich's Stephanie Plum is distinctly unheroic, a woman with very human failings and concerns. Her job is not the glamorous job of the heroic cowboy explorer, full of derringdo. Very often, it consists of finding someone who has forgotten her court appearance and taking her to the police station to reschedule, somewhat like a legal taxi service. Evanovich has Stephanie comment on the difficulties of surveillance: trying to stay awake against the boredom of watching nothing happen, and the problem of needing to go to the toilet while on a stakeout. While the hard-boiled hero gets shot or beaten up, Stephanie has to deal with a pimple on her chin. Like



Chandler's Marlowe, sometimes during a case, Stephanie feels the need to drink, but unlike Marlowe, she drinks her whisky in her cocoa with her grandmother and becomes violently ill the next day. It is hard for the reader to identify with the mythic detective heroes on a personal level, as the reader cannot imagine being able to do what they do in the course of the investigation. Conversely, readers may find it easy to identify with Stephanie Plum, and Evanovich has a great eye for noticing the little problems in life that cause so much stress and anguish. This point is best exemplified during that most heroic of film noir moments, the stand off with the villain.

We both had guns drawn, standing about ten feet apart.

"Drop the gun," I said.

[Homer Ramos] gave me a humorless smile. "Make me."

Great. "Drop the gun, or I'm going to shoot you."

"Okay, shoot me. Go ahead."

I looked down at the Glock. It was a semiautomatic, and I owned a revolver. I had no idea how to shoot a semiautomatic. I knew I was supposed to slide something back. I pushed a button and the clip fell out on the carpet.

Homer Ramos burst out laughing. . . . I threw the Glock at him.

This is not to suggest that Stephanie is without skills; indeed, she escapes captivity and torture at the hands of the hitmen Habib and Mitchell, as well as repeatedly gives her various pursuers the slip. Furthermore, Stephanie does not feel a macho need to face things alone and, in Joe Morelli and especially Ranger, she has help who make hard-boiled heroes look average. This does not mean that Stephanie's partnership with either is a partnership that approaches equality: both Ranger and Morelli milk Stephanie for what she knows, while offering little or nothing in return. Evanovich takes delight in depicting Stephanie's struggles for information and for professional respect against these two, in which Stephanie sometimes comes out on top. In describing the struggles for professional respect, Evanovich shows Stephanie battling against the sexism implicit in Burg society, as both Morelli and Ranger try to protect her and to keep her away from trouble by not telling her about it: it is a measure of Stephanie's determination that she gets any information at all. Also, while Stephanie does bring this case to its conclusion, it would be difficult to say that she does this by imposing order, as the traditional detective hero does.

Rather, she works by intuition: "intuition is the big gun in my arsenal. I can't shoot, I can't run all that fast, and the only karate I know comes from Bruce Lee movies. But I have good intuition. Truth is, most of the time I don't know what the hell I'm doing, but if I follow my instincts things usually work out." Stephanie is a courageous, feisty, and successful detective, but she is no superhuman hero.



To return to a more personal aspect of Munt's messianic "man in the mac," one of the key features of these hard-boiled men is their chosen status as loners. They avoid personal relationships, which they see as compromising their effectiveness. In contrast, Evanovich foregrounds Stephanie's sexuality as an important part of her character. Through Stephanie, Evanovich examines the change in sexual mores between different generations of the tightly knit Burg community.

This theme is explored through Stephanie's relationship with Morelli. While they lived together in *Four To Score*, Stephanie still feels the inbuilt need to protest the innocence of her relationship with Joe to her mother, Joe's mother, and Joe's fearsome Grandma Bella. Armed with the magical ability to put the evil eye on people, Bella represents a matriarch for the whole Burg. The older generation, while they are not completely blind to what is going on, still expect sex and/or cohabitation to lead to marriage and children. Stephanie's mother especially is presented as eternally hopeful that her daughter will take a safer job, learn how to cook, get married and, after having borne children, become the local patriarchal culture's ideal of maternal femininity.

Stephanie, on the other hand, wants sex on her terms and wants to make her own decisions about whether to commit to marriage or not. The closest thing she has to a child is her hamster, Rex. Her mother's repeated anguished cries "Why me?" could be a comic plaint for the older generation as a whole about the incomprehensible actions of the younger generation. In this respect, Evanovich's exploration of the Burg resembles a comedy of manners.

