

If Tomorrow Comes Study Guide

If Tomorrow Comes by Sidney Sheldon

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Contents

If Tomorrow Comes Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-5.....	5
Chapters 6-10.....	7
Chapters 11-15.....	9
Chapters 16-20.....	11
Chapters 21-25.....	13
Chapters 26-30.....	15
Chapters 31-34.....	17
Characters.....	19
Objects/Places.....	22
Themes.....	24
Style.....	26
Quotes.....	28
Topics for Discussion.....	31



Plot Summary

This is a high-octane, sexy thriller that keeps the reader on tip-toe throughout, trying to guess what the next plot twist will be. It is the story of an average American woman, Tracy Whitney, who sets out to avenge her mother's suicide resulting from the loss of her business to con men and criminals in New Orleans. Against seemingly impossible odds, Tracy outwits these career criminals and one by one leads them to their own destruction through clever con games of her own. Her anger sated by these acts of revenge, Tracy is drawn subtly into another world of criminality peopled by hustlers, flim-flam artists, burglars and assorted other human parasites. She finds that she has a real gift for this line of work, and soon becomes one of the most wanted female criminals in the world—a one-woman crime wave who never does physical violence to anyone but who lives by outsmarting those who would capture or co-opt her. Tracy's satisfaction in executing high-risk, high-reward schemes grows exponentially until it is the central driving force, or addiction, of her life. Her relationships with men are largely superficial one-nighters; it seems she is incapable of truly loving anyone but herself.

Her first blunder, committed in exacting revenge on the crooks in New Orleans who drove her mother to suicide, lands her in a Louisiana prison. She goes to the Big Easy to find Joseph Romano, a known underworld mobster who bought her mother's company for a pittance, stole all its resources and drove her into bankruptcy. She goes to his house during Mardi Gras and charms her way inside. She then pulls a pistol and demands that he write a letter confessing his crimes. Romano pushes her down on the floor and tries to rape her. In the scuffle, the gun discharges and puts a bullet into Romano. Tracy flees to the airport, leaving Romano gasping in a pool of blood on the floor. She is arrested at the airport by a couple of plain clothed officers and taken to jail. Soon, she is incarcerated in prison where she becomes the object of desire and competition among prison bull dykes. While in prison, she adds four more names to her revenge list in addition to Joe Romano, who survives the shooting.

Pregnant, Tracy tries to reach her fiancée, Charles Stanhope, in Philadelphia by phone. When she finally gets him on the line, he shuns her because of the press coverage of her shooting, without listening to her explanation of circumstances. He also tells her she is on her own with their child and hangs up. Subsequently, Tracy miscarries their child while in prison. She is visited in prison by Daniel Cooper, an adjustor for the insurance company that insured a painting belonging to Romano—a painting that was stolen around the time of the shooting. Tracy has been charged also with theft, but Cooper's report says he believes her to be innocent of the art theft. They form a relationship that is partly romantic, partly collaborative and finally competitive in the field of high-stakes swindles.

As a prisoner, Tracy is impeccable to the extent that she is invited as a trusty to work as day nanny for the warden's daughter, Amy. She returns each night to her prison cell, but soon she hatches an escape plan. One afternoon, while watching Amy play near a lake, Tracy sees the child fall from a wall into the water. Panic-stricken, Tracy takes off at full sprint speed and dives into the lake to save her. She remembers as the cold waters



cover her head that she can't swim either. Impressed with her heroism, the governor of Louisiana gives her a full pardon and releases her from prison just before the bull dykes can accost her.

Tracy goes to live at the home of a black former cellmate, Ernestine Littlechap. One by one, Tracy devises schemes for her list of five to cause their own downfalls by their particular character defects. Together they gleefully check the names off the list when these enemies have died. Unable to find a job as a computer expert because of her arrest record, Tracy steals valuable jewelry from the wealthy, executes complex financial scams, rigs games of chance and becomes a protean impersonator with a plethora of wigs, dresses, accents and improvised biographical details. The stakes get higher with each heist, and vastly more complex. She learns how to betray an associate without batting an eye. Divorced from Stanhope, Tracy dallies again with Cooper until they both surrender to love, and by the end of the story they have both renounced their lives of crime and have become engaged.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary

Tracy Whitney's upper middle-class life in Philadelphia is suddenly interrupted by a phone call from her desperate mother in New Orleans, who is facing financial ruin because a flimflam artist has essentially robbed the company her late husband left her for her financial security. Although her mother doesn't speak to Tracy of her dilemma, she holds a pistol to her head during the conversation which ends with her telling Tracy how much she loves her. After she hangs up, Dolores Whitney pulls the trigger. Pregnant with the child of Charles Stanhope, her wealthy fiancée, Tracy is on top of the world although she wonders if she'll ever be able to warm to his cold, snobbish parents. The next day, Tracy receives a call at work from the New Orleans police telling her of her mother's suicide. Tracy arrives in New Orleans during Mardi Gras and learns of the devious way that mobster Joe Romano destroyed her mother's life; she seeks revenge on him and his criminal cabal.

Tracy goes to Romano's mansion with a pistol in her pocket to demand that he sign a paper admitting his fraudulent activities that led the company into bankruptcy. He refuses and tries to rape Tracy, whereupon the pistol fires during a scuffle. Romano hits the floor in a pool of blood. Tracy flees to the airport to make a quick getaway but is arrested by two plain-clothed police before boarding her plane. She later finds that Romano is still alive, after she is taken to jail and charged with attempted murder and the unrelated theft of a valuable painting from Romano's home. Tracy hopes that Charles will use his money and power to free her on bail; instead he shuns her for fear that her arrest may bring infamy to his family name in Philadelphia.

A willowy and beautiful young woman, Tracy becomes the sexual fetish of several bull dykes in prison. The stress causes her to miscarry her child. Tracy is raped on one of her first nights by some of her cellmates, but becomes friends with a black cellmate named Ernestine Littlechap. Ernestine protects Tracy from the other sexual predators but when she is due to be released on parole, Tracy seizes the moment to plan her escape.

After an aborted attempt to run away from her trusty job, Tracy is returned to prison where she once again faces the prospect of sexual assault.

Chapters 1-5 Analysis

With what seems like cruel harshness, Tracy Whitney is in a single phone call thrust into the criminal underworld of New Orleans from her comfortable perch as the fiancée of a wealthy Philadelphian. When she returns to New Orleans to deal with her widowed mother's suicide, the details of her secret life are shocking and outrageous. In an instant, Tracy is transformed from a socialite to an armed woman bent on revenge.



Unaware of the web of corruption into which she has thrust herself, she tries to extract a statement at gunpoint from one of the mobsters implicated in her mother's death. The gun accidentally fires and she flees, believing that she has murdered Joe Romano. What she doesn't know is that the mob, the district attorney and even a judge are all part of the same web of evil. With scarcely a chance to enter a plea, she finds herself in the Louisiana Penitentiary for Women.

In this instance, innocence on Tracy's part is anything but bliss. It is her guileless innocence that leads her to New Orleans and gives her permission to take the law into her own hands. Still innocent, she learns in prison that the world is filled with characters who are anything but innocent. She also awakens to the fact that her fiancée is not the man she thought he was, but rather a gutless coward who would rather abandon her than allow a blot on his family name because of arrest and imprisonment. Once she sheds her innocence, Tracy becomes obsessed with mastering the world around her to meet her own needs rather than relying on others. Her transition from innocence to experience is also a journey from being a victim to becoming an offensive player in the game of life. She vows that she will never allow the world to victimize her again.



