

# **L.A. Requiem Study Guide**

## **L.A. Requiem by Robert Crais**

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# Plot Summary

Elvis Cole agrees to work with his partner Joe Pike to find Karen Garcia, a former girlfriend of Pike's, who has gone missing. Soon, they learn that her body has been found by the Los Angeles Police Department in Lake Hollywood. Karen's father, Frank Garcia, begs the two private detectives to work with the LAPD to catch his daughter's killer, and Cole and Pike agree. Harvey Krantz, the lead detective for the LAPD, hates Joe Pike and refuses to cooperate with Cole, but Garcia insists that the two men remain involved.

Pike's history with the LAPD prevents him from working productively with the police force, so Cole goes to the Parker Center and meets Samantha Dolan, a clever, tough cop who resents having to baby-sit the unwelcome private detective. Soon, Cole realizes that there is more to this murder than meets the eye, and he learns that Karen Garcia is actually the fifth victim to be killed by the same serial killer in the last two years. Krantz admits that the Robbery-Homicide unit has been tasked to discover the identity of this killer, and he confesses that he suspects Eugene Dersh, one of the two men who discovered Karen's body. Cole and Pike both doubt that Dersh is a serial killer.

Meanwhile, Pike recalls much of his painful childhood, the time that he spends in the military as a young man, and his relationship with Karen Garcia, which ends when Karen realizes that Pike is in love with Paulette Wozniak, Pike's partner's wife. Pike is a notorious former cop that many other police officers would love to see incarcerated, so when Eugene Dersh is shot and an eyewitness puts Joe Pike at the scene of the crime, Krantz relishes the opportunity to arrest his longtime rival.

Cole continues to work towards finding Karen's killer, but his personal life suffers. Samantha Dolan expresses interest in Cole, but he has a long-term relationship with a lawyer named Lucy who has recently moved to Los Angeles to be closer to Cole. He attempts to keep Dolan at an arm's length out of respect for his relationship, but his attraction to her makes it a constant struggle. Once Pike escapes from prison, Lucy loses faith in him, and her doubts hurt Cole deeply. Their relationship falters under the intense stress of Cole's work and his refusal to make her a priority.

Cole and Dolan continue the investigation on their own, learning that the six victims all testified against Lennie DeVille, a pedophile who Pike and his partner arrested right before Wozniak killed himself. They soon uncover the identity of Laurence Sobek, a young man who had lived with DeVille before DeVille died in prison and who has been working at Parker Center under another name for the last two years. Sobek is their killer, but they must find him. The Robbery-Homicide team raids his house, but he has booby-trapped the apartment and Samantha Dolan dies in the operation. Cole fears that Sobek may try to kidnap or kill Lucy and her son, but then realizes that he wants to kill all of the people who hurt DeVille. He has gone to kill Abel Wozniak's widow.

After a shoot-out at Paulette Wozniak's house, Cole and Pike are both shot and Sobek is killed. The cops can tie Sobek to all the murders except Dersh's, so Pike must run



from Paulette's house. Cole helps him escape, and so along with getting a physical wound, he loses his private detective license and his relationship with Lucy. Soon, however, Cole connects Sobek to Dersh's murder, and Pike's name is cleared. Frank Garcia helps Cole regain his detective license, and Cole feels hope that he may redeem himself to the woman he loves.



# Chapter 1-2

## Chapter 1-2 Summary

L.A.-based private detective Elvis Cole is helping his longtime girlfriend Lucy Chenier move into her new apartment when he gets a phone call from his partner Joe Pike. Pike says that local celebrity Frank Garcia fears that his daughter has been kidnapped. Cole leaves for Garcia's house, where the man describes Karen's disappearance the day before. She went running around Lake Hollywood and never came back. Cole is certain that she simply forgot to come by her father's house, but Garcia insists that his daughter is in trouble.

Pike and Cole drive to Karen's favorite smoothie shop. On the way, Pike reveals that he briefly dated Karen Garcia years before. No one at the smoothie store remembers having seen Karen the day before. The two detectives drive around Karen's running route until they find a homeless man named Edward Deege, who remembers a car like Pike's pulling up next to Karen, then speeding away. Pike and Cole discover Karen's car parked back at the beginning of her route, and Cole knows that something bad has happened to her.

## Chapter 1-2 Analysis

The first chapters of the novel set up the dynamic between Elvis Cole and his girlfriend, Lucy, as well as the relationship between Cole and Joe Pike. Cole and Lucy have a strong relationship, and even though she needs his help to move into her apartment, she insists that he investigate Karen's disappearance. Both are nervous about Lucy's move to LA, since they have never lived in the same city before and neither knows what the move will do to their relationship.

Cole and Pike have a long-standing friendship, although Cole often notes that Pike is enigmatic and prefers silence to idle chatter. Cole is accustomed to his partner's reclusive nature, but Edward Deege plants the first seeds of suspicion when he points out that a car identical to Pike's approached Karen on her run, and that a driver resembling Pike then steered the car away from the runner. Pike certainly seems like a shady character, but he confesses early on that he had a relationship with Karen, which is why he refuses to be paid by Frank Garcia. He is both secretive and morally upstanding.



## Chapter 3-4

### Chapter 3-4 Summary

A flashback sequence reveals how Pike met Karen Garcia. She is working at a day care center and calls the police to complain about a man standing across the street photographing the children at play. Joe Pike, then a street officer, and his partner Abel Wozniak respond to the call. Wozniak recognizes the description of the photographer as Lennie DeVille, a known pedophile. Pike promises Karen to take care of the situation, and Karen gives Pike her phone number.

Back in present day, Cole and Pike visit Karen Garcia's apartment, where they encounter a team of LAPD officers who tell them that Karen's body has just been discovered in Lake Hollywood. At Frank Garcia's request, the two detectives go to the site where the body lies. Harvey Krantz, lead detective for the elite Robbery-Homicide Unit of the Los Angeles Police Department, arrives and announces that he is in control of the investigation. Krantz sees Pike and confronts him. The conversation grows heated until Mr. Garcia calls and asks Pike and Cole to return to his home.

### Chapter 3-4 Analysis

The flashback sequence reveals a great deal of Joe Pike's character. First of all, his quiet nature is not a recent development, but rather a lifelong trait. Karen Garcia is fascinated by his coolness, as well as his physical appeal, and assertively asks him to remove his sunglasses so that she can see his eyes. Pike is not invulnerable, despite appearances, and Karen Garcia is a strong, confident woman. When Pike learns of her death, Cole notes that his partner barely responds. His neutral mask is so thick that he can hide even the shock of loss. That mask can also control contempt, as Pike obviously feels toward the overbearing Harvey Krantz, and which Krantz returns in kind. The two men have an unpleasant history together, and Krantz zeros in on Pike with an intensity that suggests that the LAPD detective has a score to settle with the private detective. At one point, Pike calls Krantz "pants", and Krantz nearly explodes. The significance of that nickname will go a long way towards explaining Krantz's animosity towards Pike.