# Style

## Point of View

Hot Six by Janet Evanovich is written in the first person, present tense. The narrator of the novel is Stephanie Plum, the main character. By writing in the first person, the author gives the reader a better understanding of the thoughts and feelings of Plum, as well as the reasons behind her feelings and actions.

Hot Six describes approximately one week in the life of Stephanie Plum. The novel moves at a very fast pace which is reflected in the dialogue that makes up a large part of Hot Six. Interspersed with the dialogue are short descriptive passages that allow the reader to better understand the characters and their motives. Though the novel is written from the point of view of Plum, the reader is able to gather information regarding the other characters, as the author involves the characters in descriptive, long sections of dialogue with Stephanie.

## Setting

The novel Hot Six by Janet Evanovich takes place in New Jersey. Stephanie Plum is a native of New Jersey and has grown up and spent her life within its limits. The neighborhood Stephanie lived in during her youth is known as "the Burg." Stephanie's parents and grandmother still live in the Burg, as well as Moon Man Dunphy, one of the hapless skips that Stephanie deals with in Hot Six.

A suburb of Trenton, Deal is the location of Alexander Ramos' home when he is in New Jersey. The house is located on a beach, allowing Stephanie to conduct surveillance for Ranger without putting herself in immediate danger. Stephanie Plum, the main character of the novel spends most of her time driving, trying to locate and apprehend people that have failed to appear in court. When not working, Plum is often at her apartment, where Ranger often turns up in the middle of the night. When not at home, Stephanie also spends time at her parents' home, usually eating with her family. Plum also spends time at Joe Morelli's house, her sometime boyfriend and Trenton cop.

## Language and Meaning

Hot Six is written in a modern style, reflecting the characters. The novel takes place in New Jersey, and each character is represented well by the author. The dialect used by each character within the dialogue represents their cultural differences as well as their motives.

The quantity of the rapid fire dialogue moves the story along at a fast pace, allowing the reader to become immersed in the type of life that the main character leads, as well as to help distinguish the relationship between the characters. Because the dialogue is



written in such a way, it may be difficult at times for one to follow; however, within a short period of time the reader is able to pick up the author's style follow the characters with little difficulty. The descriptive passages allow the reader to understand the thoughts and feelings of the main character. This enables the reader to develop a better understanding of the plot, as it is experienced along with the main character, Stephanie Plum.

## Structure

Hot Six is comprised of a prologue and fifteen chapters, with each chapter approximately twenty pages in length. The chapters are numbered, with each chapter usually centered on one issue of the main character, as well as several smaller issues.

The main plot of the novel is the main character, Stephanie Plum, assisting her co-worker, Ranger, in finding the truth behind the murder of Homer Ramos. Each chapter contains some bit of information regarding this. There are also many sub plots involving the day-to-day life of Plum. Her family affairs, such as her grandmother moving into her apartment, as well as her relationship with Joe Morelli are central to her life, as well as her work as a bounty hunter.

Throughout the novel, Plum tries to apprehend FTA's (Failure to Appear), or skips, and the reader is drawn into the action as each particular case is carried out. Mooner becomes a repetitive character, as well as Dougie Kruper, the "dealer." Morris Munson is another skip who becomes entangled in Plum's life on an almost daily basis within the short span of time covered in the novel.

Each chapter is written in such a way as to draw the reader to the next chapter, carrying the storyline throughout the novel. The chapter breaks act more as a set up for the next phase of action, rather than to conclude the portion of the story that has just taken place.





## Quotes

"I flipped the file open. Morris Munson. Arrested for vehicular manslaughter. 'Could have been worse,' I said. 'Could be a homicidal rapist.'

'You didn't read down far enough,' Connie said. 'After this guy ran over the victim, who just happened to be his ex-wife, he beat her with a tire iron, raped her, and tried to set her on fire. He was charged with vehicular manslaughter because according to the M.E. she was already dead when he took the tire iron to her. He had her soaked in gasoline and was trying to get his Bic to work when a blue-and-white happened to drive by.'

Little black dots danced in front of my eyes. I sat down hard on the fake-leather couch and put my head between my legs."

Chapter One, pg 8

"'Yes, and it is not good when we become annoyed,' Habib said, wagging his finger. 'We are not to be taken lightly. Is that not so?' he asked, looking to Mitchell for approval. 'In fact, if you annoy us we will spread your entrails across an entire parking space of my cousin Muhammad's 7-Eleven parking lot.'

'What are you, nuts?' Mitchell said. 'We don't do entrails shit. And if we did, it wouldn't be in front of the 7-Eleven. I go there for my Sunday paper.'"