Chapters 6-10

Chapters 6-10 Summary

Tracy is led into the cell that she will share with three other women. She befriends a black cellmate, Ernestine Lirttlechap, who she learns is the real power broker among the prisoners. At suppertime, Tracy doesn't want to go to mess because she's not hungry. But Ernestine tells her she must go or face punishment by the prison guards. Afterwards, undressing for bed, the other women remark on her beautiful body and all she can think about is her child. All night, Tracy finds it impossible to sleep because she is fearful of an attack by the other women. Finally at 3 am. she dozes off and awakens suddenly to find that she is, in fact, the victim of a gang assault and rape. Afterwards, she goes to the infirmary where she is treated for her cuts and bruises and where she miscarries her child.

After the miscarriage, a very weakened Tracy is put into solitary confinement for her own protection. As she heals in the dank, dark cell she decides to strengthen herself physically and mentally so she will not be broken by imprisonment, and so that she can escape when the opportunity comes. She engages in daily practice of t'ai chi to improve her muscle strength and performs complicated math problems in her head to remain mentally agile. When a guard comes to remove her, he is surprised at Tracy's fitness as she springs to her feet and walks without hesitation. She is taken before Warden Pennington, who offers her a different cell with different cellmates, but she insists on returning to her previous cell because she wants Ernestine's help in breaking out. Tracy smuggles a piece of metal into the cell, and when the lesbians attack her that night she pummels them until they are bloody and screaming. Ernestine commands them to leave her alone.

Daniel Cooper, an agent for the insurance company responsible to pay damages to Joe Romano for his allegedly stolen painting, visits Tracy and says he believes that she had nothing to do with the painting, that she was framed by someone else. Cooper returns to his office and prepares a report that emphasizes her innocence. Meanwhile, in the women's prison Big Bertha jumps on Tracy in the yard, trying to rape her, but Ernestine comes to her defense pulling her off Tracy and beating her senseless with her fists.

When Warden Pennington's trusty housekeeper is released from prison, he asks Tracy if she wants the position, Tracy accepts because she hopes to gain an opportunity to escape. Ernestine tells her there have been 12 escape attempts at the prison; 10 prisoners were captured and returned, two were shot to death. In her new job, Tracy studies ways to escape as the warden's daughter, Amy, grows increasingly affectionate toward her. Tracy rebuffs her affections.



Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Tracy's hardening becomes apparent when she is made a prison trusty and allowed to leave her cell each day to care for the warden's 12-year-old daughter. The adolescent girl, deprived of a warm relationship with her narcissistic mother, becomes attached to Tracy. But Tracy rejects her attempts to form a relationship, perhaps as a defense against the traumas she's recently experienced. Tracy learns how to stifle her feelings, in no small part because of her abandonment by her fiancée and by the predatory behavior of prison bull dykes who want her sexual favors. She becomes a woman who tries to outrun her fate. In the dark night of her soul locked in solitary confinement, Tracy discovers her inner strength and determination not to be broken. She uses her anger and sense of having been abused to grow stronger. Through self-discipline and the repetition of t'ai chi exercises, Tracy strengthens her body while using math problems to discipline her mind. As a side-effect, Tracy develops an extraordinary degree of self will that helps her to overcome her circumstances but that eventually becomes a shield against emotional intimacy. This shield enables her to conduct a series of high-risk jewelry thefts but becomes problematic when she wants to draw closer to Jeff Stevens, a fellow traveler in the world of high society jewelry theft.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary

While walking with Amy on the grounds surrounding a lake near the warden's house, Tracy takes advantage of an unguarded moment to attempt her escape. She starts to run as fast as she possibly can, but realizes that Amy has fallen into the lake and is drowning. She turns back and jumps into the water to rescue her, although Tracy can't swim either. She manages to get them both to safety. Tracy is pardoned by the governor for her heroism in saving the child, and released from prison. She returns to New Orleans where she poses as a brainless secretary to Joe Romano to convince a lascivious bank clerk to issue her checks on Romano's account. She tells him she will drop by the bank in a couple of days to pick them up and tells him not to mail them to Romano's office.

When she gets the checks, she pulls out the blank deposit slips and leaves them on the countertops so that customers will use them, unknowingly making deposits to Romano's account. She then discards the checks. She goes to a travel agency and secures a one-way ticket to Rio de Janeiro for Joseph Romano, and asks that it be delivered to Romano's office. The next day, Anthony Orsatti visits Romano in his office. Orsatti, the head of the New Orleans mob, has been like a father to Romano. While they chat, Romano's secretary buzzes to tell him a messenger has arrived with his ticket to Rio. He tells her to call the travel agency and tell them they've made a mistake. Then a set of expensive new luggage with Romano's initials is delivered, and Orsatti begins to take notice. He tells Romano to call his bank and check his balance while he listens on the extension; Orsatti is shocked to hear that Romano has more than \$300,000. His mood becomes frosty, suspicious. Then Romano gets a call from a hotel in Rio confirming his reservation. "It's your reservation, Joe," Orsatti says. "You won't be needing it, will you?"

On a sweltering hot New Orleans day, two men dressed as workmen disconnect the electrical wires to the air conditioning in the home of Perry Pope, one of the criminals who conspired to rob Tracy's mother. After about a half-hour, they appear at the front door and say they've come to fix the air conditioning. Meanwhile, the house has become an oven and Pope's servant is nearly hysterical because this is the night when Pope, Orsatti and other underworld figures meet each week for poker. Relieved, he lets them inside and they go to the attic to check on "the condenser." In the attic they unpack their bags and drill a small hole in the ceiling directly above the poker table, and install a wooden tube. They also release two hamsters that have been injected with amphetamines and leave a pair of binoculars. They tell the servant the air conditioning is fixed and will come on in a minute or two. They leave, reconnect the outside electrical cables, and leave. That night, during the poker game, Pope hears scurrying overhead. He looks up to see a hole in the ceiling. He runs to the attic accompanied by Orsatti, and discovers the peephole. Orsatti picks up the binoculars and realizes he can see the entire poker table. Pope screams he knows nothing about the spy apparatus, but Orsatti pats him on the arm and says in a gruff, low voice: "Don't worry about it."



The next person on Tracy's revenge list is Judge Henry Lawrence, a fellow traveler with the Mafia who had been promoted into his position by the Orsatti organization. Judge Lawrence is also one of the group that plotted her mother's downfall. Disguising her voice, Tracy calls the judge's office and tells his secretary that her organization, the American Trial Lawyers' Association, has picked Lawrence as man of the year and would like him to speak at their annual meeting. The secretary says Lawrence is in Moscow, and Tracy asks whether he might be able to tape some kind of message for the conference. She tells Tracy where Judge Lawrence is staying in Moscow. Tracy then arranges to have several cables sent to him at his hotel which are intercepted by the KGB and interpreted as spy messages. They arrest Judge Lawrence for espionage, put him on trial and sentence him to 14 years of hard labor in Siberia. Tracy orders a funeral wreath from a local florist to be delivered to Orsatti with a card reading, "Rest in peace, from Doris Whitney's daughter."

Tracy bids farewell to her New Orleans hosts, Ernestine and her husband, and returns to Philadelphia to get revenge on Charles Stanhope, her former fiancée. Running out of money, Tracy stops at a jewelry store to seek a job. She meets Conrad Morgan, who has a reputation for helping people just released from prison. He tells Tracy he will pay her \$25,000 to steal some jewelry from one of his wealthy customers for him. Morgan says he cuts up larger stones and puts them in new jewelry pieces before selling them. Incensed, Tracy refuses him and walks out. He tells her to reconsider as she leaves. After a few days of fruitless job searching, Tracy returns to Morgan and takes his offer. He tells her when, where and how to break into the victim's home. She is to take a train from New York to St Louis and meet him there for the hand-off.

Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Tracy still has a warm heart despite her tough exterior, as evidenced by her rescue of Amy when she falls into the lake. Running for her getaway, Tracy can't leave the 12-year-old to drown. In the process, her escape attempt is aborted. But, as if to prove the axiom, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," Tracy is rewarded by the governor with a pardon for her heroic rescue. Then she methodically goes down her grudge list of people who harmed her mother to seek revenge. Through an extremely clever ruse, she sets Romano up for disapproval, or worse, with the local Mafia chieftan Anthony Orsatti. She then sets up Perry Pope, another of the mobsters, with a showdown also involving Orsatti. In a final flourish, she finds a way to dispose of a corrupt judge who is part of the mob circle. These capers show Tracy's intelligence and creativity. Although she wouldn't like to hear it, the truth is that Tracy displays real gifts for deception, manipulation, subversion and revenge—the necessary ingredients for a professional crook. And she finds just the opportunity to exercise her talents when she meets Conrad Morgan, who operates a jewelry store as a front to sell the jewels he steals from his customers. The reader may ask, how crooked can a person get? The answer, in later chapters, is very, very crooked.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

Wearing a wig and carrying false identification papers as Ellen Branch, Tracy does as directed by Conrad Morgan and drives to the Long Island home of Lois Bellamy for the burglary. She follows his maps and instructions, avoiding all the alarm systems until inside the house. As she opens the safe, an alarm goes off and soon the Sea Cliff police arrive. Tracy convinces them she is a house guest of Lois Bellamy and has mistakenly triggered the alarm. The police turn the alarm off, apologize, and leave. Tracy then pockets the diamonds and drives back to Manhattan where she boards an Amtrak train for St. Louis. She locks her compartment door and inventories the haul: three diamond rings, a sapphire bracelet, an emerald pin, two necklaces and three pairs of earrings.

A knock on the door reveals two men in gray suits who say they are FBI agents. Tracy lets them into the compartment and they call her by name, demanding that she produce the stolen gems as "evidence" in the case. One of the men finds the chamois bag containing the jewelry in Tracy's suitcase and they nod solemnly to themselves. They tell her she's not to leave her compartment until the next stop, when they will all leave the train and ride in an FBI car as she's taken into custody for formal charges.

At the next stop, no one comes to her compartment and Tracy wonders where the men are. The conductor gives the "all aboard" call just before the train departs. Tracy jumps off the train and, seeing the two men nowhere, gets a cab to try and intercept them at the airport. She finds them standing in a boarding line and demands the jewels. They resist, and she shouts for help from a security officer. When he comes running, Tracy says everything's OK because the men have found her missing jewelry and are returning it. The men produce the bag and hand it over to Tracy, then fly away empty-handed. When Tracy gets to New York, she confronts Morgan about the jewelry and the two men in St. Louis whom he hired to take the gems from her. She demands \$50,000 payment "because I had to steal them twice." She gets the \$50,000 payment and gives Morgan the key to a locker in Penn Station that contains the contraband.

Daniel Cooper meets with the insurance agency that has a policy on the stolen jewelry of Lois Bellamy. The insurance men don't like Cooper because he is a cold, calculating sort but they tolerate him because he is so good at catching criminals. The conference becomes windy, as most such meetings do, and Cooper grows impatient. He tells the men in suits that he knows who the perpetrator is. Cooper explains his reasoning: the criminal probably rented a car and drove to the Bellamy house, then drove off and returned the car. He tells the group that he visited rental car agencies and found one matching the police description that had 64 miles—the round trip distance to Sea Cliff. The rental agreement is in the name of Ellen Branch, Tracy Whitney's alias; Cooper had the document fingerprinted and the prints matched those of Tracy Whitney. The insurance men realize they can't bring any charges against Whitney for lack of evidence, but Cooper promises to catch her the next time.



Tracy celebrates her ill-gotten gains by renting a room in a posh New York hotel with a sweeping view of the city. As she sips champagne and watches TV, she decides to take a cruise ship to London. The next day she buys tickets on the Queen Elizabeth II; she spends the next several days buying new clothes and luggage for her voyage. As she boards the ship, she passes an impromptu news conference at the foot of the gangplank for the Romanian Pietr Negulesco and the Russian Boris Melnikov, world chess masters who will face off in a summit match aboard ship. Later, as Tracy has dinner alone, a man sits down at her table and says hello. She recognizes him at once as Jeff Stevens, one of the bogus FBI men who tried to steal her jewelry in St. Louis. He tries to excuse himself for his behavior, but Tracy tells him to get lost. Before he leaves, he mentions that Maximilian Pierpont, one of the world's wealthiest men, is aboard and that he'd like her to join with him in a scheme to take some of that wealth. Once again, Tracy tells him to buzz off. The next night she encounters him once again, walking the deck. He tells Tracy that Pierpont decided at the last minute to cancel his trip but that there is an easy way to collect "a small fortune" involving the upcoming chess match. Again, she blows him off. The next day, Tracy is knocked off her feet by a jogging Boris Melnikov; later that night she runs into Pietr Negulesco in the bar and he makes a crude pass at her. She leaves in search of Jeff Stevens, and finds him dining with a gorgeous blonde.

Jeff explains his scheme is to get Tracy to challenge the two chess players to a match; she will play them both and 10-to-one odds bets will be taken on the outcome. Jeff tells Tracy not to worry because she can't play chess. Both European players agree to the match, after Tracy agrees to Jeff's proposal. Both men are placed in separate, curtained rooms and Tracy goes between them to make her moves on each board. She merely copies the move of one player then repeats it on the board of the other player, so the two men are essentially playing against each other. After six hours of play, the two Slavic players declare a draw and Tracy wins, with all the money placed in bets—roughly \$200,000.

Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Tracy the con artist and swindler herself gets taken by a couple of grifters on the train from New York to St. Louis, and the jewels she's stolen from one of Morgan's customers get stolen from her. She recovers the gems, returns them to Morgan and demands twice the amount he offered her, or \$50,000, because she had to steal the jewels twice. At this point, Daniel Cooper, the wizened insurance adjuster, sets his sights on finding Tracy because he believes she stole the jewels from one of the policy holders with the insurance company that's hired him. At this point, Cooper's beagle-like pursuit of Tracy takes on sexual overtones. He has sexual fantasies about apprehending and seducing the beautiful young woman. When she boards a cruise ship for Europe, Tracy encounters Jeff Stevens, one of the two con artists who relieved her of the jewels. He tempts her into a bogus chess tournament wherein she collects some \$200,000 in bets. By this time, her anger at Jeff for taking advantage of her on the train starts to melt into a kind of admiration for his cleverness. Her professional jealousy also is tinged with a romantic fascination.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

In London, Tracy meets Gunther Hartog who describes himself as a friend of Conrad Morgan. Hartog says Morgan has suggested they might be able to work together for some jewelry heists from Hartog's wealthy clients. Tracy flatly refuses, but Hartog persists and asks her to come to his country estate for a weekend getaway. Amid the party atmosphere, Tracy is introduced to the wealthy Europeans, and briefly does a mime of a nouveau riche Texan that Gunther says she can use to enact an elaborate scam. Posing as the Texan wife of a wealthy man identified as P.J. Benecke, Tracy goes into a jewelry store and asks to see the \$100,000 in emeralds that P.J. wants to give her for a birthday present. She writes a check for \$100,000 and the jeweler promises to deliver the stone the next day to her hotel suite. The check clears the bank and the stone arrives, but later that day Mary Lou Benecke is back at the jewelry store to return the stone because, she says, her husband wants her to have two emeralds of comparable size and beauty. She says he's willing to pay up to \$350,000 for a second stone, if the jeweler can find one.