## Chapter 5-6

### Chapter 5-6 Summary

Pike and Cole arrive at Mr. Garcia's house, where Mr. Montoya, Garcia's lawyer, asks that Pike and Cole remain on the case in conjunction with the LAPD. Neither Cole nor the police department are pleased with this suggestion, but at Garcia's desperate plea, they agree. Cole returns to the scene of the crime to watch the body for Mr. Garcia. He spends the rest of the day watching the LAPD process the crime scene.

That night, Cole invites Lucy and her son to his house to try to block out the day. Pike drops by unannounced to discuss the case, and he mentions that Cole will have to deal with the LAPD on his own, because most of the cops who know Pike have despised him since Pike killed his partner, Abel Wozniak, years ago.

Meanwhile, Edward Deege makes his way to a commercial area to panhandle money for dinner. In an alley, he sees the truck identical to Joe Pike's. A large man wearing sunglasses steps out of the truck and kills Deege.

### Chapter 5-6 Analysis

The tensions between private investigators Cole and Pike and their LAPD counterparts first arise here. The LAPD is unwilling to cooperate with independent investigators for various reasons. First, to concede that a private team could trump the police force would be a major blow to the reputation of the LAPD. Second, if and when the case comes to court, the involvement of a third party will cast doubt upon the integrity of the evidence. The fewer people who handle the evidence, the better.

These chapters further enhance the reader's suspicion of Joe Pike. Once he admits that Wozniak's death is his fault, both Lucy and the reader are shocked. Then, the one witness to the Karen Garcia's last few moments of life is killed by a man who drives the same car as Pike and who fits Pike's description, down to his sunglasses and build.





## Chapter 7-8

### Chapter 7-8 Summary

Crime Scene Investigator John Chen returns to the scene of Karen Garcia's murder in the hopes of turning up more evidence. He still cannot find the place where the murderer hid. Joe Pike arrives and, without giving his name, helps Chen locate the shell casing and a partial boot print, as well as some tire tread marks and an oil drip. Chen happily takes credit for the discovery.

Meanwhile, Cole arrives at Parker Center for his first day with the LAPD on Karen's case. Krantz introduces Cole to Samantha Dolan, a prickly detective who resents the babysitting assignment. The Robbery-Homicide team meets and Krantz continues to snub Cole and resist cooperating. Cole reads much of the paperwork already compiled on the murder, and has more questions for Eugene Dersh and Riley Ward, the men who discovered Karen's body.

In a flashback sequence, a younger Harvey Krantz, working for Internal Affairs, is convinced that street cop Joe Pike is in cahoots with his partner Abel Wozniak in a crime partnership with thieves. Krantz interrogates Pike to the point of physically provoking him, at which point Pike defends himself and scares Krantz so badly that the young detective soils himself.

### Chapter 7-8 Analysis

These chapters begin to develop the central theme of motive in this novel. John Chen, for example, wants to do a thorough investigation not for the sake of justice but rather to gain notoriety with his female coworkers. Many of the police officers are driven not by desire to know the truth but rather by a desire to foil the investigation of Elvis Cole. Finally, through the flashback sequence, it becomes clear what Harvey Krantz's motive is: he wants to humiliate Joe Pike in return for the humiliation that still haunts him when his colleagues or superiors call him "Pants" instead of Krantz.



# Chapter 9-10

## Chapter 9-10 Summary

Cole persists in remaining involved with Krantz's investigation, even though Krantz continues to sabotage Cole's efforts. He tells Cole that Karen's autopsy will take place that afternoon; however, by the time Cole arrives at the morgue with a slightly more cooperative Samantha Dolan, the procedure is over. Cole demands to see copies of the autopsy report and grows more suspicious that the LAPD is hiding something from him. He takes matters into his own hands and interviews Eugene Dersh, one of the men who discovered Karen's body. Cole asks Dersh about Edward Deege and the red truck that the hobo described, but Deege does not recall anything suspicious. As Cole leaves, he spots an undercover police car following him.

He returns home with Lucy, where Pike is waiting for him with a copy of the criminalist's crime scene report. Cole shares his suspicions about the police department with Pike, then settles in for a romantic evening with Lucy.

A flashback sequence finds Pike as a nine-year-old boy hiding in the woods outside his home, dreading his father's return. His mother calls him into the house for dinner, and Joe feels overwhelming anxiety as he makes his way home. His father, drunk and belligerent, flies into a rage in the middle of dinner and starts to beat his wife. Joe tries to pull his father away, but is not strong enough. He runs from the house into the safety of the woods, and waits for his father to leave.

## Chapter 9-10 Analysis

Cole suspects the Los Angeles Police Department of hiding something important. The kind of sabotage perpetrated by Krantz far exceeds that of an irate cop whose pride is wounded at the idea of outside help. The most difficult obstacle for these detectives is their unwillingness to cooperate with each other. In fact, that staunch solitude hinders the investigation. Cole manages to create a rapport with Samantha Dolan by acknowledging her surliness and telling her that he realizes how frustrating it must be to have to tolerate Krantz's grandstanding, but Cole is not to blame and will not be Dolan's whipping boy. His sympathy and strength appeal to Dolan, who warms to the private detective, and Cole, though deeply in love with Lucy, notices for the first time what an attractive woman Dolan is.

The flashback sequence gives the reader insight into Pike's upbringing. Pike was raised in a violent, unloving home, and that childhood justifies much of Pike's self-containment and ironclad self-control. That tumultuous youth could also go a long way toward explaining an unpredictable brutal streak in Pike's character. Since the identity of Karen's killer is anonymous beyond Deege's testimony that the killer looks just like Pike

and drives a car just like Pike's, this new knowledge of Pike's trauma could be as incriminating as it is revealing.



# Chapter 11-12

## Chapter 11-12 Summary

Cola arrives at Parker Center and senses an immediate, marked change in the mood of the team. Dolan gives him the reports that he has requested, but refuses to answer his questions about the case. When Cole reads the reports from Parker Center, he realizes that Krantz has doctored the criminalist's report that Pike showed him the night before. The autopsy report must have some missing information as well. He calls a contact in the coroner's office to confirm that Krantz is feeding him disinformation.

Early the next morning Cole meets Jerry, his contact at the coroner's office. Jerry reveals that Karen was shot with a gun that had an empty bleach bottle taped over the barrel as a makeshift silencer. Even more interesting, Karen is the fifth victim murdered in this way over the last year and a half. Cole now knows why this investigation has been tightly sealed: a serial killer is murdering Los Angeles residents, seemingly at random.

## Chapter 11-12 Analysis

Cole's suspicions have been confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt. The police have been hiding crucial information from him in the investigation of what he thought was just one murder. In sabotaging Cole's work, the police have essentially helped the killer slip away, forcing the question, "who is really the enemy?" The killer's motive is to kill and escape; Cole's motive is to catch the killer; the LAPD's motive seems to be looking good to the public and making sure that Cole fails.