Chapter One, pg 20

"We went out the door together and found Moon standing in the parking lot, watching my car burn. There were a bunch of cops with extinguishers working on it, but things didn't look too hopeful. A fire truck rolled down the street, lights flashing, and pulled through the chain-link gate.

'Hey, man,' Moon said to me. 'Real shame about your car. That's mad crazy, dude.'

'What happened?'

'I was sitting there on the bench waiting for you, and I saw Reefer walk by. You know Reefer? Well, anyway, Reefer just got out of the tank, and his brother was coming to pick him up. And Reefer said why didn't I come out to say hello to his brother. So I walked out with Reefer, and you know Reefer always has good weed, so one thing led to another, and I thought I'd just relax in your car for a minute and have a smoke. I guess a pod must have jumped, because the next thing your seat was on fire. And then it kind of spread from there. It was glorious until these gentlemen hosed it.'

Glorious. Uh. I wondered if Moon would think it was glorious if I choked him until he was dead."

Chapter Two, pg. 29

"Problem was, Munson was banging into me with what looked like a retired cop car, a Crown Victoria. Bigger than the Rollswagen. He came at me again, bouncing me back about fifteen feet, and the wind machine stalled. He scrambled out of his car while I was trying to restart, and ran at me with a tire iron. 'You want to see me jump through hoops,' he yelled. 'I'll show you jump through hoops.'

A pattern was emerging here. Ram somebody with your car, beat them with the tire iron. The Rolls engine caught, and I catapulted forward, barely missing him.

He swung the tire iron and caught my back fender. 'I hate you!' he yelled. 'You women



are all alike!""

Chapter 3 pg. 47

"No can do, Edna. Not that I wouldn't want to help you out, but being a bounty hunter takes a lot of special skills."

'I have skills,' Grandma said. 'I can shoot and cuss and I'm real nosy. And besides, I've got some rights. I've got a right to employment.' She gave Vinnie the squinty eye. 'I don't see where you got any old people working for you. That don't look like equal opportunity to me. You're discriminating against old people. I've got a mind to get the AARP after you.'

'The AARP is the American Association of Retired People,' Vinnie said. 'The 'R' stands for 'Retired.' They don't care about old people working.'"

'Okay,' Grandma adds, 'how about this? How about, if you don't give me a job I'll sit on that couch over there until I starve to death.'"

Chapter 4, pgs 62-63

"I sat there for a while, watching nothing happen. No action in Hannibal's house. No action in either of his neighbors' houses. Very boring. No one on the bike path. No dog walkers. No joggers. Too dark. this is why I love surveillance. Nothing ever happens. Then you have to go to the bathroom and you miss a double homicide."

Chapter 4, pg 70

"The front door opened and clicked shut. Ranger was gone. I padded to the door and looked out the peephole. No Ranger anywhere. I slid the security chain in place and went back to the couch. I fluffed up my pillow and crawled under the quilt.

And I thought about the kiss. What was I supposed to make of the kiss? Friendly, I told myself. It had been friendly. No tongue. No groping hands. No gnashing of teeth in uncontrollable passion. A friendly kiss. Only it hadn't felt friendly. It had felt...sexy.

Damn!"

Chapter 5, pg. 81

"No one looked especially happy at the reunion. Understandable, I guess considering the circumstances. Hannibal said something to the older man. The older man stiffened and smacked him on the side of the head. It wasn't a hard smack. Not something designed to knock a guy out. It was more of a statement. Fool. Still, I reflexively flinched. And even at this distance I could see Hannibal clamp his teeth together. "

Chapter 5, pgs 97-98

"Ranger snapped the table lamp off and stood. He was wearing a black T-shirt, black Gore-Tex windbreaker, and black cargo pants tucked into black boots, army style. The well-dressed urban commando. I could guarantee that any man facing him in a blind alley would have an empty scrotum, his most prized possessions gone north. And any woman would be licking dry lips and checking to make sure all her buttons were buttoned. He looked down at me, hands in pockets, his face barely visible in the dark room.

'Would you be willing to visit your ex and check out Cynthia Lotte?'

'Sure, Anything else?'



He smiled, and when he answered his voice was soft. 'Not with your grandmother in the next room.'

Eek.

Chapter 6, pgs 108-109

"Bob and I piled into Blue and rumbled down the street, past the Ramos house, one last time. When I paused at the corner, a man in his sixties jumped off the curb at me. He was wearing a running suit and running shoes. And he was waving his hands.