The jeweler, Gregory Halston, calculates that if he can find such a stone for \$100,000, then he could pocket the \$250,000 difference. Frantically, he searches through London jewelry outlets for a match to the emerald. At his wit's end, he receives a call from a Contessa Marissa, who says she's calling in response to Halston's advertisement and has a family heirloom emerald she wants to sell. Halston hurries to the hotel where Tracy, posing as the Contessa, shows him the emerald. He gets very excited because it resembles the first stone (which it is). They haggle the price to \$250,000 and he writes her a check for that amount and leaves with the emerald. When he calls "Mary Lou Benecke" he learns that she has checked out of the hotel; then he calls "Contessa Marissa" at her hotel and finds she's also checked out. He then realizes he's been swindled out of \$150,000.

At Gunther's suggestion, Tracy boards the Orient Express for Istanbul in search of more jewelry. She meets the Italian film director Alberto Fornati and his voluptuous actress wife Silvana Luadi in the dining car. She's heard that the philandering Italian buys his wife jewelry every time he has an affair, and Silvana is heavily bedecked with gems. After her husband knocks gravy onto her dress, Silvana departs for her cabin. Fornati makes a pass at Tracy, she plays the coquette and asks what compartment he occupies. She also agrees to meet him later in Venice. That night, while the Italians are sound asleep, Tracy picks the lock on their door and makes off with all of Silvana's jewelry. A search of every passenger and every compartment the next morning turns up no jewelry. In Venice, Tracy gets off the train first and has her baggage taken to the airport, where she boards a plane for London with Silvana Luadi's jewels. At INTERPOL, the international police agency outside Paris, Daniel Cooper is called in as a consultant on the Fornati jewelry caper. He asks whether anyone inspected Mrs. Fornati's bags; the reply is the police saw no need to inspect the victim's bags. Cooper



says the thief obviously hid the jewels in the bottom of Mrs. Fornati's suitcase and switched bags at the train station.

With Gunther's help, Tracy buys a fashionable home in London, makes friends in the right social circles and donates to the correct charities. With hoards of cash stashed in bank accounts all over Europe, she seems to have her future secured. Meanwhile, Cooper is assigned the investigation into a string of robberies, burglaries and swindles attributed to a gang in Europe. As he pores over police reports, he realizes that the "gang" is none other than Tracy Whitney. With the help of a local burglar, Tracy breaks into the estate Chateau de Matigny at Cap d'Antibes to haul away a large collection of jewelry from a safe surrounded by laser beam alarms and Dobermans. The pair toss the jewels into a van and get away before the police arrive.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

Tracy's next train robbery involves faking out the wealthy and lecherous Italian film director Alberto Fornati. Aboard the Orient Express, he asks if she will meet him for a tryst in Venice; she leads him on by asking him his compartment number, and he gives it to her. That night she slips into the compartment and steals his wife's jewelry box. Tracy continues to develop as a criminal with finesse. She's learned to combine her feminine wiles and seduction to hoodwink a wealthy man whose male ego is larger than his brain, and she is becoming gradually more daring as she tackles more perilous heists with bigger potential rewards. And she can do this while giving the slip to Cooper, whose desire for her has practically made him foam at the mouth. After buying herself an expensive home in London, Tracy heads for France and the greatest jewel burglary in her career. She is aided and abetted by an experienced French burglar, and they make off with a huge amount of precious stones. With so many successes, Tracy not only becomes wealthier but more confident and the addictive features of criminal behavior become evident. She doesn't really need the money, but she needs the high she gets from being an outlaw.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary

Staying at an historic and expensive hotel in Biarritz on the coast of France under the name of Baroness Marguerite de Chantilly, Tracy Whitney is approached by a man at dinner who says he's got an accurate map that shows where a shipwreck lies that contains gold bullion. Professor Adolf Zuckerman says he is a school teacher who doesn't have the \$100,000 he needs to pay for the retrieval of the gold worth \$50 million. Tracy offers to provide him the \$100,000 for an equal share in the treasure. Zuckerman works for an underworld figure named Armand Grangier; the co-conspirators intend to tell Tracy that the salvage ship has had an accident and they need another \$100,000, and they plan to continue the con as long as possible. The hardened Grangier realizes that Tracy is also a con artist and decides to visit her hotel suite. When he comes to her hotel room, he discovers a small printing press in the adjoining suite and several wet \$100 bills hanging on a line to dry.

Grangier confronts Tracy with his suspicion that she intended to pay the \$100,000 in counterfeit money. She tells Grangier that the excellent engraver who made the dyes for the money has a larger press in Switzerland that can produce more money, and faster, than the small press. Tracy says he would sell Grangier the press for \$500,000. Before he pays for the press, Grangier has Zuckerman take some of the bills to a bank and ask for change. Zuckerman returns with the correct change: the bills aroused no suspicion. So he raises the \$500,000 in cash and gives it to Tracy to purchase the press, but tells her she will be under house arrest until she leaves. Tracy, watched by Zuckerman goes back to her hotel for some clothes and slips into disguise as an elderly nurse. She flees with the \$500,000 and the crooks realize that she's conned them by using real \$100 bills to make them think the defunct printing press actually produced them.

Followed by a bevy of local detectives and Daniel Cooper, Tracy goes to Majorca to meet Gunther Hartog. The detectives and Cooper follow her around for a few days and she goes to all the usual tourist destinations and restaurants without overtly arousing suspicion. Cooper insists she is there to plan a crime. At a deep cave frequented by hordes of tourists, Tracy slips away from her pursuers and finds Gunther in a spot where they can talk. He tells her that a wealthy client wants a Goya painting from the Prado Art Museum in Madrid, and is willing to pay half a million dollars. Tracy checks into a hotel in Madrid opposite the Prado, so she can scan the location. Jeff Stevens calls her room and speaks in Spanish until she recognizes his voice. He invites her to dinner; they pass the stealthy Daniel Cooper and two detectives spying on them in the hotel lobby. They spend the next several days together, visiting tourists spots and having dinner together. Their mutual attraction becomes obvious but Tracy fends Jeff away each evening when he tries to come inside.

Tracy goes to the Prado and looks around, followed by Cooper and his sidekicks. She stops and lingers over Goya's "Puerto" studying its every detail. Cooper tells the Madrid



police that Tracy is planning to steal a painting from the museum. The police chief says there is no criminal activity and he's calling off the investigation. Cooper asks if he can continue on his own; the chief approves. Through Gunther, Tracy contacts a skilled burglar, Cesar Porretta, who can assist her in the heist. Porretta gets permission to set up an easel in the museum to paint a copy of the painting that hangs next to the "Puerto." A large crowd of museum-goers causes a crush in nearby part of the museum where a different artist is copying another Goya painting. Tracy steps on the artist's paints, smearing them everywhere, then falls down causing a panic. During the turmoil, Porretta applies a fast-drying paint over the Goya signature and affixes the forged signature of Lucas—a contemporary of Goya.