# Chapter 13-14

## Chapter 13-14 Summary

Cole confronts Dolan about the fraudulent reports and the serial killer. She is amazed at his investigative skill, but fears that if she cooperates with him she may lose her job. Nevertheless, she reveals that the LAPD suspects Eugene Dersh is the killer. Cole's instincts cause him to virulently disagree. Cole fills Pike in on the status of the investigation, including the LAPD's suspicion of Dersh. Cole maintains his belief that Dersh is innocent, but Pike wants to see the man and make his own judgment. Pike goes to Dersh's house and watches him through the window. His instincts agree with Cole's, so he decides to wait and see what the Los Angeles Police Department turns up in their investigation.

In another flashback, Joe Pike as a seventeen-year-old young man performs a reconnaissance drill for two of his Marine Corps sergeants. Pike is a natural soldier who reads voraciously, speaks little, and excels in all exercises. Sergeant Ames wants to recruit Pike for special forces. Pike goes on to serve with distinction in Vietnam.

## Chapter 13-14 Analysis

The attraction between Cole and Dolan continues to grow. Cole notes specific details of her appearance and demeanor. Although he realizes that he treads on dangerous ground, he cannot help but acknowledge that he is drawn to Dolan's smart, tough persona. He also respects her honesty when he confronts her, and in return she respects his investigative skill. Cole's relationship with Lucy appears to be rock-solid, but Dolan's presence in Cole's professional life poses a subtle threat to Cole's personal idyll.

Pike remains doggedly on the path towards finding Karen's killer. He uses the skills that he cultivated as a young marine to get close to Dersh and observe his personality at home. He is, in many ways, a programmed machine. Pike trusts his own intuition, but even he admits that such a feeling can be fooled. This bold move of approaching a suspect at home unannounced will have further-reaching consequences that Pike can know.



# Chapter 15-16

## Chapter 15-16 Summary

Cole, Pike, and Dolan meet with Frank Garcia, who does not recognize the names of the other four victims of the serial killer. Garcia does, however, immediately sense that Dolan knows more than she is telling, but he allows her to search Karen's childhood room. The detectives find nothing but letters from Karen's pen pal, some of which deal with Karen's relationship with a cop named Joe. Karen writes that she fears Joe may be in love with someone else.

Pike reflects on a time when he took Karen to a police department family picnic. They meet up with Paulette Wozniak, Pike's partner's wife. She confides in Joe that she fears her husband may be having an affair. Joe knows that Abel is, in fact, having an affair, as well as participating in a larceny ring, but his feelings for Paulette prevent him from telling her the truth. Karen watches the exchange from a distance and realizes that Joe loves Paulette.

Cole, Dolan, and Pike, along with a handful of other police officers, stake out Karen's funeral. Before the service begins, a throng of reporters surrounds Eugene Dersh. Somehow they have discovered the truth about Karen's death, and that the police suspect Dersh. Frank Garcia becomes hysterical, and Krantz is furious that the investigation is being compromised by publicity.

## Chapter 15-16 Analysis

Garcia reveals himself to be an apt judge of character and a street-smart businessman when he immediately sees through Dolan's cover story. Cole respects the man's intuition, since he himself had the same thought early on in the situation, but did not share Garcia's certainty. Cole also comes to respect Dolan's ability as a detective, throughout the encounter with Garcia and the thorough search of Karen's room. Though the search turns up nothing relevant to Karen's murder, Cole does learn more about her relationship with Pike. The letters that he reads describe a handsome, soft-spoken man whose heart belongs to another woman. As it turns out, that woman is the wife of Pike's partner. Such a romance would result in total ostracism from the LAPD, and Pike is a man of honor and integrity, even if his partner does not seem to be one as well.

The media is a major catalyst for the investigation. By putting Dersh under a public microscope, the media effectively indicts the man in the hearts and minds of its patrons, and makes proving a case against him much more difficult. Krantz knows that he has lost the element of surprise, and that loss could set into motion the greater loss of his ultimate goal: to solve the case in the public eye and look great doing it.



# Chapter 17-18

## Chapter 17-18 Summary

Cole and Pike arrive at Parker Center after the funeral, and Pike receives a chilly welcome from many of Wozniak's friends who still work there. They meet Krantz, Dolan, and Frank Garcia, who is still distraught from the scene at Karen's funeral. Dolan confesses that Cole and Pike knew about the serial killer. Krantz takes the opportunity to insinuate that Cole and Pike must have leaked the story to the press, and while Garcia does not agree, he does believe that from this point on the Police Department should have exclusive control over the case.

Cole returns home, upset that he has been fired. Eugene Dersh is being hounded by the press and Cole is powerless to clear his name. Lucy returns from work and supports Cole. She is preparing to romance his awful day away when suddenly Samantha Dolan arrives, slightly drunk. She urges Cole to work towards exonerating Dersh, then leaves.

## Chapter 17-18 Analysis

Krantz manages to win the battle on the day of Karen's funeral, despite the leak to the media. He embarrasses Cole and Pike, and even ensures that they are removed from the case. Not only has he notched a personal victory on his belt, with the one-upmanship over his longtime rival Pike, but he also prepares for his own professional glory. Without the private detectives on hand to take credit, Krantz knows that he will be the man in the spotlight when Karen Garcia's killer is brought to justice.

Cole's personal life, on the other hand, begins to waver. Even though he deeply loves his girlfriend and continues to appreciate her support and beauty, his interest in Samantha Dolan graduates from merely professional to more deeply personal, and she reciprocates. Cole is not fully aware of Dolan's reciprocity, however, until she arrives at his house unannounced, and exchanges some thinly-veiled innuendo with a protective but genteel Lucy. Lucy warns Cole that Dolan likes him, and her intuition is accurate.



# Chapter 19-20

## Chapter 19-20 Summary

The next morning, Cole returns to Lake Hollywood and examines the place where Riley Ward and Eugene Dersh left the trail and discovered Karen's body. They left the trail at an overgrown, poorly lit spot. Cole decides to visit Ward and ask why they picked that place to wander off the path. Ward cannot give truthful answers to Cole's questions, but Ward's receptionist confirms that Ward, a married family man, has been having an affair with Dersh. Cole shares the new information with Dolan, who makes a few digs at Lucy's heavy southern accent, then tells him that Edward Deege's body has been found.

Meanwhile, the killer injects himself with steroids and meditates on his plan to avenge the loss of the man who saved his life. His self-training is very different from that which Joe Pike imposed on himself as a seventeen-year-old boy training for the Marine Corps. Running through the woods, he comes across a group of high school dropouts who are about to set a stray cat on fire. Pike stops them, but Daryl, one of the boys, badly beats the younger Pike. A few days later, Daryl receives his orders to go to Vietnam. Just then, Joe Pike returns and beats Daryl with a baseball bat, getting revenge for his own beating and simultaneously rescuing Daryl from war.

