

Final Jeopardy Study Guide

Final Jeopardy by Linda Fairstein

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Plot Summary

Alexandra Cooper, or Alex as her friends call her, is a New York City prosecuting attorney who works specifically on sex crimes cases. Alex had never intended to remain on the prosecutor's team but is wealthy in her own right, meaning she can live in the manner she chooses without depending on the salary from her job to support her. She loves clothes and lives in a secure high-rise apartment. She has a wealth of friends and is dedicated to her job.

Alex is friends with an actress, Isabella Lascar, and learns that Isabella has been murdered near Alex's house on Martha's Vineyard. The initial fear is that someone had meant to shoot Alex and had killed Isabella by mistake. It takes some investigation, including by Alex's friend, police officer named Mike Chapman, before Alex is convinced that she wasn't the target at all. The investigation then turns to who would have killed Isabella. Alex thought that Isabella was borrowing her house on Martha's Vineyard in order to spend some time alone, but discovers that she'd actually been with a man. The man's identity remains a mystery until someone sends police copies of photos taken of Isabella during her trip to Martha's Vineyard. It's Alex who recognizes the arm of the man as belonging to her boyfriend, Jed Segal.

Alex confronts Jed for his betrayal but Mike believes that Jed had something to do with Isabella's death. With her relationship in shambles, Alex is forced to focus on her job which includes an ongoing investigation into the quest for a serial rapist. When the rapist is captured, Alex works with police on the case but the death of Isabella is never far from her mind.

Meanwhile, Alex is working with a freelance reporter, a woman named Ellen Goldman, who is working on a profile article about Alex. Ellen is somewhat pushy but seems harmless until the day she offers Alex a ride home. She takes Alex to an area of the park where a rape had been committed with the intention of killing Alex and making it seem that a man she'd prosecuted had taken revenge on her. Ellen then reveals that she had also killed Isabella and that her objective is to remove both Alex and Isabella from Jed's life, believing that Jed would return her affection if she eliminated the other two women. It's only then that Alex learns that Ellen had been the woman convicted of stalking Jed months earlier in California and that her obsession had taken her across the country to New York.



Chapters One through Seven

Chapters One through Seven Summary

Alexandra Cooper is reading a "mock up" of the New York Post's front page that includes the story of Alex's death. The report is based on mistaken identity and the dead woman is actually Isabella Lascar who had been staying in Alex's house on Martha's Vineyard. Alex is a New York City prosecutor who works specifically in the sex crimes division. On this particular day, she has her friend Mike Chapman with her. He is a New York City police officer who works homicide cases. Alex hears from Mercer Wallace, a police officer is working on the case of a serial rapist who has become the focus of a huge investigation, and tries to focus on that case though she is still shaken by Isabella's death and the fact that the initial reports were that Alex was the victim.

In chapter two, Alex knows that her boss, District Attorney Paul Battaglia, will not be happy that Alex's name is in the papers though it is not Alex's fault. Alex notes that she'd never really planned a career in prosecution, but that she'd fallen in love with the challenge. Alex is financially secure without her income from her job, meaning she can live well on the small income. Alex talks to Mike about Isabella, who is a movie star. Alex had met Isabella through a mutual friend. Isabella had complained recently of a stalker though Alex hadn't paid a great deal of attention. Isabella has asked Alex for the use of Alex's house on Martha's Vineyard, saying she planned to read through a script and spend some quiet time alone. Alex agrees to lend her the house, rents a car in her own name so that no one will know Isabella is visiting the island, and thinks nothing else of it until Isabella is killed. The initial thought by police is that Isabella had been shot by mistake by someone seeking revenge for Alex. For this reason, Mike is assigned protective duty and stays with Alex.

In chapter three, Alex arrives at the Manhattan Criminal Courts Building where she works. Alex, having had the night to think about the murder, says she doesn't believe she was the intended victim. Alex deals with the normal aspects of the job. Alex learns from Officer Corchado that there's a new case for the office and Alex decides to assign it to another prosecutor, Sarah Brenner.

In chapter four, Mike checks in with the police chief on Martha's Vineyard, Wally Flanders, to see if there are any new leads in the case. Alex hears from her boyfriend, Jed Segal, who is in Paris on a business trip and has been unable to return, even when Alex is so upset about having likely been the target of a murderer. Mike says that Isabella had a male visitor who had slept in the bed with Isabella. Meanwhile, Alex works on a case of a serial rapist and interviews the latest victim.

In chapter five, Alex goes for a conference with her boss, Paul Battaglia, and knows by her reception from his secretary that he's not in a great mood. Battaglia tells Alex she can take some time off but she declines. Mike and Alex decide to make a trip the following day to Martha's Vineyard to see the crime scene for themselves and to talk to



the police involved. Alex and Mike realize that there's a good chance that someone recognized Isabella from her movies and took her picture during the ferry ride to the island. They put out advertisements asking for pictures, hoping that Isabella's companion will be identified.

In chapter six, Mercer Wallace tells Alex that their most recent rape victim produced a good sketch that should be of help in their investigation. The witness also knows details about the rapist that will help with the eventual prosecution. Mike remains with Alex throughout the day as her protective detail. They go to Alex's high rise at the end of the work day where Alex is greeted by her doorman who says that she has flowers from a lady who had dropped the delivery off personally. The flowers are from Ellen Goldman, a reporter who is supposed to begin working on a segment on Alex over the coming days. The card says that Ellen is looking forward to seeing Alex on the following week and offers commiseration on the trials of Isabella's death and Alex's role in it. Once in the building, Alex encounters her next-door neighbor, David Mitchell, a doctor of psychiatry. David's dog is named "Prosac," but is called "Zac." David tells Alex that she should have called on him the previous night when she learned of Isabella's death. Alex assures him that she's alright.

Once inside, Alex calls Steve's Pizza for a delivery while she and Mike settle in. Alex says she doesn't really want to talk about the situation anymore. Later, as Alex is thinking about the situation, she says that she shouldn't have ignored Isabella's statement that she believed she had another stalker. Alex knows that Isabella had experienced a stalker at an earlier time. Alex really believed that Isabella had only wanted to use the house on Martha's Vineyard and had invented the story of the stalker in order to gain the use of the house. As Alex is heading off to sleep, she remembers that Isabella had mentioned something about a "shrink."