Next, he paints over the Lucas signature and executes a credible Goya signature. An art expert visits the museum and declares the painting a fake. Upon discovery of Lucas' name during testing, the museum is eager to sell the clever fake as quickly as possible. The art critic, Rendell, offers the museum \$50,000 for the painting and gives them a check in that amount for the actual Goya masterpiece, worth millions. Rendell carries the painting to an apartment where Tracy and Porretta wait. Tracy gives both men envelopes stuffed with cash, and arranges for a messenger to collect the painting and bring it to her hotel room. She leaves Porretta in charge of the painting when she leaves. When the messenger comes to her room, Tracy calls Porretta to tell him the messenger is on his way. Porretta shrieks that the messenger has already come and taken the painting. Tracy then realizes that Jeff has gotten there first and outwitted her.

Chapters 26-30 Analysis

In Biarritz, Tracy outwits a con man whom she in turn cons into believing that a small printing press can produce absolutely perfect counterfeit currency. For this, she sells the bogus press to underworld boss Armand Grangier for \$500,000. Working on commission for notorious art counterfeiter Gunther Hartog, Tracy pulls off a spectacular theft of a Goya painting from the Prado Museum in Madrid. But when she tries to sell it to Hartog, she learns that Jeff Stevens has already stolen the painting from her and sold it to Hartog. Furious, she determines to get her fee from Hartog. The reader sees how Tracy's confidence has put her in a league with some of the toughest and smartest criminals in the world; furthermore, she is hardly intimidated by anyone and can advocate for what she thinks is right. This is basically the same behavior pattern that started with her revenge on her mother's tormentors. Tracy has modified this pattern and adapted it to the criminal world, but she is still possessed of a strong sense of "justice."



Chapters 31-34

Chapters 31-34 Summary

In Gunther's Paris office, Tracy has a confrontation with him over who should be paid for the Goya painting — Jeff Stevens or herself. Tracy says, "I got there first. He got there last." But Gunther reminds her that it was Jeff who delivered the Goya painting to his client, and thus he is entitled to the payment. To her surprise and disgust, Jeff Stevens enters the office and Tracy turns to leave. Gunther asks her to hear the plan to steal \$4 million worth of De Beers diamonds on a shipment from Paris to Amsterdam. Gunther is offering \$1 million for the diamonds; they need someone to fit inside a shipping container to take the bag of diamonds and replace it with a dummy bag. Tracy storms off angrily. But she relents and finally meets with Gunther, Jeff and Ramon Vauban, an Air France cargo dispatcher who is crucial to the success of the heist. Their plan is to put Tracy inside one of the containers next to the other container with the diamonds. She is to slip from one container to the other to switch the jewelry bags, and then stay inside the crate for one hour as it is shipped out of the country.

Tracy returns to her hotel and has a bowl of soup for dinner; she is exhausted and preoccupied with tomorrow's caper. Watching her from a far corner of the hotel café is Daniel Cooper. Early the next morning, Tracy slips out of the hotel and away from Cooper to get a ride in a gray Renault to a shop operated by Vauban's brother. She exits and follows a middle aged man to a warehouse where she is told to get inside a shipping container with furniture and other objects. Tracy feels slightly nauseous but squeezes in nevertheless. He gives her a knife, a coil of rope, a flashlight and a small jewel box that will be exchanged for the diamond jewel box. She survives the bumpy ride to the airport in the back of a truck. At the last second, the truck rolls up to the Air France cargo plane and is whisked aboard. As the plane descends from its flight, Tracy works feverishly to cut her way out of her container, open the other container, switch the jewel bags and then return to her first hiding place.

Inside the hot container, Tracy hallucinates then passes out. She comes to when the crate is opened inside another warehouse, and sees Jeff smiling at her. She hands him the jewel bag, then passes into a kind of delirium. Jeff wraps her in a blanket and takes her to his car. The he drives to Alkmaar, a resort village on the north coast of Holland, where he rents a room under the pretense they are newlyweds. He tries to bring down her temperature with wet sheets, then sleeps close to her bed so he can monitor her fitful breathing. In the morning, Tracy is still covered with perspiration. He removes her bedsheets and gets some clean sheets from housekeeping, Then he crushes some aspirin tablets and feeds them into her mouth, washing them down with spoons of water. Exhausted, Jeff falls asleep and later Tracy awakens, confused about where she is and puzzled to see Jeff in the room.

Jeff stays by her side, buys her new clothes, walks around the village with her and nurses her back to health. On the night before they are to part, they fall into each others'



arms and Jeff asks her to marry him and she joyously accepts. They decide to quit their lives of crime and go straight; they call Gunther and tell him the news. He's disappointed because of an opportunity for another big heist. Tracy and Jeff go to Amsterdam and stay in a hotel, making all the tourist rounds in the city. David Cooper trails them and convinces the Dutch police the couple is planning another caper. While they are at dinner, the police bug their room. Once again, the police tell Cooper they cannot arrest either of them without proof of some illegal activity.

A large shipment of gold is due in Amsterdam, and Cooper is convinced that is what Jeff and Tracy will try to steal. In fact, they use this shipment as a decoy. Jeff has a delivery truck painted the same color as the trucks used by the security firm that will transport the gold, and they discuss how to intercept the shipment while in their bedroom. On the day of the delivery, however, the cops move in and find there is no Tracy and no Jeff; they have been duped. Meanwhile, Jeff and Tracy pull off the theft of a rare \$10 million diamond and flee to Brazil on separate planes. They plan to reunite there, be married, and finally say goodbye forever to crime. As Tracy settles into her airline seat, the man next to her introduces himself as Maximilian Pierpont.

Chapters 31-34 Analysis

In one triumphant heist, Tracy becomes a player in a drama orchestrated by Hartog that involves stealing a pouch of valuable jewels from a shipping container aboard an airliner flying from Paris to Amsterdam. The payday is worth \$1 million, to be divided between Tracy, Jeff and an airline cargo official. Because of the change in cabin pressure and variations in heat during the flight, Tracy becomes faint and passes out. Jeff takes her home, puts her under damp sheets and tries to cool her. When she awakens, she finds Jeff asleep beside her bed. He nurses her back to health and they become lovers. In what both Jeff and Tracy decide will be their last theft, the couple steal a diamond worth \$10 million and escape to Brazil. Temporarily sated, the two addicts/lovers make plans to get married once reunited in Brazil. But on the way, Tracy is presented with another opportunity to steal a fortune. The reader can practically see her salivating as she ponders whether to betray Jeff and to return to crime. As is the case with most untreated addicts, the chances are good that she will relapse. The author leaves this dilemma for the reader to sort out.



Characters

Tracy Whitney

In Tracy Whitney, the author has created a politically correct young woman who is smart, sometimes conniving, self-possessed, independent and tough. At the same time, Tracy shows little feminine warmth and human compassion. She is, after all, an idealist whose life has been thrown out of kilter by the tragic suicide of her mother and by the abandonment or disinterest of those she considered close friends. Early on, Tracy knows that her best friend is herself. Tracy is an interesting character because she essentially undergoes no change throughout the story and seemingly becomes trapped in her life of crime once she's settled the score with the New Orleans thugs who caused her mother's suicide. Tracy's criminal behavior is addictive; it progressively overtakes her life although she would like to stop and causes an essentially decent person to commit a string of increasingly risky crimes. Her tendency to escalate the level of risk involved in her activities may be a cry for help, a way of seeking outside intervention. It is only after she has pledged to quit her life of crime that she can enter into a meaningful relationship with Jeff Stevens.