## Chapter 19-20 Analysis

The motives of Eugene Dersh and Riley Ward are exposed in these chapters, which explain the men's thin explanations of their activities on the day that they discovered Karen's body. The intense power of love shocks Cole when he realizes that Ward jeopardizes his entire idyllic life for a single person. He thinks of Lucy and Samantha, and on some level realizes that he is standing at a similar crossroads between the beautiful life he has and the dangerous affair he could have.

Joe Pike further reveals his humanity when he sacrifices himself to save a cat. Because he has lived in a home of physical brutality and bullying, he both recognizes and despises Daryl's cruelty in picking on a small, defenseless creature. This chapter also begins to build a case against Pike as the killer, since this is the first time that the reader steps inside the killer's head.





# Chapter 21-23

## Chapter 21-23 Summary

Pike wakes up from a dream and cannot return to sleep. He goes running and meets a young runaway named Trudy. At the same time as Joe's run, Dersh's next-door neighbor spots a man who looks just like Joe Pike walk into Dersh's house and shoot the man dead.

Early the next morning, two Robbery-Homicide detectives wake up Cole and tell him that they have arrested Joe Pike for the murder of Eugene Dersh. Cole races downtown after reassuring Lucy that Pike would not have done such a thing. Unfortunately, Dersh's neighbor picks Pike out of the lineup, and the police book him for murder.

Pike meets with his lawyer and explains his alibi, that he was running far away from Dersh's house at the time of the murder. Cole resolves to find the runaway, Trudy, but Krantz is equally resolved to indict Pike. Krantz shows the group video footage of Pike sneaking around Dersh's house on the day that Cole told Pike that Dersh was a suspect. Pike's lawyer begins to lose hope that Pike's innocence can be proved.

## Chapter 21-23 Analysis

Pike is both suspicious and innocent, a combination that bodes ill for his defense. Because he is innocent, he could not have bothered to come up with an alibi, and the chances of locating a runaway who is only known by her first name are slim. Someone is setting him up, masquerading as Pike in order to slander Pike's name and reputation. Cole seems to be Pike's only friend, and his determination to clear his friend's name is evidence of both Cole's integrity and the strength of his friendship. He knows that his greatest enemy will not be the killer, but rather Krantz, whose personal vindictiveness would see Pike incarcerated even if the killer confessed to everything. His greatest personal battle will be removing himself emotionally from the situation. His fear and faith are hindrances to his deductive reasoning.



## Chapter 24-25

### Chapter 24-25 Summary

Cole retraces Pike's running route but cannot find anyone who saw Pike running that morning. He knows that Dersh's killer has inside information on the investigation, and that he is actively impersonating Joe Pike. He calls Dolan, who is drunk again, and asks for her help to clear Pike's name. Dolan has been fired from Robbery-Homicide for admitting to Cole that there is a serial killer on the loose, and she is disappointed that Cole has not returned her advances.

Lucy returns to Cole after work, disturbed by all that she has learned of Pike's past. She believes that he may have killed Eugene Dersh, and Cole cannot believe her lack of faith. Meanwhile, the real killer stalks his sixth victim at a nearby park even as he relishes his complete victory over Joe Pike.

The next morning, Joe bids Lucy an awkward good-bye. As soon as she leaves, Dolan arrives. They talk about Pike's partner's death. Allegedly, Pike and Wozniak followed known pedophile Lennie DeVille to a motel, where Wozniak beat DeVille unconscious. Pike tried to stop him, and during the men's scuffle, Wozniak's gun accidentally fired and killed Wozniak. Dolan believes that a police officer may be setting up Pike because of his partner's shady death. Dolan admits that she cares for Cole and kisses him, but Cole rebuffs her and she leaves.

### Chapter 24-25 Analysis

Cole and Lucy's relationship is cracking, even as all of Cole's energies must be focused on defending his friend. Cole is convinced that Pike is innocent, but no one, not even his girlfriend, will support him. Lucy's failure to believe in Pike and in Cole's judgment hits Cole hard, and he feels as though he must choose between a longtime friend and a longtime love. Dolan, on the other hand, believes that it is possible that Pike is innocent. She shares Cole's suspicion that someone is setting up the former police officer, and her parallel thoughts strengthen Cole where Lucy's opposition had weakened him. Her kiss is not unwelcome, and Cole must fight to reject the brazen woman. After she leaves, he feels guilty but aroused.



# Chapter 26-27

## Chapter 26-27 Summary

Cole plans to visit Pike but cannot stop thinking about Dolan. He loves Lucy but struggles daily to stifle his attraction to the tough woman detective. At Parker Center, he meets Pike and shares his theory that Karen's killer is impersonating him, and may be a cop, based on his inside knowledge of the investigation. Krantz arrives and tells the group that a sixth victim, Jesus Lorenzo, has been found murdered in a park. Though the murder does clear Joe Pike for the serial killer charge, Krantz will continue to build a case against Pike for Dersh's death, and he reveals that he will ask for the death penalty when Pike's day in court arrives.

Cole finally calls Dolan and asks for her help accessing Wozniak's police file. She agrees, coolly, and the two set out for the LAPD storage facility. They find Wozniak's file, but DeVille's file is missing. Cole discovers that Krantz was the officer in charge of investigation Wozniak's involvement in the crime ring, so he decides to visit Mike McConnell, a retired Internal Affairs Supervisor.

In a flashback, Pike spends a Sunday at the Wozniak's house. Abel barbeques and Pike plays with Evelyn, until she runs inside to help Paulette. Pike approaches Abel and tells him that he knows all about the larceny ring with the Chihuahua brothers, and that Wozniak can quit the police force or quit the crime, but Pike will not allow him to continue in this way. Abel threatens Pike, but his partner stands firm.

## Chapter 26-27 Analysis

Even though Pike is not a murderer, Krantz still wants to kill him, allegedly because Krantz suspects that Pike was involved with Wozniak's illegal activities. However, Pike never betrayed the police force. In fact, his history with his partner is not what the police department perceives it to be. Wozniak knew that Pike loved Paulette, but Pike never confessed his feelings to the woman. He also gave his partner the option of bowing out gracefully, either from one profession or the other, but Wozniak rebuffed his partner's offer of help.

Meanwhile, Cole feels guilty about the kiss with Samantha, not only because of his relationship with Lucy but also because he sees how his rejection has affected Dolan. She is tough and outwardly unfazed, but Cole can see that she bristles around him in order to protect herself. That reaction intrigues him and endears her to him, which is why he continues to spend time with her and tolerate her sideways remarks and innuendo.



# Chapter 28-29

## Chapter 28-29 Summary

Cole arrives at McConnell's sod farm and McConnell explains that Wozniak had been under suspicion of involvement with the Chihuahua brothers, members of a burglary ring. Krantz also believes that Pike was involved. McConnell admits that Pike's story of Wozniak's death is fishy, but he also believes in Pike's character, and that Pike would never steal or murder a man in cold blood. Cole realizes that one of Wozniak's informants might be able to tell him more about what happened on the day of Wozniak's death.