Chapters One through Seven Analysis

It's believed that Alex is the victim at Martha's Vineyard because the woman is shot through the head and there are few features remaining with which to identify the victim. Because she's driving on the road to Alex's house, has hair the same color as Alex, and is driving a car rented in Alex's name, police initially believe it's Alex. The police chief of Martha's Vineyard, Wally Flanders, says that now that it's known that the victim isn't Alex, the media will probably become less interested in the murder. However, Alex notes that the chief is wrong because the victim is actually a movie star, though this fact isn't revealed until the second chapter.

Alex's job, according to Mike, involves a great many "sick" people. Mike says that he doesn't understand why Alex chooses to be involved in the sex crimes unit and says he prefers homicide because the victims are already dead rather than having been tortured. Mike, who seems like a typical tough cop, may actually be tenderhearted to the point that it bothers him to deal with the traumatized victims. Alex, however, says that she loves her job because the victims typically expect little in the way of resolution or justice, and having someone care for them and work on their side is more than they



expect. Alex's attitude about her job is positive but she admits the need to escape from the rigors as often as possible. She finds that escape through shopping as she loves spending money on the finer things in life.

Ellen Goldman is supposedly a reporter who is working on a freelance article from Lawyer's Digest. Ellen leaves flowers at Alex's apartment the day after Isabella's death, a fact that's a foreshadowing of the eventual resolution of the story. Alex initially believes that Ellen must have gotten her address from someone at her office based on the fact that Ellen is soon to be working on a story about Alex. In fact, Ellen is a stalker who killed Isabella and will later try to kill Alex because of the involvement of the two women with Jed Segal, the object of Ellen's infatuation.

Alex feels somewhat guilty that Isabella was killed because Isabella had indicated her belief that there was a stalker watching her again. Alex hadn't really believed Isabella's story, citing the fact that Isabella is a manipulative person who will do whatever is necessary to make sure she gets her way. Alex will later come to realize that there was a stalker.



Chapter Eight through Ten

Chapter Eight through Ten Summary

In chapter seven, Alex tells Mike about the history of Martha's Vineyard as they prepare to travel to the island. Alex says her favorite part of the island is that from her home at Chilmark she is never far from water. At the airport, they meet their pilot who is a young girl. Mike fears flying and Alex spends a great deal of time reassuring him. At the landing strip on the island, they are met by Wally and a fellow officer, Ebenezer Mayhew. They also meet Trooper Lumbert with the state police who was the first on the scene of Isabella's murder. They are also introduced to Federal Bureau of Investigations Special Agent Luther Waldron who immediately gets on the bad side of Alex and Mike. When Waldron tells Alex that she should ride with him, she declines and rents a car for her day on the island. They drive to Daggett's Pond Way, the drive leading to Alex's home and the site of Isabella's murder.

In chapter eight, the officers go through the scene with Mike and Alex, saying they want Alex to understand what they believe happened so that Alex will better be able to help them go through Isabella's last day of life. The plan is for Alex to go to the house and look for things out of place that would help figure out the identity of Isabella's guest. Alex learns that a dog discovered the crime scene and returned to its master with blood all over its paws. Alex sees that the investigators have dusted for prints, leaving a film of dust over most of the surfaces. She points out the food in the refrigerator as belonging to Isabella and then points out the liquor that she'd left at the front of the cabinet in the kitchen, pointing out what had been moved since her last visit. She learns that used condoms were recovered from the bathroom and confirms that they weren't there on her last visit. Alex learns that Isabella had been wearing a favorite ring but that her "Filofax," a planner that Isabella never left behind, was not among her possessions. Mike goes outside with Wally to get more information on the situation, while Isabella remains inside with Waldron to share what she knows of Isabella's life.

In chapter nine, Alex talks about the thin line that separates harassment and murder and says that even an order of protection isn't usually enough to fully protect a victim once he or she is in the open. Alex tells Waldron what she knows about Isabella's life and her claim of a stalker, though she admits that she didn't question Isabella about the latest claim, believing there to be no truth to the claim. Waldron asks if Alex has met Isabella's ex-husband, Richard Burrell, and Alex says she hasn't but that Isabella had told her about him. She says that Richard had been heavily dependent on cocaine and that Isabella had distanced herself from him. They also discuss a recent boyfriend named Johnny Garelli who had worked on a movie with Isabella though their affair had ended when the movie ended. Alex and Mike later go to visit the Quinn sisters who run an oyster shack. The sisters remember Isabella and say they could identify the man she'd been with if they saw a photo. They remember that Isabella and this man had been talking about the fact that he was leaving the island but that she was going to remain.



In chapter ten, Alex returns to her house on Martha's Vineyard to pack up Isabella's personal belongings for shipment to Isabella's next of kin. Alex is later talking with Mike who asks how she came to be acquainted with Martha's Vineyard and why she enjoys her time there. She says that it's a "love story" and describes her love for a young man who had proposed marriage. They spent a lot of happy time on Martha's Vineyard and Alex had come to associate the island with her love for this man. He died tragically prior to their marriage and Alex tells Mike that she'd never brought another lover here, keeping the island for herself through the passing years.

Alex and Mike share a love of the game show Jeopardy and often make bets on specific questions. As they are leaving the island, they see that the game is on television and they remain to watch the rest of the show before catching a later plane back to the mainland. After the show, they return to Alex's apartment. The talk returns to Isabella's murder and Alex says she doesn't believe she'd been the target and wants the guard detail dropped. Mike says that even though Alex is pretty, Isabella is clearly a movie star and he doesn't believe someone mistook Isabella for Alex. Alex receives a phone call in the middle of the night but the caller hangs up.

Chapter Eight through Ten Analysis

Mike says that he'd known Isabella ate oysters shortly before her death from Wally's information about the autopsy. He also knew that Isabella would have gone wherever Alex said was a good place to eat, because both women want nothing but the best of everything, including food. Throughout this investigation, Mike will continue to follow leads on his own, seeking ways to solve the murder while the FBI and other officials are also working. In fact, it will be Mike who comes to the conclusion that Ellen is the murderer just before Ellen makes an attempt to kill Alex.

Alex knows that police investigations are sometimes traumatic for the victims, but it's not until she sees the dust left by the fingerprinting crew that she fully understands what the victims were experiencing. When it's time to pack up Isabella's belongings, Alex seems to want to do it herself so that she doesn't have to deal with additional police going through her house and through her things in order to accomplish the task. It seems likely that Alex will have greater sympathy for the victims who experience this in the future.