Joe Romano

Joe Romano is a lieutenant to Anthony Orsatti in the pecking order of the New Orleans Mafia. Romano is hand-picked by Orsatti and groomed for his position, and owes everything to his mentor. An unimaginative mobster, Romano is the enforcer who carries out Orsatti's will in all of the criminal activities of the mob—such as real estate and business swindles of the type that involve Tracy Whitney's mother. Romano is also involved in the theft and counterfeiting of priceless works of art. He lives a fast life as an ostensibly successful businessman to cover his criminal activities. Romano is a man without a conscience, a classic psychopath without real feelings for other people. Tracy seeks revenge on him by planting a suspicion in the mind of Orsatti that Romano is ripping him off behind his back. Without going into details, the author strongly suggests that Romano's days are numbered once Orsatti decides he is disloyal.

Big Bertha

Big Bertha is the bull dyke in the Louisiana prison for women where Tracy is sentenced following her conviction for shooting Joe Romano. Big Bertha not only rules the prisoners and has her pick of which woman to take as her lesbian bride, but also tells the guards what to do and when to do it. She is bigger than most men, more audacious, more ferocious in her sexual appetites, and more violent. The other women prisoners live in fear of her. When Tracy Whitney shows up in the prisoner population, Big Bertha sets her sights on her and pursues Tracy. It seems only a matter of time before the huge woman hurls herself at Tracy, which makes Tracy plan feverishly for her own escape. All



of her schemes become unnecessary, however, when she is pardoned by the governor. Big Bertha, for once, doesn't get her prey.

Ernestine Littlechap

Ernestine is Tracy's cellmate in the Louisiana Penitentiary for Women. She is gruff, streetwise and cynical. Tracy at first sees her as an enemy, but Ernestine's heart of gold soon shines through and she takes Tracy under her protective wing. Ernestine is someone with whom the other prisoners do not mess. She can fistfight with the toughest prisoners and even hold the bull dyke Big Bertha at bay. Through Ernestine, Tracy learns how to survive in prison and discusses with her the feasibility of an escape (virtually none). Ernestine is released and Tracy must fend for herself. She uses various strategies such as working in the laundry and becoming a trusty who takes care of the prison warden's daughter, Amy. Once Tracy is pardoned, she lives with Ernestine and her husband while she seeks revenge on the thugs who drove her mother to suicide.

Daniel Cooper

Daniel Cooper is the eerily-gifted insurance detective who pursues Tracy Whitney throughout the book, sometimes in concert with local police officials and sometimes on his own. Cooper is known as an oddball who has a genius for figuring out crimes and finding criminals. His skills and luck bring him very close to apprehending Tracy, but the closest he gets is to fondle her clothing during an illegal break-in at her apartment. Cooper's pursuit of Tracy takes on clear aspects of sexual obsession as he fantasizes about capturing her and making her subservient. The closest he ever gets to her is masturbating on a wash cloth in her shower.

Amy Brannigan

Amy Brannigan is the pre-adolescent daughter of the prison warden who becomes Tracy Whitney's charge when she earns trusty status. Amy is starved for love because she does not get it from her mother, and becomes fiercely attached to Tracy. At first, Tracy pushes her away because she doesn't want to be a surrogate mother. But eventually Tracy understands that Amy is a young soul who is searching, just as she herself is searching, and she lets Amy into her heart. When Tracy makes an aborted attempt at escape from prison, she hears Amy fall into the lake and she runs to save her because she knows that Amy can't swim. For that matter, neither can Tracy.

Charles Stanhope

Charles Stanhope is the wealthy East Coast aristocrat who is engaged to Tracy Whitney at the beginning of the book, and the father of their child. When Tracy is falsely arrested and incarcerated in New Orleans, Stanhope refuses to offer her assistance on grounds he doesn't want his family's reputation to be smeared by association with a criminal.



During her imprisonment, Tracy loses their child and any attachment she may have had to Charles. His cold rejection, as well as the ugly way her mother was driven to the point of suicide, provide the drive for vengeance that motivates Tracy throughout the book.

Jeff Stevens

Jeff Stevens is the handsome jewel thief who is the masculine counterpart to Tracy Whitney. A charming sociopath, like her, Jeff is an accomplished con artist. For a time, Tracy and Jeff compete with each other to pull off the major jewelry burglaries that have European police scratching their heads and muttering obscenities under their breath. But they finally fall in love and become partners, eventually agreeing to stop their high crime lifestyle. But since they are both addicted to crime, the temptation to revert to their old ways is always there, especially when they encounter the obscenely wealthy.

Contessa Marissa

The Contessa Marissa is one of the aliases of Tracy Whitney who impersonates the fictitious blueblood to pull off one of her jewelry scams. She wears the appropriate clothing, projects the perfect accent and is convincing enough to cause a dishonest jewelry merchant to be deceived at his own crooked game.

Alberto Fornati

Alberto Fornati is the drunken, egotistical film director whom Tracy meets aboard the Orient Express. The chronic philanderer buys gems for his lady friends whenever he has an affair—a situation his wife tolerates glumly. When he tries to seduce Tracy, she turns the tables on him and robs his wife of all her jewelry.



Objects/Places

Southern Louisiana Penitentiary for Women

The Southern Louisiana Penitentiary for Women is where Tracy Whitney goes after she is convicted of trumped up charges in the accidental shooting of New Orleans underworld figure Joe Romano. She finds the prison a snake pit of lesbianism, violence and treachery.

New Orleans

New Orleans is where Tracy's mother lives at the time she takes her own life. Tracy goes to New Orleans to get revenge for the criminal acts that drove her mother to desperation and suicide.

Prado Art Museum

The Prado Art Museum in Madrid, Spain is where Tracy steals a priceless Goya painting in a cleverly orchestrated bit of street theater subterfuge.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia is where Tracy lives with Charles Stanhope, the father of her unborn child. Tracy is happy with Stanhope until after her arrest, when he basically abandons her when she most needs his support

Pistol

A pistol is what Tracy's mother uses to kill herself, and a different pistol is what Tracy carries in her handbag when she visits Joe Romano and accidentally shoots him.

Manhattan

In Manhattan, Tracy meets jeweler/thief Conrad Morgan and agrees to her first major burglary from the Long Island home of one of his wealthy customers.

London

Tracy buys an expensive home in London after successful burglaries that have netted her some quarter of a million dollars



Madrid

Madrid is the home of the Prado Art Museum, where Tracy working with an experienced con artist, manages to make off with a priceless oil painting by Goya.

Biarritz

In Biarritz, Tracy flim-flams a flim-flam artist and makes off with \$500,000.

Orient Express

The Orient Express is where Tracy encounters the pompous Italian director Alberto Fornati, and relieves his wife of her precious jewelry bag while the couple is sleeping on the train.



Themes

The perfect crime

Most of the dramatic tension in the novel derives from the ever-escalating audacity of the crimes committed by Tracy Whitney. Her career as a criminal, con artist, and master of disguise has a plausible unreality about it. She seems to go from one perfect crime to another, if the "perfect crime" is defined by success in eluding arrest. Her nemesis is Daniel Cooper, whose intuition strongly tells him almost precisely when, where and how she will attempt her next caper, but somehow Tracy is just a little more cunning and a little luckier than Cooper can imagine. Tracy is so successful in her thefts of precious gems that European authorities believe there is a crime wave perpetrated by a gang of women underway. Tracy uses her imagination in pulling off these ripoffs, and never repeats herself, unlike many criminals whose patterns of crime eventually lead to their arrest.