'Stop,' he said. 'Stop a minute.'

I could have sworn it was Alexander Ramos. No, that was ridiculous.

He trotted to the driver's side and rapped on my window.

'Have you got any cigarettes?' he asked.

'Gee...uh, no.'

He shoved a twenty at me. 'Drive me to the store for some cigarettes. It'll only take a minute.'

Thick accent. Same hawklike features. Same height and build. Really looked like Alexander Ramos."

Chapter 7, pg 134

"'You ruined my life,' he said. 'I did everything for you, and you ruined my life. You took everything. The house, the car, the furniture—'

'That's your ex-wife, you dope! Do I look like your ex-wife?'

'Sort of'

'Not at all!' Especially since his ex-wife was dead, with tire tracks up her back. 'How did you find me?'

'I followed you home one day. You're hard to miss in that Buick.'

'You don't actually think I'm your wife, do you?'

His mouth pulled back into a loopy grin. 'No, but if they think I'm really flipped out I can plead insanity. Poor distraught husband goes berserk. I've laid all the groundwork with you. Now all I have to do is carve you up and set you on fire, and I'm home free.'

'You're crazy!'

'See, it's working already.'"

Chapter 8, pg 146

"Lula gave Munson her junkyard-dog look. 'You don't haul your bony white carcass out of this car, I'm coming back there.'

'Fuck you,' Munson said. 'Fuck your fat ass.'

The cops all sucked in a breath and took a step backward.

'That does it,' Lula said. 'You put me in a bad mood now. You went and wrecked my good disposition. I'm gonna come back there and root you out like the little pencil-dick rodent you are.' She heaved herself out of the car and wrenched the back door open.

And Munson jumped out of the car."

Chapter 9, pg 161

"I was at Art's Carpets last week, contemplating a rug purchase. And you know how it the beginning you're thinking all the rugs are totally excellent, and then the more you



look at them, the more they all start looking the same. And before you know it you're like, rug hypnotized? And the next thing you know, you're taking a break, laying on the floor, chilling? And while I was laying there behind the rugs, I heard Homer come in. He went into the back room, got a rug, and left. And the rug dude, you know, the owner guy, and Homer were talking about how the rug was worth a million dollars, and Homer should be real careful with it. Far out, huh?"

Chapter 10, pgs 185-186

"If a member of the Ramos family was going to deal drugs, then North Jersey was going to deal guns. And nobody was happy about any of this because it meant boundaries would have to be redrawn. Everyone was feeling nervous. So nervous that it became known a contract was out on Homer Ramos."

Chapter 15, pg. 277

"Homer Ramos?"

'In the flesh.'

We both had guns drawn, standing about ten feet apart.

'Drop the gun.' I said.

He gave me a humorless smile. 'Make me.'

Great. 'Drop the gun, or I'm going to shoot you.'

'Okay, shoot me. Go ahead.'

I looked down at the Glock. It was a semiautomatic, and I owned a revolver. I had no idea how to shoot a semiautomatic. I knew I was supposed to slide something back. I pushed a button, and the clip fell out onto the carpet.

Homer Ramos burst out laughing.

I threw the Glock at him, hitting him in the forehead, and he fired at me before I had a chance to take off. The bullet grazed my upper arm and lodged in the wall behind me. I cried out and stumbled back, holding tight to the wound."

Chapter 15, pg 282

# Adaptations

In an abridged form, *Hot Six* has been adapted to an audio book format, read by Debi Mazar and produced by Audio Renaissance (2000).



## Key Questions

In *Hot Six*, Evanovich succeeds in using humor to analyze serious issues about identity in traditional patriarchal communities, the agreements between criminal organizations as unwritten laws for an underground government, and the inter-generational problem of changing sexual mores. By writing detective fiction, Evanovich adds manic humor by frustrating reader's expectations through a succession of spectacular slapstick episodes without sacrificing complexity of plot line. Through the series, the author has built up a hilarious supporting cast of characters and on-going subplots, all of which add to the reader's enjoyment and amusement. While it is tempting for readers simply to read the work as comic light entertainment, in doing so they might miss out on Evanovich's multifaceted appropriation and adaptation of the traditionally patriarchal, conservative, and sexist hard-boiled detective fiction genre.