Alex is clearly certain that she isn't the target of the killer who murdered Isabella but doesn't reconcile the fact that someone has called her home several times, hanging up without saying anything. The hang-ups are evidently an effort at foreshadowing so that the reader doesn't drop the idea that Isabella is in danger so that the author keeps the sense of suspense.



Chapters Eleven through Fourteen

Chapters Eleven through Fourteen Summary

Alex watches the coverage of Isabella's funeral on television. She's waiting for Jed to return from Paris and after the funeral coverage, she tries to read a novel but has trouble concentrating. She telephones the Twentieth Precinct's Special Victims Unit where she learns that Mercer is out for the rest of the weekend. An officer on duty, Frank Barber, gives her an update based on the report he has and Alex admits that she's looking for a distraction from her own problems—Isabella's murder and her relationship with Jed—by looking for an update on the case. She learns that a new victim, Mrs. Zalina, fought back and that the woman swears she can recognize her attacker's penis. Alex also learns that there is a young woman who called for help but hadn't yet made the decision to come in. Frank promises to call Alex if she's needed.

The doorman calls to let Alex know that Jed is on his way up. They have sex and later Jed tells her that he hasn't yet been home, but had felt the need to be with Alex. Alex tries to change the subject, admitting that she always does so if the conversation turns serious at all. Alex says that she cares for Jed, but is hurt that he hadn't been able or willing to come home to her when she'd needed him. Alex recalls how she and Jed had met, through a mutual friend. In chapter twelve, Jed goes home and Mike comes over. They make plans to meet up again on the following evening though Alex says she has a formal dinner event with Jed and will meet Mike after that. On Monday morning, Alex takes clothes to wear with her at the evening's event, a dinner to honor Jed's boss. Jed is a financier at Complex.

At the office, Alex learns that Ellen Goldman, the freelance writer who is working on an article about Alex, has called and expects some time later that day. Alex is reluctant but agrees to go through with the appointment. Over the early part of the day, Alex interviews a woman who is a victim in a case and has several calls from Jed who wants to be sure Alex is going to be ready on time. In chapter thirteen, Ellen arrives and Alex begins their interview by telling her about the special victims unit and her role in it. Ellen asks the typical questions, including how Alex manages to have a normal life after dealing with the horrible crimes. Alex responds that she deals little with the criminals and that she feels she's doing good for the victims, making it a rewarding job. Ellen stops the tape recorder and turns the talk to clothes. Alex fears having details about her personal life show up in the article but feels clothes to be a safe topic. Ellen has obviously done her homework and knows a great deal about Alex's personal life. Ellen then asks about Isabella's death and Alex, looking for a way to avoid answering rudely and knowing she won't give any details, says she isn't working on that case.

Alex talks to Jed after Ellen leaves and Jed is obviously trying to make a good impression on his boss, Anderson Warmack. Jed says that Anderson has "a million things to ask" about Isabella, having been a fan. Alex is furious and tells Jed that she'd told him about the case in confidence, as lovers, and hadn't expected him to use it to



get in good with his boss. Alex tells Jed that they'll talk about it later but makes it clear that she's angry and that he better not tell anything else. She then goes to shower in the locker room in the building, changing into her evening clothes before returning to her office where she sees a strange man. In chapter fourteen, Alex's first question is how the man gained access to her office because the building is secure with guards on duty to check those entering. The man's name is Richard Burrell, Isabella's husband. He tells Alex that there is evidence against him in the case of Isabella's death and that he wants her help to avoid that situation. He says that he owns guns, that he's a sharpshooter who could have made the shot that killed Isabella, and that he wanted to reunite with Isabella. He says that they had spent a night together just before Isabella's trip to Martha's Vineyard, a fact that police already know. He says that he'd wanted to reconcile but Isabella hadn't been willing. Richard assures Alex that he's no longer involved in the drugs but says that he and Isabella had an argument, resulting in Richard grabbing her by the shoulder. He says that when she locked herself in the bathroom, he'd gone back to his own room and hadn't followed her to Martha's Vineyard. He also says that she'd insinuated to him that she was going alone. Burrell leaves without incident and Alex heads to the party.

On the way, Alex thinks about the time Isabella had met Jed. She and Jed had dinner plans when Isabella called, announcing she was in town. Alex had thought it would be a good surprise for Jed to have Isabella join them and she did. There, Isabella had turned on her natural charm and when she'd learned about Jed's job, had confided that she believed her business manager was embezzling from her. Jed had recommended an accountant who could help her track the money and Alex had encouraged that he follow up with Isabella later. As Alex thinks about this, she makes a mental note that Mike should add her business manager should be added to the list of potential suspects. Alex arrives at the party late, finding the speeches already started so that she doesn't have to make small talk with Jed's boss. After the dinner ends Jed says that he's going to the University Club with his boss and some others but Alex begs off, saying that she has to meet Mike and has to be in court the following morning.

Chapters Eleven through Fourteen Analysis

Alex and Jed have been seeing each other for only a few months at the time of Isabella's death. Jed is divorced and has children on the west coast, meaning he travels there over many vacation times. Alex says that she hasn't taken him to Martha's Vineyard, partly because he spends his vacations with his kids but partly because she hasn't yet been willing to share her special place with him. She does, however, wish he would share with her more information about his marriage and that he would invite her to meet his children. Alex seems to be reluctant to allow her relationship with Jed to advance but seems to defend her relationship with him when Mike questions it. When Jed returns to Alex's house from his business trip to Paris, he seems to want to convince Alex that their relationship should advance. Alex doesn't rush the situation, changing the conversation when she has the opportunity. She also doesn't want it to end. When Alex learns that Jed had come to her after spending a night with Isabella and

having an affair with her, Alex will end the relationship and won't give Jed another chance.

The reader learns a great deal about Jed, including that he'd sought a political office while living in California. The quest seems typical of Jed's personality, seeking the spotlight but without the ability to endear and hold the number of votes necessary to be elected. Jed also tells Alex that he'd been stalked during that time, and that the woman had eventually been arrested. The stalker had apparently been at least part of the reason Jed and his wife split up. Alex puts the information down to the fact that everyone wants to share a story about the justice system at work with her because of her job. Alex says that the woman had been arrested and she'd given it little more thought. In fact, this will turn out to be the key to the case. Jed's stalker was Ellen and when she's released from jail she follows him to the east coast where she sets out to kill those she believes stands between her and a happy life with Jed: Isabella and Alex.