Cole visits Paulette Renfro, Wozniak's widow. Paulette speaks warmly about Pike, but becomes uncomfortable and nervous when Cole asks about Wozniak's informants. Wozniak's daughter, Evelyn, mentions that her father's belongings are in a storage unit, and offers to help Cole get into it if he promises to tell her the truth about her father's death.

Meanwhile, Krantz visits Pike in prison and details the evidence against him, including a newly-found gun in the water nearby Pike's running route, as well as an eyewitness that puts a man of Pike's description leaving the scene of Edward Deege's murder. Pike boards a van to be transported to another prison. During the ride, another passenger attacks him. Pike defends himself, and during the scuffle manages to jump out of the van and escape.

## Chapter 28-29 Analysis

Cole is grasping at any information that he can gain in Pike's case at this point, becoming more and more unorthodox in his investigation as the case proceeds. He knows that Krantz is building a case that is made more solid than not by the cunning killer's impersonation of Joe Pike. Cole has blinders on, and cannot see any problem but the most immediate one; therefore, his fight with Lucy remains dormant and rarely considered. When he thinks of her, he worries about the woman he loves, but quickly reminds himself to focus on the task at hand, which is not salvaging his relationship. Luckily, Evelyn, a sullen and unhappy girl, promises to help him gain access to Abel's personal files, even though Paulette staunchly refuses.

Krantz further establishes his disdain of Joe Pike when he visits the prisoner simply to fill him in on the exact details of the case that could result in his execution. He is sadistic and dogged in his determination to see Pike dead. Pike knows that Krantz's motives are more personal than professional, and with the lead detective so dead-set against him, there is little chance that he will not be convicted of these crimes. Whether or not he plans to escape is never explicitly stated, but Joe Pike knows that he must take some

action himself if he is to live long enough to see the woman he loves, Paulette, once again.



# Chapter 30-31

## Chapter 30-31 Summary

Cole comes home to find Pike standing in his kitchen. Pike explains that even though he is innocent, Krantz could still win, and the lead detective will do everything he can to make sure that Pike stays in jail. Cole says that he has been working the case from the Wozniak angle, and fills Pike in on all he has learned. Pike defends Paulette's refusal to cooperate. Just then, Lucy arrives home and demands that Pike leave. Cole refuses to make his friend leave, and Lucy storms out.

Pike leaves in the night, and Dolan arrives to tell Cole that she has been fired from Robbery-Homicide division. She begs him to sleep with her, but Cole refuses. Just then, Lucy returns for her handbag and sees Cole tenderly embracing Samantha Dolan. She races from his home, and this time Cole follows. He hastily explains that he had been in the process of rejecting Dolan, but Lucy is more upset that Cole chose to protect his friendship with Pike over his relationship with her. She asks him to leave.

At the same time, the killer furiously lifts weights to vent his rage that Pike has escaped. He knows that Cole will soon learn his identity, and plans to use Lucy and her son, Ben, to distract the detective.

## Chapter 30-31 Analysis

Things are coming to a head in Cole's personal and professional lives. Cole and Lucy's relationship is at a breaking point. Cole protects Pike's safety over Lucy's, even though Pike can protect himself, and if the police find him in Cole's house while Lucy is there then she could lose her job and custody of her son. The fight leaves Cole confused, because he knows that he would make the same decision if he had another chance, but he does not know what that means about his relationship. Samantha Dolan is in many ways Lucy's opposite. Where Lucy is conservative, Dolan takes a chance. When Lucy is coolly polite, Dolan is blunt and unsophisticated. When Dolan arrives at Cole's house after Pike leaves, he is tempted to seduce her, but his guilt and love for Lucy stop him.

Cole is very close to catching the killer; so close, in fact, that even the killer knows how close Cole is to learning his identity. What Cole does not know is how far the killer will go to carry out his mission. He may even put the lives of Lucy and Ben at risk.



## Chapter 32-33

### Chapter 32-33 Summary

Cole finally returns home, where he speaks to Evelyn Wozniak about Abel Wozniak's belongings that are in storage. Cole drives to the storage facility and retrieves Wozniak's personal logs. Pike arrives when Cole is about to leave and explains that he cannot allow anything in the storage unit to embarrass or hurt Paulette. He reveals the truth about Wozniak's death: that given the choice between retirement and conviction, Wozniak killed himself. Pike covered up the suicide to make sure that Paulette could collect benefits. In Wozniak's logs, Pike and Cole come across the name Laurence Sobek, a young informant who had been involved with Lennie DeVille.

Cole goes to Dolan's house since he cannot reach her by phone. He shows her Abel's logs and Dolan agrees that Sobek needs to be accounted for. She manages to track down DeVille's file from the District Attorney, and discovers that the six victims of the serial killer all testified against DeVille. Cole knows that if he finds Sobek and garners a confession for Dersh's murder, then Pike will be exonerated. Dolan knows that apprehending Sobek will get her job back. They decide to track Sobek down. Together, they visit Sobek's mother, a bitter woman who does not know her son's whereabouts but does give the detectives a recent photograph. Both Cole and Dolan recognize Sobek. He works at Parker Center.

As Cole and Dolan close in on him, Sobek finishes booby-trapping his home with a shotgun. He must visit his last victim before he flees.

### Chapter 32-33 Analysis

Cole is distracted by his fight with Lucy, but remains determined to exonerate Pike. Pike finally admits the truth about his love for Paulette, which has been his motive for living as an outcast from his police comrades. Love is, therefore, a powerful driving force in these chapters. Cole cannot help but compare Pike's devotion to Paulette to his own relationship with Lucy. He finds himself disturbed by how easy it was to choose Pike over Lucy, and even more bothered by how quickly and fully he has fallen for Samantha Dolan. Even though he has not acted on the attraction, it still haunts him. Dolan, for her part, is aware of his attraction and uses it to her advantage. However, where her motive had been to crack the case in order to gain Cole's respect, now she wants to crack the case in order to win her job back. Cole's motivation has shifted similarly, away from discovering the truth of Karen's death and towards protecting his friend and partner. The truth becomes a tool for these two detectives, a gambling chip used to leverage power and prestige among other power-hungry allies, like Harvey Krantz.

Sobek's home life is as twisted as Pike's was, which makes Sobek's impersonation of Pike all the more poignant. While Pike uses that painful history to become something of a paradigm of good, Sobek channels his rage and grief toward murder and deception.