When Tracy collaborates with Jeff Stevens, after a long spell of competing with him, their partnership leads to some truly extraordinary jewel heists. They seem to make a perfect pair of thieves and together commit a string of "perfect" crimes. Although Tracy's conscience bothers her before every crime, she gets caught up in the cat-and-mouse challenge of not getting arrested, and continues to take on ever more improbable thefts as much for an intellectual challenge as for the actual financial enrichment. Once she has stashed away perhaps more than a million dollars, her criminal behavior is clearly no longer motivated by need or greed. Tracy, like Jeff, is addicted to the excitement that stealing provides. As she continues her one-woman crime spree and takes on increasingly risky jobs, the reader gets the sense that her luck may run out at any moment. At the close of the book, Tracy finds herself seated next to the super-wealthy Maximilian Pierpont on an airplane.

She and Jeff have decided to end their criminal careers and get married, but faced with the powerful temptation to find a way to rob Pierpont, Tracy may yield to her addiction in one final criminal challenge—the one that may end both her career and her life as a free woman. The reader is left to ponder this possibility and to guess what Tracy will do, with the dramatic tension never fully resolved.

Addiction

For both Tracy Whitney and Jeff Stevens, crime provides the jolt of adrenaline to which these young people are addicted. Within recovery circles, such folks are referred to as "excitement junkies." This is a rush similar to what drives obsessive gamblers as well as those addicted to sex, shopping, drugs or alcohol. The addiction grows out of a need to fill the perceived empty hole in the soul which is symptomatic of real needs for affection, support and affirmation that are unmet because of the addict's own personality, which can be controlling, grandiose, dishonest and self-absorbed.



Tracy's first taste of this kind of adrenaline high comes as she works out her own resentments by taking revenge on the underworld figures of New Orleans who she believes caused her mother to commit suicide. While she is in prison, she schemes to take revenge on the world for the injustice to herself. She vows never to go to prison again and never to be poor again. This egocentric compulsion drives her to theft of ever-increasing risk, not unlike the alcoholic or addict who must keep increasing the dose level to experience the same high.

When she meets Jeff Stevens, they form a co-addictive relationship. Jeff is in a pattern of crime for similar reasons as Tracy; he seeks to escape painful childhood experiences of sexual abuse and abandonment through the adrenaline rush of jewelry theft. At first rivals, Jeff and Tracy are so similar they can easily predict each others' behavior and the resulting rivalry tends to actually draw them closer. Because they are both addicts, their solution to life's challenges is the same. Once they finally work together on a heist, they become irresistible to each other and fall in love. They swear off crime, much as an alcoholic might swear off booze after a particularly horrific drunken spree. But, like most real addicts, they find it difficult to stay stopped and the prospect of a relapse into old behavior looms as a strong temptation. Tracy is in the throes of such a temptation as the novel ends. Should she yield to it, her relationship with Jeff would be threatened and the probability that she might be arrested would be increased exponentially.

Honor among thieves

As Tracy and Jeff draw closer in their competition for the big jobs, the reader is aware of a great amount of respect each has for the other's skills. There is a professional admiration and even jealousy between them. But there is hardly a moment when either stops to ponder that their "profession" is really crime. There is between them the kind of professional admiration and honor that one sees among brain surgeons, athletes, artists. Tracy and Jeff learn new tricks from watching each other perform, and they become better thieves. As a contrast, there is no honor among some of the other outlaws in this book. The New Orleans thugs that drove Tracy's mother to suicide show no respect for each other, and no desire to help. They are all done in, one at a time. Mafia boss Anthony Orsatti in New Orleans shows no respect, trust or honor toward his protégée Joe Romano when it looks like Romano is trying to rob him. In fact, he contemplates ways to have Romano killed. Evidently the code of honor covers only thieves but not murderers, drug dealers, pimps, or corporate criminals.



Style

Point of View

The point of view shifts from the narrator to Tracy Whitney, and back again, throughout the story. It is the narrator's voice that binds the various threads of the story together — the suicide of Tracy's mother, how life in a women's prison affects the inmates, the skill that career criminals develop in reading people and sensing their weaknesses. Thus the narrator sets the stage and connects the sometimes-jagged edges of the play. Tracy, on the other hand, shares some of her thoughts and feelings about the events in her life and when that happens the point of view is hers. As narrator, Tracy's voice is that of a maladjusted child who has not learned to accept the world for what it is. The narrator, on the other hand, offers the steady voice and point of view of an adult who has seen the world and is surprised by nothing. The two points of view make a kind of narrative point-counterpoint that adds energy to the story.

Setting

The setting changes from the Louisiana Prison for Women at the beginning to the world of the super-elite and super-wealthy in New Orleans, Philadelphia, New York, Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam and London. Although the physical setting shifts as Tracy Whitney shifts locations, the setting for the narrative action always remains the same: one crafty woman against the world. Changes in geography may entertain the reader, but the setting for the action is the fearful heart of an addict who only achieves peace when she can outsmart, control or otherwise exploit other people. The time setting is contemporary, although there are a few outdated references in the book to now-distant occurrences in the real world. The reader can easily glide past these temporal shifts by staying engaged with the story line, which is compelling.

Language and Meaning

Although the world of the underclass, the criminal and the socially unwelcome is never far beneath the surface of the rich, superficial and self-absorbed society, it seldom travels across class and economic lines through the use of argot. Tracy seems not to have picked up any of the language of jail birds or street hustlers despite being exposed to them often. She is, however, able to affect the persona, dress and language of the upper class when necessary to carry out one of her crimes. It is precisely her chameleon-like qualities that make her such an effective thief, plus her imagination and daring. Tracy doesn't pretend to be someone else for the sake of a ruse. She becomes that other person with her specific use of language and her ability to shade or distort her meaning to get her way. The reader is exposed to the language of the underworld, the verbal oddities of prisoners, the slick and polished language of the drawing room or the



boardroom, and the unimaginative language of cops. These provide a kind of linguistic map of Tracy's travels that reflects the shifting settings.

Structure

Although the purpose of this novel is entertainment, it is beautifully structured with the intricacy and precision of a Swiss watch, or like one of the complex jewelry heists of Tracy Whitney. The plot advances the narrative line quickly and may leave the reader somewhat breathless. It's all part of the adrenaline rush that propels the characters in the book, and the book itself. The structure is standard narrative style, with a few flashbacks. Except for the lead character, the author relies on stereotypes: underworld thugs, super-wealthy snobs, flat-footed police. Tracy Whitney makes a transition from victim to criminal quite successfully and seemingly devoid of any real development. Although the reader is presented with many situations in which Tracy is shown to have a conscience and to know the difference between right and wrong, her anti-social and narcissistic traits are never fully explored. Why does she transition so easily from revenge to chronic criminality? Why does she choose this lifestyle over, say, working at a conventional career? If she is embittered because of her lost engagement and lost fetus, that is not made explicit, either. The only way to resolve the dilemma at the core of Tracy Whitney is to see her as an addict perhaps with sociopathic tendencies — someone who feels such an emptiness inside that taking more and greater risks is the only way she can feel fully alive. The novel's well-oiled plot moves far too quickly for much reflection upon, or by, the characters themselves.