Chapter Fifteen through Eighteen

Chapter Fifteen through Eighteen Summary

Alex arrives home after work and discovers that Mike is already at her apartment, waiting for Alex and talking to her doorman. Alex and Mike go upstairs and Mike says that he has photos people took on the ferry to Martha's Vineyard on the day Isabella made the trip. Among the photo is a series of shots of Isabella, apparently taken by someone who recognized Isabella and was making a nuisance of himself. There isn't a clear shot of the man who was with Isabella, but there is a photo of the man's arm as he evidently tries to make the photographer stop. Mike is flippant, saying that it will be impossible to identify the man from just his hand and the sleeve of his shirt. However, Alex immediately realizes that the arm, as well as the expensive designer shirt, belongs to Jed Segal. Alex says that she paid a \$147 for the shirt, meaning there won't be a great many of them just like that. Mike initially tries to calm Alex down, saying that she might be mistaken and shouldn't jump to conclusions. However, Alex is suddenly certain about the situation and realizes that when Isabella had mentioned a handsome financier she was interested in, she was talking about Jed. Mike immediately makes the jump to consider that Jed might have killed Isabella, but Alex says that doesn't make sense because Jed would have been completely enamored with the idea of a beautiful actress as a mistress.

Alex insists that she go to confront Jed about his affair with Isabella and Mike insists that he go along. She knows that he's at the University Club with his boss and, without taking time to change clothes, heads there with Mike. They arrive at the club's entrance and the doorman tries to block Alex's entrance, saying that she can't come in because she is inappropriately dressed. Alex refuses to listen and slips by him, knowing that Jed and his party will be upstairs. Jed's boss tries to intervene and Alex thinks to herself that he is a "pompous" fool, but that she's too polite to say so. Alex and Jed go to another room where Alex tells him that she'd had no idea that they were having problems and that she knows that he's had an affair with Isabella. Jed initially tries to deny it but Alex show him the picture. Mike takes a different approach, asking what Jed likes to drink and pointing out the arrangement of the liquor in Alex's house at Martha's Vineyard.

Alex and Mike return to her apartment and Alex says that she'd like to be alone, promising that she's going to stay home and that she'll be fine. Mike points out to Alex that Jed might be dangerous and urges her to be careful if he tries to contact her. She has several messages from him but notes that she can't believe in him again. Later there's a buzz from the doorman though Alex had left instructions that she's not to be disturbed. The buzzes continue and Alex ignores them until there's a knock on the door. Thinking that Jed has bribed his way in, she is angry until she finds that it's Mike. Later, Mercer drops by as well and the three spend the night talking, keeping Alex from dwelling on the broken relationship. The two men leave and Alex prepares to go to work. Mike drops her at work and Alex thanks him for his concern.



In chapter seventeen, Jed calls Alex at the office, assures her that he's not a killer and pleads for a chance to talk to her. Alex knows that the fallout for her could be ugly, especially if Jed becomes an official suspect and others—including the press—learn of his possible involvement. Alex and Ellen Goldman connect later in the day. Ellen asks for some personal information and eventually turns the conversation to Jed but Alex says that she and Jed are through and pleads with Ellen to leave mention of Jed out of her article. Alex has a serious altercation with a judge in court later in the day and Alex asks a co-worker if she has the appearance of "losing it," saying that she's feeling a bit crazed and hopes she isn't projecting that attitude.

In chapter eighteen, Battaglia returns to town and Alex begins their conversation with an apology for the situation involving Jed. Battaglia believes she's apologizing for her altercation with the judge and assures her that she was in the right until she tells him about Jed and Mike's belief that Jed may have been involved in Isabella's death. Alex knows that Jed will likely be waiting for her outside her building that day and so goes out the back door and takes the subway, though she admits that she hates the subway.

Chapter Fifteen through Eighteen Analysis

When Alex realizes that Jed and Isabella had been having an affair she feels angry and betrayed, as is to be expected. This seems incredibly callous of Isabella who is borrowing Alex's house for a rendezvous with Alex's boyfriend. Isabella knows of Alex's relationship with Jed and there's no excuse for her behavior. Jed is equally to blame and it seems evident that he is going to meet Isabella with illicit plans because he tells Alex that he's going to Paris on business. This lie will eventually prove that Jed had been on the island because he brought Alex a gift back from his trip that he says he bought in Paris but that credit card receipts prove weren't bought in Paris at all. The sisters who run the oyster shack also positively identify Jed from a photo, proving his guilt. Jed's reaction is to plead with Alex to forgive him. His pleading seems genuine in that he suddenly realizes what he had in his relationship with Alex and that he was responsible for the loss of her love.

Mercer and Mike each take it upon themselves to be with Alex as she's reeling from her discovery of Jed's affair with Isabella. She appreciates their friendship and says that the two men are among the most decent guys she knows. This is an example of Alex's relationship with Mercer and Mike, both considered friends and both concerned about Alex both as a co-worker and a friend.

Alex's altercation with the judge is prompted by the judge's apparent belief in the defense presented by the defense attorney. That attorney says that the victim in the case had been victimized before, and that it therefore shouldn't have been nearly as traumatic for her as for someone who hadn't. The judge is apparently buying this defense which makes Alex so angry that she risks a contempt charge by objecting. This kind of injustice seems to make Alex very angry, a statement to her character and the reason she chooses to carry on this work rather than going into



Chapters Nineteen through Twenty-One

Chapters Nineteen through Twenty-One Summary

Alex heads out for a dinner meeting with her friend Joan and Jed sees her, asking her to please let him give her a ride. She reluctantly agrees, hoping to stop him from following her. During their conversation, Jed accuses her of being "crass and vulgar." She counters by saying that she's at least being honest, which Jed isn't. Alex is later given a letter that was found in Isabella's desk at her home. The letter is from a woman named Cordelia Jeffers, who identifies herself as a psychiatrist. She calls David and asks if he can take a look at the letter, possibly giving her some insight into the person who wrote the letter. David tells her that he has company. He says the company will be gone in the morning and that he will call her then. In chapter twenty, David tells Alex that he believes Cordelia Jeffers to be a fraud.