# Chapter 34-35

## Chapter 34-35 Summary

Cole insists that he and Dolan bring Krantz into their investigation. He calls Pike to fill him in on Sobek, and Pike says that he will personally visit Paulette to prepare her for the media frenzy that will surround her when her husband's death reemerges. When Cole and Dolan arrive at Parker Center, Dolan exposes the civilian employee known as Curtis Wood to be Laurence Sobek. Wood has had constant access to the investigation. In fact, Cole has spoken to Wood on more than one occasion about progress in the case. Dolan also reveals that DeVille's trial connects the six formerly unconnected victims. In the office of his supervisor, Krantz grudgingly agrees to proceed on Dolan's information, and to allow Dolan to accompany the arresting team.

Dolan, high from her professional turnaround, tells Cole that she plans to steal him from Lucy. Cole does not respond to this advance, but he does admit that he has deep feelings for her. Once the team arrives at Sobek's house, Krantz informs Dolan that she must stay in her car. She refuses and charges into Sobek's house, straight into the rigged shotgun's blast. She dies.

## Chapter 34-35 Analysis

Even though the truth has been uncovered, it cannot yet be proven. Dolan has earned her place on the Robbery-Homicide team for the second time in her career, and Cole is confident that Pike's name will soon be cleared.

The major obstacle now becomes Harvey Krantz and his unwillingness to share credit. In fact, his hesitation to even act on solid information shows that his motive remains unchanged. He wants, ultimately, to cripple Cole's capabilities, punish Joe Pike, and look good in front of his boss. It is this motive that drives him to agree to allow Dolan on the raid while he is in his superior's presence, and then rescind that policy once he realizes that Dolan could receive the credit for the investigation's success. That order to stay put is what drives Dolan to charge into Sobek's house and be shot to death.

Cole is not a perfect man, and his attraction to Dolan proves that fact. However, when he hears the shotgun blast, he runs into the house without any cover and without a thought to his own security. He may be weak to attraction, but Cole's heart is pure in its desire to protect the people he loves.



## Chapter 36-37

### Chapter 36-37 Summary

As the shock of Dolan's death sets in with the detectives at Sobek's house, Sobek himself arrives at his last victim's home and waits for the victim to return. Meanwhile, Vole and Krantz inspect Sobek's apartment and discover murder weapons, empty bleach bottles, and Lennie DeVille's police file. Sobek is the serial killer, but Cole knows that he is still not tied to Dersh's murder, and that Krantz remains convinced that Pike is guilty. Then, Cole discovers photographs of Lucy's son, Ben. Lucy is furious that her son's life is in danger, and Cole feels intense guilt as he races to Ben's summer camp. Ben is safely protected at camp, and Cole realizes that Sobek's photographs were a distraction. As the LAPD rushes to a summer camp, the killer has made his way to the home of the only other person he can blame for DeVille's death: Abel Wozniak's widow, Paulette. Cole rushes to Palm Springs, leaving Lucy alone once again.

At Paulette's home, Sobek waits for her return and is surprised to see Pike arrive first. Paulette arrives home only moments later, and is amazed and thrilled to see Joe Pike waiting for her. Evelyn, however, is furious that her mother is warmly welcoming the man that Evelyn blames for her father's death. Paulette insists that Pike stay, and she finally confesses to her daughter that Abel killed himself. Evelyn is shocked and heartbroken, and just then Sobek runs into the house and shoots Pike in the chest. Pike fires back, but Sobek's bullet-proof vest stops the bullets. Sobek fires again and drops Pike, then tapes Paulette and Evelyn into chairs. Just then, the Highway Patrol arrives to secure the house before the LAPD arrives. Sobek shoots both patrolmen.

### Chapter 36-37 Analysis

Cole's priorities include Lucy and her son for only a brief moment, when he believes that he has put their lives at risk. However, as soon as he knows that Lucy and Ben are safe, his focus returns once again to Joe Pike and Laurence Sobek. For Lucy, this casting-off is heartbreaking. The man she move to Los Angeles to be with is leaving her alone once again, choosing to protect a friend rather than her. Cole does not see his decision as evidence of how much he loves or does not love Lucy; he simply knows that Pike's situation is more urgent than Lucy's right now. He continues to pick other people over her, and cannot see how deeply his distraction hurts her and damages their relationship.

Joe Pike, on the other hand, finally acts on the love that he has cherished for his entire adult life. When he sees Paulette again, he smiles for the first time in the entire novel. Even though it has been years since they have seen each other, he believes that she has grown only more beautiful and strong. Paulette blooms under his love, and dotes on him.



# Chapter 38-39

## Chapter 38-39 Summary

Krantz and Cole arrive at Paulette's home and see a body lying on the living room floor that Cole recognizes as Joe Pike. Cole goes in, immediately followed by several other detectives, and in a tense shoot-out tries to get Sobek to admit that he killed Eugene Dersh. Sobek shoots Cole in the arm and prepares to shoot Paulette, but Pike regains consciousness long enough to shoot Sobek in the head and save Paulette's life. Cole knows that without Sobek's confession, Pike will still be convicted for the murder of Dersh. Pike, too, realizes his fate, and decides that even with two gunshot wounds, he must escape from Krantz. Krantz tries to stop Pike from staggering from the house, but Cole takes his gun away.

Immediately, Cole is rushed to the hospital for surgery on his arm, as Krantz arrests him for obstruction of justice. He orders another detective to drive Cole to Parker Center for booking that night, but instead, the detective drives to Samantha Dolan's house, where the two men grieve their colleague and friend. Cole spends the night at home.

## Chapter 38-39 Analysis

The villain is dead, yet the real conflict remains unresolved. Krantz still wants to see Joe Pike in jail or underground, and Pike refuses to accept that fate. Cole wants to feel relief that his loved ones are safe and a serial killer is dead, but all he feels is grief at Dolan's death and fear that his relationship with Lucy will never recover from his neglect over the last weeks.

In the aftermath of the shoot-out, no one feels relief. Cole and other detectives grieve for Samantha Dolan. Pike has gone missing, and Cole fears that his friend may bleed to death before he can get medical attention. Cole is also being charged with a felony, which will make him ineligible to be a private detective. In essence, Cole's entire life, personal, professional, physical and romantic, has come crashing down.



# Chapter 40

## Chapter 40 Summary

Cole calls Lucy, but their conversation is cold and depressing. The next day, Cole goes to Parker Center, where he takes a plea bargain and is convicted of a felony without having to spend any time in jail. He will lose his private detective license, and his license to carry a gun. He goes from the LAPD to the hospital, where he undergoes further surgery and has a cast put on his shoulder. His first visitor is Lucy, who does not know if she can forgive him for how deeply he betrayed her. Next, a tearful Frank Garcia arrives and promises Cole that he will do anything he can to make Cole's life easier, for the rest of his life. Finally, Krantz arrives with a group of detectives and reveals that Pike's car has been found, soaked with blood near the desert. Pike still has not been found, and he is still wanted for Dersh's murder.

Cole leaves the hospital the next day, determined to exonerate Pike by placing Sobek at the scene of Dersh's murder. He searches for Pike in the desert day after day, but to no avail. Finally, he reads the criminalist's report from Dersh's crime scene. Cole realizes that some information might be missing, so he calls criminalist John Chen and asks him to meet at Eugene Dersh's house.