1. Is the depiction of inept Pakistani hitman Habib racist? Why or why not?
2. How does the setting add to characterization? How would the work be changed if it were set in a large, anonymous city?
3. To what extent could Stephanie Plum be considered to be a feminist character?
4. Does the humor of *Hot Six* add to or detract from Evanovich's analysis of social concerns?
5. Consider the attitude of the police to Stephanie's interference in their investigations. Is Evanovich's depiction of the police investigation positive? Why or why not?
6. Discuss Evanovich's presentation of Grandma Mazur. As people live longer, more healthy lives, do you think that ageist views on appropriate behavior for elderly people will be a problem?
7. Do you agree with Evanovich's presentation of the mythologizing of gun culture in New Jersey? Do you think that opinions on gun ownership and use change from state to state?
8. Some critics have accused detective fiction of being simply formulaic and unchanging. Where do you see the originality in Evanovich's work?



## Topics for Discussion

What is the relationship between Stephanie and Joe Morelli? What obstacles do they run into in their relationship?

How does Stephanie feel about Ranger? Are the feelings mutual?

Why is Ranger in hiding? Why does he ask Stephanie to assist him, and how does he ask her to help?

What actually happened to Homer Ramos? How was Ranger involved?

Why does Morris Munson react so violently to Stephanie?

What are Mitchell and Habib looking for? What actually happened to the package they are looking for?

How does Lula help Stephanie? What is the relationship between Stephanie and Lula?



## Literary Precedents

In writing crime fiction in the first person, Evanovich places herself in a long tradition of American writers, of whom the most famous is probably Raymond Chandler. In Chandler's novels, his protagonist, the private eye Philip Marlowe, is a hard drinker, a loner, cynical about women and love, and very competent at his job. He always moves one step ahead of the police to bring the guilty to justice, and this is especially evident in *The Lady in the Lake* (1944). Part of the delight in reading Evanovich comes from her self-conscious sending up of this hard-boiled school of writing. When Marlowe is having difficulties, he turns to Old Forester whisky for comfort: when Stephanie finds herself in dire straits, she turns to Boston Creme doughnuts. Marlowe is a loner, a ghostly figure in the background, whose life is never complicated by personal relationships: Stephanie is constantly at the mercy of her hormones, relentlessly teased by both Morelli and Ranger, and frequently hindered when her family loyalties are called upon.

While a knowledge of the hard-boiled tradition of Hammett and Chandler allows the reader to see some of the ludicrous humor in Evanovich's work, there are more profitable comparisons to be made. In having a single, assertive, sexually active female protagonist, Evanovich could be compared with writers like Val McDermid and especially Sara Paretsky. In *Tunnel Vision* (1994), Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski is, like Stephanie, carrying out an investigation that is also being pursued by the police. The professional tensions caused by this are heightened by the fact that Warshawski is involved with Conrad Rawlings of the Chicago Police Department, and Warshawski's determination to complete her investigations increase the tensions on her relationship. Furthermore, as an investigator specializing in financial crime, Warshawski's investigation also explores the linkages between politics, business, and the supposed underworld of crime. However, there is an important contrast between the competent and controlled Warshawski and Evanovich's disaster-zone Stephanie, and the difference between Paretsky's dark, menacing works and Evanovich's humor.

Stephanie's shortfall in ability, compensated for by determination and intuition, and the complicated intersections between her professional and her personal life brings to mind Emma Victor, the protagonist in Mary Wings' books *She Came Too Late* (1987) and *She Came In A Flash* (1988). As in the Stephanie Plum novels, Wings' protagonist is a parody of the hard-boiled detective, played for humorous effect.





## Related Titles

Over the course of the six Stephanie Plum novels, it could be said that what has drawn readers is a certain lack of development: the reader knows to expect parody, slapstick humor, and a tangle of multiple plot lines when they pick up any Stephanie Plum novel. This is not to say that the novels are poorly constructed or repetitive: rather, this shows Evanovich's constant use of humor to explore serious issues and her gift for convoluted plots. Indeed, reading the books as a series deepens the reader's appreciation, as the ongoing romance of Stephanie and Joe Morelli, the sexual tension between Stephanie and Ranger, and the development of supporting characters like Lula all represent long-term plot developments. However, perhaps the most marked change is that of Grandma Mazur. Having initially appeared as a fairly traditional widow in *One for the Money*, she is now Dirty Harry in a red Corvette, looking for a job as a bounty hunter, and hungry for sex.

Finally, Evanovich's situation of her novels within the Burg has allowed her to create, over the course of the six novels, a cast of supporting characters increasingly fleshed out with individual histories. While *Hot Six* works perfectly well as a stand alone novel, it represents new developments in the plot lines that run through the series.



# Copyright Information

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