Alex heads to work where she gives some advice to a young attorney and then sits in on part of the case, promising to remain available to be with him for the verdict. Mike sends word to Alex that the sisters at the oyster shack identified a photo of Jed as having been the man with Isabella and that Jed had bought a gift for Alex in New York rather than in Paris, as he'd said. He had been in Paris but had changed his departure date, meaning he'd not planned to meet Isabella ahead of time. Alex learns that Richard Burrell was near Martha's Vineyard on the day of the murder. Alex is asked to consider that Isabella's ex-husband, Burrell, may have been the person who murdered Isabella, that he perhaps saw her with Jed or that some other catalyst prompted the act of rage. Alex is prompted to have dinner with Johnny Garelli, the man Isabella had had an affair with, in order to seek out information. Johnny agrees to meet her for dinner and Mike plans to be at the bar with another officer, Maureen Forester. Alex hears from David who says that he's checked into Cordelia Jeffers' license and that no one from that name has the graduate degree she claims following her name. There's also a discussion of the fact that both Isabella and Jed had been stalked.

In chapter twenty-one, Alex arrives at the place she's to eat dinner with Johnny Garelli just before eight o'clock. She talks with Maureen and Mike briefly before Johnny arrives. She and Johnny talk about Isabella for awhile, with Johnny asking how much Isabella had talked about him. Johnny doesn't know Alex's role as a prosecutor and believes she has been questioned about Isabella as well. Johnny tells Isabella that he was on a yacht with a married woman at the time of Isabella's death and that he doesn't want anyone to know because she is married.

Alex, Maureen and Mike return to Alex's apartment and she orders pizza from Steve's, citing her concern for the others who drank at the bar while she ate. Mike still believes that Jed should be a suspect in the case though Alex believes that he wouldn't have killed Isabella. David shows up and talks about Cordelia Jeffers and her role in the situation. He says it's obvious that she knew Isabella intimately, citing her knowledge of Isabella's plans to go to Martha's Vineyard. David then suggests that he talk to Jed in an



effort to find out what Jed thought of Isabella and whether he might have been involved. Mike jumps at the idea though Alex is reluctant. Mike points out that David, as Alex's friend, would be someone Jed would confide in. David leaves Alex with a book about the disorder that typically prompts stalkers and Alex reads until bedtime.

Chapters Nineteen through Twenty-One Analysis

The investigation into Isabella's choice of psychiatrists makes it evident that Isabella had made demands of those caring for her and that anyone who didn't meet her demands was summarily dismissed. The officers find that she's had three psychiatrists over recent years and that two of those were dropped by Isabella because they didn't meet her demands.

When David suggests that he should contact Jed, Alex is not sure it's a good idea. Mike jumps at the suggestion and believes it to be a good idea but then takes a step back and asks Alex what she thinks. This is typical of Mike's reaction to the situation, to try to find a way to sooth Alex, but he is going about it wrong in this situation. Alex is naturally torn by her feelings of betrayal at Jed's hands and her need to do her job. Maureen is the one who sees this first and tells Mike that he should leave Alex's opinion out of the equation, eliminating the need for her to offer up her opinion vocally.

David brings a new perspective to the case, talking about the typical stalker who truly believes that the victim would care about the stalker if some external situation were resolved. In this case, there is a stalker who believes that Jed would love her if only Isabella and Alex were removed from Jed's list of possible relationships.



Chapter Twenty-Two through Twenty-Six

Chapter Twenty-Two through Twenty-Six Summary

Alex wakes the following morning to a clear October day. Alex arrives at work and is soon visited by Mickey Diamond, a reporter with a reputation for creating quotes and making up details as necessary to make his stories more exciting. Alex has been on the receiving end of this several times though her superiors realize that it's Mickey and don't punish Alex for speaking to him. Mickey already knows about Alex and Jed breaking up and about Jed's potential role in Isabella's murder, and tells Alex that the story is on the verge of making headlines. Alex is immediately angry.

After Mickey leaves, Mike tells Alex that he has an identification for the rapist they've been tracking and that he expects an arrest soon. He tells her to remain available and promises to call as soon as they have the man in custody. Later in the morning, Alex interviews a woman who complains that her mailman made inappropriate advances to her and begins the process of investigating the woman's claim. Alex then gets a letter and discovers that it's from Cordelia Jeffers. The letter, like all the letters with Cordelia's name at the end, is somewhat vague and filled with innuendo. She tells Alex that she'd planned to send the letter to Alex's home but feared it would be lost among the roses being sent by "our mutual friend," obviously referring to Jed Segal. She writes that Alex had surprised her by her willingness to jump into the car with Jed and asks if it wasn't humiliating to do so, indicating that she has been watching Alex's actions. The letter ends with a warning that Alex should "yield not into temptation." Alex rereads the letter trying to figure out how the woman could have known that she'd gone for a ride with Jed. Alex knows that she has to alert Mike and David of this development immediately.

Alex receives a call announcing that the rapist has been arrested. She tells Mercer to be sure the press doesn't get a chance for a photo so that she doesn't have to worry about their witness seeing him on television before the line up and potentially making her identification questionable. Mercer agrees that he'll be careful and tells Alex that he'll call when they get the man to the station. Alex arranges for a technician to tape the questioning of the accused rapist and heads home. She changes clothes, dressing appropriately for the evening ahead with questioning the man, making notes and preparing for his first court appearance. She thinks about calling David but realizes that it's almost time for his meeting with Jed and doesn't want to risk interrupting. Therefore, she puts it off until later and leaves a message on David's home phone.

In chapter twenty-three, Alex goes to the Twentieth Precinct where she expects the officers will be questioning the suspected rapist. She learns immediately that the police captain is angry that Alex instructed them to keep the man's face hidden from the reporters. They make the arrangements for the lineup. Meanwhile Alex learns that the young attorney who had tried the case earlier in the day had won the guilty verdict. The suspected rapist is questioned and reveals a great deal about the crimes, though he continues to deny actually committing any rapes. They begin the taped interview with



the man and Alex goes in to talk to him but he asks for a lawyer, ending the interview. Alex says that she's going home and will return any phone calls from there. She heads out of the police station, giving a wave to the guys who had worked the case.