## Chapter 40 Analysis

Cole has admitted to committing a felony and will lose his professional success because of it. He has apologized to the love of his life, but cannot win her back until he knows that Joe Pike is safe. He has helped a father avenge his daughter's violent death, and in return he has received a pledge of friendship and loyalty from a powerful local politician. Elvis Cole still wants the truth, because without it he knows that Joe Pike will never again live free.



# Chapter 41-43

## Chapter 41-43 Summary

John Chen meets Cole at Dersh's house. Cole recalls that at Karen Garcia's crime scene, Chen analyzed some oil drips from the killer's car. Cole asks if Chen looked for the same drips at Dersh's house, and Chen realizes that he did not. He spends the rest of the day taking samples from the streets near the murder scene.

Cole receives word that his detective's license and gun license have been revoked. Even worse, his relationship with Lucy is in a free-fall, as every conversation they have is more and more distant. Frank Garcia invites Cole to his home for dinner, and surprises him with a brand-new detective license and gun license. Cole is intensely grateful and emotionally overwhelmed.

The next day, he receives a phone call from a mutual friend about Joe Pike, who may be alive and waiting for Cole in a park in Encino. Cole races out to the desert and finds Joe there. Pike explains that the police are staking out his home and work, and have frozen his credit cards, so he has been in Mexico, hiding and recovering from his wounds. Just then, the LAPD arrives, and SWAT, led by Krantz, corners Joe Pike. Krantz taunts Pike, trying to provoke him into assaulting an officer so that Krantz can finally kill him. Luckily, another detective arrives and stops Krantz, then tells the men that John Chen has successfully placed Sobek's car at Eugene Dersh's house, and Pike has been proven innocent.

Cole returns home with the knowledge that much has changed in his life, but that second chances are possible.

## Chapter 41-43 Analysis

Even though Cole has hit rock-bottom in many areas of his life, he still maintains hope that his lot may improve. First, he continues to work towards exonerating his friend. He believes that there is hope yet for Joe Pike. Cole also learns, in the wake of his professional breakdown, that unwavering loyalty is the greatest gift he could hope for. Cole has lost everything, and Frank Garcia knows that he can give just a little bit back. Finally, Cole sees that his hard work and sacrifice pay off when his friend goes free. Cole can continue to live his life in a city that he loves and earn back the love of Lucy. He is not yet fulfilled, but he recognizes the potential for happiness once again, and can settle for that.



# Characters

## Elvis Cole

Elvis Cole is an LA-based private detective who owns his own agency with longtime friend Joe Pike. Cole is a skilled investigator with a penchant for using bad jokes to appear harmless to possible adversaries. He is physically attractive, well-conditioned, and disarmingly warm and friendly.

He has a long-term girlfriend, a lawyer named Lucy Chenier, who has moved to Los Angeles from Louisiana with her son Ben in order to be closer to Cole. Their relationship at first appears to be rock-solid. Cole supports Lucy's professional ambitions, and she in turn supports Cole's devotion to a job that does not have regular office hours. They are attentive, loving, and patient with each other. However, Elvis's loyalty ultimately lies with Pike, and when Pike faces trouble, Cole drops everything, including his relationship with Lucy, to aid his friend and partner. The arrival of tough, sexy Detective Samantha Dolan further complicates Cole's personal life. Although he never acts on his attraction to the smart, resilient woman, he nevertheless grows more intrigued by her the more he works with her on the intense investigation.

Ultimately, Cole is driven by a desire to discover the truth. He wants to help give Frank Garcia justice for his murdered daughter, and will not tolerate a wrongful incarceration of his friend Pike.

## Joe Pike

Joe Pike is an enigmatic former police officer-turned private detective who co-owns Cole's detective agency. He is renowned for his physical strength and quickness, his quiet demeanor, and his sunglasses. As a child, he suffers through a physically abusive relationship with his father, and he joins the Marine Corps at the age of seventeen in order to escape his home life. He excels as a soldier, is recruited for special forces while still in boot camp, and serves with distinction in Vietnam.

Once he joins the Los Angeles Police Department, he is partnered with Abel Wozniak, a veteran street cop with many sources in the community. Pike falls in love with Wozniak's wife, Paulette, but never expresses his feelings out of respect for his partner's marriage. He soon discovers that Wozniak is corrupt, making money by partnering with petty thieves. Pike corners Wozniak and the man kills himself, resulting in Pike's total ostracism from the rest of the Los Angeles police community.

Pike also has a brief relationship with Karen Garcia, which ends when Karen realizes that Pike loves Paulette. He is stoic, undemonstrative, and unwaveringly moral.



## **Samantha Dolan**

A tough, beautiful detective in Los Angeles' elite Robbery-Homicide unit, Dolan takes her work seriously and enjoys the notoriety of being the only woman at her level of advancement. A brilliant investigator, Dolan threatens Krantz's position as lead detective with her keen eye and dogged investigative style. Krantz, therefore, assigns her to baby-sit Cole while he is working out of Parker Center. Dolan, a consummate professional with a well-honed poker face and a stiff backbone, keeps Cole at a distance at the beginning, largely because she resents the assignment that will keep her away from the bulk of the action. However, she soon warms to the private detective, and falls in love with Cole despite the fact that he is in a committed relationship. Cole returns Dolan's interest but cannot show it without betraying Lucy.

## **Harvey Krantz**

The lead detective for the investigation of the serial murders in the Los Angeles area. Krantz begins his career as an Internal Affairs officer, and at one point attempts to nail Abel Wozniak for his involvement with the Chihuahua brothers' crime ring. Krantz also believes that Joe Pike is corrupt. He tries to investigate Pike but Pike ends up pinning the young detective against a wall and scaring him so badly that he earns the nickname "Pants", which still haunts him right up until he runs into Pike again at Karen Garcia's crime scene.

Krantz is driven by the desire to succeed professionally, no matter the cost, and to humiliate Joe Pike in the same way that Pike has humiliated him.

## **Abel Wozniak**

Joe Pike's former partner, a man who kills himself during the interrogation of pedophile Lennie DeVille because he knows that he will be caught and punished for his illegal dealings with the Chihuahua brothers. He is married to Paulette, the woman that Pike loves, and has a daughter named Evelyn.

## **Paulette Wozniak, Evelyn Wozniak**

Paulette and Evelyn are Abel Wozniak's wife and daughter. Paulette is a beautiful, natural woman who sells real estate, and Evelyn is a sulky, depressed girl who cannot recover from the loss of her father until she learns the truth about his death. Paulette loves Joe Pike and defends him to her daughter, who believes that Pike is to blame for her father's murder.



## **Lennie DeVille**

A known pedophile who victimizes young boys and girls, DeVille is the man who Pike and Wozniak had cornered on the night of Wozniak's death. DeVille goes on to die in prison, but not before he befriends a young runaway boy named Laurence Sobek.