Quotes

"Tracy had little sexual experience, but it seemed to her that Charles made love the same way he lived his life: meticulously and very properly. Once, Tracy had decided to be daring and unconventional in bed and had so shocked Charles that she began secretly to wonder if she were some kind of sex maniac. The pregnancy had been unexpected, and when it happened Tracy was filled with uncertainty. Charles had not brought up the subject of marriage and she did not want him to feel he had to marry her because of the baby." (Chapter 2, p. 10)

"When Romano took over, he fired everybody and brought in his own people to run things. Then he began to raid the company. He sold all the assets and ordered a lot of equipment, selling it off but not paying for it. Romano told her he had decided not to go ahead with the deal and was returning the company to her. By then the company was not only worthless but your mother owed a half million dollars she couldn't pay. They forced her into bankruptcy. They took everything—the business, this house, even her car." (Chapter 2, p. 24)

"'I'll bet you've never been fucked by a real man,' he said. He was astride her now, his body heavy on hers, his hands moving up her thighs. Tracy pushed out blindly and her fingers touched the gun. She grabbed for it, and there was a sudden, loud explosion. 'Oh, Jesus!' Romano cried. His grip suddenly relaxed. Through a red mist, Tracy watched in horror as he fell off her and slumped to the floor, clutching his side. 'You shot me, you bitch. You shot me.'" (Chapter 3, p. 30)

"She was young and beautiful and fresh. The bull dykes in the prison would fall on her like animals. There was not even a safe cell to which he could assign her. Nearly every cell was controlled by a stud. Warden Brannigan had heard rumors of rapes in the showers, in the toilets and in the corridors at night. But they were always rumors because the victims were always silent afterwards. Or dead." (Chapter 5, p. 52)

"Tracy broke loose for an instant but one of the women grabbed her and slammed her head against the bars. She felt the blood spurt from her nose. She was thrown to the concrete floor and her hands and legs were pinned down. Tracy fought like a madwoman but she was no match for the three of them. She felt cold hands and hot tongues caressing her body. Her legs were spread apart and a hard, cold object was shoved inside her. She writhed helplessly, desperately trying to call out. An arm moved across her mouth, and Tracy sank her teeth into it, biting down with all her strength." (Chapter 6, p. 60)

"Daniel Cooper could have kept a psychiatrist busy full-time had he been able to expose his emotions, but he could never bring himself to speak of the past to anyone. The one piece of physical evidence that he retained from that terrible day long ago was a faded, yellowed newspaper clipping safely locked away in his room, where no one could ever find it. He looked at it from time to time as a punishment, but every word in the article



was emblazoned on his mind. He showered or bathed at least three times a day, but never felt clean. He firmly believed in hell and hell's fire and he knew his only salvation on earth was expiation, atonement." (Chapter 8, p. 74)

"Freedom to Tracy was no longer simply an abstract word. It was something tangible, physical, a condition to be enjoyed and savored. Freedom meant breathing fresh air, privacy, not standing in lines for meals, not listening for bells. It meant hot baths and good-smelling soaps, soft lingerie, pretty dresses and high-heeled shoes. It meant having a name instead of a number. Freedom meant escape from Big Bertha and fear of gang rapes and the deadly monotony of prison routine. Tracy's newfound freedom took getting used to. Walking along a street, she was careful not to jostle anyone" (Chapter 12, p. 122)

"Things were not going well for Anthony Orsatti, and the capo was unable to figure out why. For the first time in his life, his luck was going bad. It had started with Joe Romano's defection, then Perry Pope, and now the judge was gone, mixed up in some crazy spy deal. They has all been an intrinsic part of Orsatti's machine—people he had relied on. Joe Romano had been the linchpin in the Family organization, and Orsatti had not found anyone to take his place." (Chapter 14, p. 150)

"Tracy glanced up and her heart suddenly skipped a beat. Seated in a booth across the room were Charles and his wife. They had not yet seen her. Tracy's first impulse was to get up and leave. She was not ready to face Charles, not until she had a chance to put her plan into action. She looked over at Charles again, and an astonishing phenomenon occurred: it was as though she were looking at a stranger. She was seeing a sallow, drawn-looking, middle-aged, balding man with stooped shoulders and an air of ineffable boredom on his face. It was impossible to believe that she had once thought she loved this man, that she had slept with him, planned to spend the rest of her life with him." (Chapter 15, p. 158)

"The manner in which Tracy Whitney had outwitted them at the airport was the most ingenious con he had ever witnessed. A scam on top of a scam. Conrad Morgan had told them that the woman was an amateur. My God, Jeff thought, what would she be like if she were a professional? Tracy Whitney was without doubt the most beautiful woman Jeff Stevens had ever seen. And clever. Jeff prided himself on being the best confidence man in the business, and she had outsmarted him." (Chapter 17, p. 189)

"Gregory Halston sat in his office lost in a daydream. Fate had placed in his hands a man who was so besotted with his blonde tart that he was willing to pay \$350,000 for a \$100,000 emerald. That was a net profit of \$250,000. Gregory Halston saw no need to burden the Parker brothers with the details of the transaction. It would be a simple matter to record the sale of the second emerald at \$100,000 and pocket the rest. The extra \$250,000 would set him up for life. All he had to do now was to find a twin to the emerald he had sold to Mrs. P.J. Benecke." (Chapter 21, p. 246)

"Tracy had money in safe-deposit boxes all over Europe, the house in London, and a chalet in St. Moritz. Everything she would ever need. Except for someone to share it



with. Tracy thought of the life she had almost had, with a husband and a baby. Would that ever be possible for her again? She could never reveal to any man who she really was, nor could she live a lie by concealing her past. She had played so many parts, she was no longer sure who she really was." (Chapter 23, p. 274)

"Armand Grangier was in a euphoric mood that evening. By now, the large printing press would have been arranged for. The Whitney woman had said it would print \$5,000 a day but Grangier had a better plan. He intended to work the press on 24-hour shifts. That would bring it to \$15,000 a day, more than \$1000,000 a week, \$1 million every 10 weeks. And that was just the beginning. There was no limit to the fortune it would make him." (Chapter 26, p. 306)

"On her way back to the Ritz, Tracy was filled with a sense of exhilaration. From the beginning she had seen that it would be impossible to steal the [Goya] painting from the Prado, so she had had to trick them, to put them in a frame of mind where they wanted to get rid of it. Tracy visualized Jeff Stevens's face when he learned how he had been outwitted, and she laughed aloud." (Chapter 30, p. 343)

"It started slowly, a velvet touching and stroking and feeling, a caressing and gentle exploring of the senses. And it became a bacchanal, an orgy of pleasure, wild and savage. His hard organ stroked her and pounded her and filled her until she wanted to scream with unbearable joy. She was at the center of a rainbow. She felt herself being swept up on a tidal wave that lifted her higher and higher, and there was a sudden molten explosion within her and her whole body began to shudder." (Chapter 32, p. 369)



Topics for Discussion

Why and how does Tracy Whitney make the transition from well-off Philadelphia lady to a mastermind of the criminal world?

Why doesn't insurance investigator Daniel Cooper ever apprehend Tracy?

What skills does Tracy acquire that help her to be a successful jewel thief?

Who is Amy Pennington and what is her relationship to Tracy?

Besides being pursued by several large, muscular lesbians in prison, what other tragedy befalls Tracy?

How much money does Tracy get from bets on the chess tournament aboard her ocean liner?

What causes Tracy disgust and outrage after her theft of the Goya masterpiece at the Prado Art Museum?

When is the first time that Jeff Stevens and Tracy Whitney work together on a jewelry heist?

How does Tracy get revenge on Joe Romano of New Orleans for his part in her mother's death?

What are the two vows that Tracy makes to herself while imprisoned?