In chapter twenty-four, Alex heads out of the building though there is a large group of reporters gathered around the area. She immediately spots Ellen Goldman and fears that Ellen is looking for an exclusive interview. Ellen assures her that her editor had asked her to come down and says that she'd hoped to watch Alex at work on the case for the profile piece Ellen is working on. Alex says there's really nothing to see but promises that she'll let Ellen in on some upcoming aspect of the case, knowing that the story won't come out for months as opposed to the newspaper and television accounts which will be out in hours. Alex says that she's tired and simply needs to get home to sleep. Ellen offers her a ride and Alex is on the verge of refusing but realizes that she's been rather rude in her answers and agrees to the ride. She is headed to the car with Ellen when she hears someone yell her name. She doesn't answer but rushes to get in, thinking that she's escaping the knot of reporters and that someone must have recognized her.

In chapter twenty-five, Alex tells Ellen the best way to get to her apartment and Ellen begins driving. Alex leans back and tries to relax, and believes that Ellen will take the hint. However, Ellen asks if it's a satisfying feeling to catch someone she'd been after for awhile and Alex puts it down to the fact that Ellen is probably just curious. Ellen then asks about the case of Harold McCoy, a man who had been accused of rape but who had gotten off on a technicality. Alex says that Harold's brother posted bail and that Harold is now "on the street;" but that there are plans to retry the case after the first of the year. Ellen misses the turn Alex had indicated and Alex sits up to pay better attention. Ellen then says that Alex isn't very bright and that she hasn't yet figured out the facts of this case. It's only now that Alex begins to figure out that Ellen is the woman who stalked Jed during his political campaign in California and that she is Isabella's murderer.

Ellen drives the car off the road in the park and orders Alex out at gunpoint. Alex tries to think ahead, looking for ways to leave clues for those who will come to investigate her murder. She tries not to panic at the thought of her imminent death. Ellen forces Alex to a place near where Harold McCoy had raped one of his victims, puts away her gun and takes out a knife, obviously planning to imitate Harold's M.O. to make it seem that Alex had been Harold's victim. Ellen begins to talk, saying that she'd never meant for Jed to become a suspect in Isabella's murder. It's only now that Alex realizes that Jed is the reason Alex has done this. Alex assures Ellen that she has no plans to reunite with Jed but Ellen doesn't believe her. Alex is trying to talk Ellen out of her course of action when she hears someone calling for a dog named "Zac." She realizes it's David and yells out to him, hoping to alert him to her location and warning him that Ellen has a gun. There's a brief firefight before Ellen is shot and taken into custody. Mike calls for ambulances and the two are taken for medical care.

In chapter twenty-six, Alex is settled in with a friend after being checked out by doctors. She talks with Mike and others regarding the case. Mike had talked to David after David



met with Jed and learned that Jed's stalker was in the area. Jed had seen Ellen and feared that she would create problems for Alex. Mike tells Alex that they finally put the pieces together, but that finding Alex in the park had been part police work and part luck.

Chapter Twenty-Two through Twenty-Six Analysis

Alex's request that the reporters not get a chance to see the suspected rapist's face is based on her need to have a clear identification at a lineup. If the witness has potentially seen the man's face on television or in the newspaper, it provides reasonable doubt as to why the witness knows the man.

The entire subplot—that of the quest to find the man responsible for the string of rapes in the area—becomes a major source of action in chapter twenty-three. It's at this point that Alex's job as a prosecutor is seen more clearly as she works with the officers who have solved the case and tries her hand at questioning the man accused in the rapes. It's also another chance to see the relationship between Alex and Mike. As Alex realizes that she's not going to get anything out of the man, she is upset and feels that she probably made some mistakes. She knows that Mike will tell her that she can't take it personally and that there's no way to be prepared for every situation, such as the man refusing to talk and demanding a lawyer. Alex herself feels that she should have had a male counterpart along to take over the questioning if the man refused to talk to her, but it seems that she couldn't possibly have known this would be necessary. Right on cue, Mike meets up with Alex outside the interrogation room and tells her that she shouldn't take it personally. This is yet another example of the deep friendship between the two as well as the extent of their working relationship.

Alex spends a great deal of time reading the book David provided about women with the disorder Ellen is exhibiting, and is therefore prepared to talk with her. Alex tries to convince Ellen that she doesn't stand between Ellen and Jed, and goes so far as to promise to leave town. Alex's innate humor is seen as she wonders to herself whether there might be a need for a prosecutor in some remote location far away from New York. Alex also learns that Ellen had remotely checked her answering machine and removed messages and had gained a great deal of information from Isabella's Filofax.



Characters

Alexandra Cooper

Referred to her friends as Alex, she is a prosecutor who works almost exclusively with sex crimes. She lives in New York and works closely with police. She knows several of them well and has the respect of many. Alex is a self-sufficient woman who is dedicated to her career but knows the value of friendship and time away from work. She's never married though she'd been engaged as a young woman but her fiancé died. Alex is independently wealthy and so lives better than most of her coworkers. She is a shopaholic and her love of shopping is legendary among those who know her. Alex has the trust and approval of her boss to the point that when a reporter makes up a quote and attributes it to her, they realize she didn't give the quote and believe Alex. Alex is relentless in her attempts to help the victims of the crimes, always doing her best to see to it that the victims are cared for and the criminals prosecuted.

Isabella Lascar

A movie star who meets Alex through a mutual friend and asks to borrow Alex's house at Martha's Vineyard where she is murdered. Isabella is famous and apparently been stalked prior to her death, making the initial investigation looking for someone who might have been stalking her. Isabella seemed to have exhibited little in the way of morals, having had a great many lovers and an ex-husband. Among those is the man Alex is seeing, Jed Segal. Alex and Jed apparently had a brief affair just before Isabella's death. Isabella has a great many enemies, as she is known to be the type who seldom keeps her thoughts to herself and doesn't mind saying what she thinks, even if it means hurting someone or making someone angry. An example of how unfeeling she is seen in the fact that Alex is borrowing Alex's house on Martha's Vineyard and is seeing Alex's boyfriend.

Jed Segal

The man who is seeing Alex and Isabella at the same time. Jed works in the financial sector, is obviously wealthy and attractive. Jed is with Isabella shortly before her death and hides that from Alex until a photo taken of the movie star and turned into the police shows the two together. Jed seems to realize that he has made a mistake in having an affair that ends his relationship with Alex.

Richard Burrell

Isabella Lascar's ex-husband, Burrell is known for having a temper and for having spent some time with Isabella prior to her death, making him a member of the list of suspects



for a period of time. Burrell is so anxious to eliminate himself as a suspect that he gets past security and confronts Alex in her office, trying to convince her to help him.

Johnny Garelli

An actor who works on a movie with Isabella. He is also among those considered as suspects in Isabella's death because the two had engaged in an affair during their time together on that movie set but the affair had been ended after the movie was completed.

David Mitchell

A psychiatrist who lives in the building near Alex. David becomes Alex's confidant in the story as Alex tries to figure out the role of a psychiatrist in Isabella's death. David has a dog called Zac, which is short for Prosac. It's David's dog that first finds Alex in the park when Ellen is trying to kill her.

Mike Chapman

A police officer who works the homicide department, Mike is working on the case of the death of Isabella Lascar. Mike is the epitome of a tough cop but is fiercely loyal to his friends and dedicated to his friends. Mike and Alex have worked together for some time prior to this case and the two are more than co-workers. Mike worries about Alex as she's dealing with the shock of fearing that someone was trying to kill her and killed Isabella by mistake and later as she deals with the broken relationship with Jed.

Ellen Goldman

The young woman who introduces herself to Alex as a freelance writer working for Lawyer's Digest but who is really a stalker who kills Isabella Lascar for her relationship with Jed Segal and is on the verge of killing Alex when the police put the clues together and discover that she's the killer. Ellen's name is really Guttmann.

Paul Battalagia

Alex's boss, he is the district attorney. He is strict with his people but fair. He believes in Alex and trusts her but she feels pressure to perform to her best in order not to disappoint him.

Maureen Forester

The female officer who sits at the bar with Mike Chapman while Alex is having dinner with Johnny Garelli, one of the original suspects in the death of Isabella Lascar.



Objects/Places

New York

Where Alex lives and works.

Martha's Vineyard

Where Alex has a vacation home and where Isabella is killed.

Daggett's Pond

The place at Martha's Vineyard where Isabella is killed.

Manhattan's Criminal Courts Building

Where Alex works as a prosecutor.

Upper East Side

Where Alex lives in a high-rise apartment.

Steve's Pizza

The pizza place near Alex's apartment where she frequently orders.

Complex

Where Jed works.

The University Club

Where Jed is when Alex confronts him about his affair with Isabella.

Filofax

The planner Isabella carried that was taken by her killer.



Lawyer's Digest

Where Ellen Goldman says she works as a freelance writer.

Prosac

David Mitchell's dog, the dog is called "Zac" and it's he who first finds Alex in the park.



Themes

Trust

Trust is a major theme throughout the book and applies to several of the characters with Alex as a prime example. Alex works with cases involving horrible abuse and there are some who believe that she would become jaded because of it. However, she points out that most men aren't like this and that she trusts the average human being to be above this type of behavior. This level of trust is required for Alex to continue her dedication to her job.

Another aspect of Alex's trust is seen when she tells her boyfriend Jed details about Isabella's death and the case as it stands at that point. Alex trusts that Jed will keep these details to himself. It's a sign of her innate trust that she doesn't see the need to tell him that he can't tell anyone those things she's shared with him, believing that common sense will keep him from it. When she finds out that he has betrayed her trust, she is angry but not so much that she completely loses her trust in him.

An interesting point is seen when Alex realizes that her friend Isabella and her boyfriend have engaged in an affair. With her trust so completely betrayed, she is furious and it's evident that she won't allow Jed a place in her life after that. Though Alex's trust is trampled by Jed and Isabella, she continues to feel safe with Mike, Maureen, Mercer and David. It's a testament of her natural tendency to trust in others that she doesn't let herself become jaded by either the job or Jed's betrayal.

Obsession

Ellen Goldman's need to believe that Jed Segal loves her is an obsession fed by her neurotic mind though it seems likely that Jed himself may have fed her obsession early in their relationship. It's noted that this kind of obsession is typically held by women who pin their hopes on men who are in the limelight, usually as movie stars or higher political figures. Jed's quest for a political office seems to have first put him in contact with Ellen and brought her attention to him. Ellen begins attending all of Jed's functions and puts herself in his path as often as possible. She comes to believe that if the external factors were eliminated, she and Jed would live happily ever after and it's this belief that causes her to kill Isabella and to try to kill Alex.

It's not until Alex is alone with Ellen as the story is drawing to a climax that Alex figures out that Ellen has this obsession for Jed. She plays into Ellen's beliefs, promising to leave and that she's never going to reconcile with Jed in an effort to stall Ellen, and it's long enough to allow Mike and David to find them. To a lesser degree, Jed's obsessions run the storyline. Jed is a self-absorbed person with little interest in what others need as long as he is fulfilling his own desires. Jed's obsessed with self-gratification and he seems indifferent to whether his actions hurt others. It's Jed's need for fame and his



desire for beautiful women that apparently sparks Ellen's obsession with him, though it could be said that Jed was as innocent on this front as were Isabella and Alex.

Friendship

Alex depends heavily on her friends and it's noteworthy that many of her good friends are also co-workers. This is seen clearly in her relationship with Mike Chapman and Wally Mercer. When Alex discovers that Jed has had an affair and goes to confront him, Mike goes alone and as they are leaving, Mike points out that they could now undress and make a grand exit. Though he is joking, his light-hearted attempt at humor is positive in that it helps Alex relieve some of the stress of the moment. Later, when she's at home alone and battling the despondent attitude, Mike and Mercer see her lights and go to her apartment where they spend the night talking and helping her get past the pain of the loss.

Alex is fortunate in her friendships but doesn't take any of them for granted. As that first night after her breakup with Jed draws to a close, she says that she's lucky to have such good friends and lucky that they helped her through that night. Alex is also friends with David Mitchell, a psychiatrist who lives next door and who is the first on the scene when Alex is held captive by Ellen. David insists on going in the ambulance with Alex, saying that he's a doctor in order to gain the privilege. Alex again realizes her good fortune with regard to her friendships.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from Alex Cooper's point of view. This perspective is limited to only Alex's point of view, which is appropriate for the story. This means that the details of Isabella's murder are kept from the reader until Alex learns about them, which preserves the suspense. This is necessary for the story and there is no other viable option open to the author. The details of the various aspects of the story, such as the identity of Isabella's murder and the innocence of other characters, are revealed to the reader only as Alex becomes aware of them. If the author had used a more omniscient perspective, the suspense would have been eliminated, making the story less interesting. The limited perspective could mean that the reader is left in the dark as to learning the identities of some characters, but the author offers details about the characters, limited only to what Alex knows about them. For example, Jed is Alex's boyfriend and he is identified as a banker and as Alex's boyfriend. Jed's relationship with Isabella is presented as Alex knows it: he's met her once and followed up to make sure she's getting the help she needs in tracking down a crooked accountant. The reader only knows of Jed's affair with Isabella when Alex learns of it. This is acceptable and appropriate for the perspective.

Setting

The story is set in the eastern United States with two specific regional settings, New York and Martha's Vineyard. Both settings in general are real and believable. The book is copyrighted 1996 and it seems reasonable that the story is set somewhere in this time period. The majority of the characters would have cell phones in a more recent time but do not have them, indicating that the story is set in a time prior to the ever day use of cellular telephone technology. The regional settings are described only with details that are important to the story. For example, Martha's Vineyard becomes a setting because it's where Isabella is killed and therefore where some of the investigation takes place. The descriptions of Alex's house on Martha's Vineyard are sketchy except as they pertain to the investigation. For example, the reader learns that the house is on a road called Daggett's Pond Way but little about the decor of the house itself. Information about Martha's Vineyard itself is presented in great detail. Alex tells Mike all about the history of the island and the geography as they are planning their first trip there together. The two are headed to Martha's Vineyard in order to look for details about the death of Isabella Lascar and Alex stops their discussion to talk about the island. This seem somewhat out of place but the author's objective—to give the reader information about the island—is met through this conversation. The details about people and events in New York include some that are not relevant to the main story line but these also add believability to the story.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward tone with few words that could be considered difficult. The few of those that do appear are easily grasped by reading for context. The story is generally hopeful in tone, which is in direct conflict with what some people may believe about Alex's job as a prosecutor in sex crimes. Alex notes that most people would believe that her job is hopeless and horrific, but that she finds hope in the positive side of her job: her ability to find and bring criminals to justice. Alex's hopeful attitude is accurately translated by the author and becomes the tone of the story. This is true even though Alex learns that her boyfriend and a woman she considered a friend are having an affair. Alex's sense of hope is also seen in her personal relationships, including with the officer who works on the case, Mike. There are some curse words used and some readers may find these offensive.

Structure

The story is divided into chapters that are titled "Chapter" followed by a numbers through chapter twenty-six. The titles give no clue as to upcoming events. The chapters range from about six or eight pages to as many as eighteen or twenty. Many of the chapters are about eight to twelve pages. Generally, the story follows a chronological order but the main story line - the mystery of the death of Isabella Lascar - is slowed by several subplots. These subplots include a rapist who is terrorizing women and evades capture for a long period of time as well as other aspects of Alex's job. For example, the action on the death of Isabella is stopped as Alex talks with a woman who has been touched inappropriately by her mailman. In most stories, these subplots might eventually tie in to the main plot but in this case they do not. There are some letters included in the story from Cordella Jeffers and these are set apart by indenting, making it clear that it is a letter. The story is copyrighted 1996.



Quotes

"But like the overwhelming number of young lawyers on the staff, I fell in love with the challenge of the work - trying complicated felony cases to juries, working around the clock with cops in station houses and at crime scenes, and generally being on the side of the angels in the endless battles against violent crime in the big city." Chapter 2, Page 7

"I'm tired of being Scarlett O'Hara. In my next life I'm going to come back as Melanie Wilkes, fragile and helpless." Chapter 4, Page 27

"I mean if they're not domestic or drug-related, then the killer and victim have absolutely no connection. The best cop in the world can spend a lifetime on a case and never solve it unless somebody walks into the station house and confesses." Chapter 6, Page 50

"You can keep the harasser a certain number of feet away from the victim's door, order him not to enter her workplace, and demand that his calls and letters cease, but once she's an open target walking in a public space or street or subway, the thin sheet of paper handed to her by a judge as an order of the court is as worthless as Confederacy currency." Chapter 9, Page 81

"Strange business, I acknowledged to myself. I'm looking for news of a good rape case to serve as a distraction from a murder investigation and my own love life." Chapter 11, Page 103

"Well, these are the professionals who hold a camera in front of a hysterical woman's face and ask how it felt to have watched a grizzly bear eat her three children while camping in Yosemite. It's a job." Chapter 13, Page 136

"Call off your APB, Detective Chapman, that rotten, lowlife piece of excrement standing next to the screen goddess on her way to my home is Jed Segal." Chapter 15, Page 154

"The Easter bunny, the tooth fair, Santa Claus and Jed Segal - I had believed in each of them and they had proven to be among life's great disappointments." Chapter 16, Page 169

"Mike's right - they think we're all stupid in law enforcement." Chapter 20, Page 214

"Enough about me, now, let's talk about what I thought about me." Chapter 21, Page 229

"At least, my body or my blood in her rented car would link her to my death. A wave of nausea swept through me at the thought of the possibility of those two words, 'my death.'" Chapter 25, Page 286

"Shit, maybe they need a sex crimes prosecutor in Wyoming or Montana. Someplace without investment bankers and without erotomaniacs." Chapter 25, Page 299



Topics for Discussion

Who is Alexandra Cooper? What kind of work does she do? What kind of person is she? What pieces of the story do you use as a base for these characterizations?

Who is Jed Segal? How does he come to know Isabella Lascar? What is their relationship? What is the outcome of this relationship and of his relationship with Alex?

Who is Mike Chapman? Maureen Forester? Wally Mercer? How do these characters interact with Alex? What are their roles in the investigation into the death of Isabella Lascar? What are their roles in Alex's work?

What do people assume about the impact of Alex's job on her daily life? What does Alex say is actually the case? Why does Alex remain devoted to her job?

How does Alex meet Ellen Goldman? How does Jed meet Ellen? What is Ellen's "cover story?" What is her real story? How does Alex figure this out? How does Mike figure it out?

Who is David Mitchell? Who is Zac? How does Alex know David? What is David's role in solving the murder of Isabella Lascar? What is David's role in Alex's life? What kind of person is David? How do David and Zac help save Alex?

Who is Isabella Lascar? What kind of person is she when interacting with her friends? What does this say about her personality? Give at least two examples of how she betrayed those who befriended her.