## **Laurence Sobek/Curtis Wood**

Laurence Sobek is the serial killer who is murdering the witnesses who helped to incarcerate Lennie DeVille. His loyalty to DeVille stems from his own abusive home life. He blames Wozniak and Pike, as well as many other people like Karen Garcia, who once complains that DeVille is photographing children at the nursery where she works, for DeVille's death in prison. He goes undercover as a civilian employee of Parker Center named Curtis Wood, and spends his time outside of work making himself resemble Joe Pike as much as possible.

## **Lucy Chenier and Ben Chenier**

Lucy Chenier is Elvis Cole's girlfriend, a born-and-raised Louisiana resident who relocates to Los Angeles with her son to be closer to her boyfriend. She is a lawyer at a television station, extremely professionally competent and assertive. Her southern accent and sweet disposition belie a fierce, unwavering woman who will do anything to protect the people she loves.

## **Edward Deege**

A vagrant who witnesses the killer approach Karen Garcia in a car identical to that belonging to Joe Pike. He also claims to have seen a man who very closely resembles Joe Pike behind the wheel of that car. The killer tracks him down and kills him, a crime that Harvey Krantz later attempts to pin on Joe Pike while he is incarcerated for the murder of Eugene Dersh.





## **Objects/Places**

### **Lake Hollywood**

Karen Garcia jogs around Lake Hollywood and meets her death along the trail. Her body is discovered in the water of the lake the next day.

### **Parker Center**

Parker Center is the headquarters of the Los Angeles Police Department.

### **Robbery-Homicide**

Robbery-Homicide is an elite investigative unit made up of the best detectives on the police force. Samantha Dolan and Harvey Krantz are both members of the task force.

### **Bleach Bottles**

The makeshift silencers that the killer uses to silence the shots that murder his victims are empty bleach bottles duct-taped to the nozzle of his gun.

### **LAPD archives**

A building separate from Parker Center where Dolan and Cole go to dig up old information about Lennie DeVille and Abel Wozniak.

### **Los Angeles Desert**

The desert is the setting for the final confrontation between Pike and Krantz.

### **Paulette's Home in Palm Springs**

Paulette lives in Palm Springs, where the killer catches her at home and nearly kills Joe Pike in her living room. The killer dies in her home.

### **Sunglasses**

Joe Pike is known to wear sunglasses no matter the time of day or whether or not he is inside. Those emblematic sunglasses are one way that Sobek impersonates Pike so effectively.

## Oil Drips

Pike helps criminalist John Chen discover the killer's car's oil drips near Lake Hollywood, and Chen later matches those drips to some outside of Dersh's home, matching the killer to Dersh's murder and clearing Pike's name.



# Themes

## Motive

The motive is the driving force behind an action. A motive is the ultimate goal that forces someone to act. In *L.A. Requiem*, every character has a motive that dictates his/her behavior, decisions, and relationships. Elvis Cole, for example, is driven by his desire to succeed professionally and triumph over criminals. He wants to find Karen Garcia's killer not for money or prestige, but for justice. He is moved by Frank Garcia's grief and disturbed by the death of a young, vital woman. Later, his motives shift when Joe Pike is accused of a crime he does not commit. Cole's motive then shifts to exonerating his partner. Luckily, his motives never force him to choose between professional priorities, but his dedication to his work does jeopardize his personal relationships. His girlfriend, Lucy, whose own motive is to take the next step in her relationship with Cole, does not play into her boyfriend's ultimate goal. Cole must also balance the motives of Samantha Dolan, whose desire to prove herself to the Los Angeles Police Department is trumped only by her motive to win Cole's affections.

Joe Pike's goals are similarly righteous. He works in order to bring justice to those who commit crimes. He wants to clear his own name, but only so that he can return to aiding Frank Garcia in catching his daughter's murderer. However, other characters in the novel, including other detectives in the LAPD, work towards that same goal with very different motives. Harvey Krantz also wants to catch Karen Garcia's killer, but he does not care about whether or not Frank Garcia is comforted by the collar. Rather, he wants to succeed professionally so that he can parlay that success into further advancement, local fame, and power. He especially wants that power so that he can get revenge on Joe Pike, the man who humiliates him early on in his career.

## Love's Power

The power of love is a major determining force in this novel. Cole and Pike investigate Karen's death to satisfy the hunger of her loving father's grief. The only reason that Cole agrees to work the case for free is that he sees Frank Garcia's genuine love for his daughter and heartbreak at her loss. That love forces Cole to stay on an investigation where he is not wanted. Love also plays a significant role in Cole's interpersonal relationships in the novel. Cole's fierce love for Lucy is the only thing that prevents him from beginning a relationship with Samantha Dolan. On the other hand, his sudden love for Dolan makes him doubt the veracity of his love for Lucy.

Cole is not the only man in the novel who must fight against the power of love. Eugene Dersh and Riley Ward fall in love, despite the fact that Riley Ward is a husband and father already. Their relationship is simultaneously a source of delight and shame for Ward, who cannot resist the power of love but also cannot abandon his family. Joe Pike also falls in love with a forbidden mate: his partner Abel Wozniak's wife, Paulette. Pike



and Paulette share an unspoken understanding for years that their love must remain unexpressed. However, Pike cannot love any other woman, and Paulette remains devoted to her deceased husband's partner. The power of love is too great for them to fight.

Finally, the greatest love of all in this novel is between Joe Pike and Elvis Cole. The two friends protect each other, make sacrifices for each other, and even take bullets for each other. There is no glory or fortune in store for the men who make these commitments to each other. They simply value the other's friendship so much that there is no alternative.

## Redemption

Redemption is the idea that a second chance is possible. Second chances become available to nearly every character in this novel, and while some take advantage of them for bad reasons, others channel those opportunities into precious moments of redemption. Harvey Krantz's reputation suffers from his first encounter with Joe Pike. He is labeled a coward and a fool. Many years later, he gets another chance to face Pike, and he uses the opportunity to get revenge. He imprisons Pike even though he knows that Pike is innocent, and even tries to provoke Pike far enough that Krantz could have the excuse to kill him. While Krantz could have used his second chance to forgive Pike and move on with his life, instead he could not rise above petty retribution, and exposed himself as the coward and fool that he truly is.

Conversely, Elvis Cole destroys his relationship, his professional reputation, and his friendship with Samantha Dolan throughout the course of this investigation. Thanks to Frank Garcia, Cole gets another chance to be a private detective, even though he is a convicted felon. Joe Pike spends most of his life attempting to suppress his love for Paulette, but he takes advantage of his second chance to show her how much he loves her, and saves her life. She, in turn, uses that experience to show Pike how deeply she has always loved him. Cole does not have the opportunity to redeem himself to Lucy, but at the end of the novel his hopes are high that he can someday earn back the love of his life.



# Style

## Point of View

The majority of the novel is told in first person from the point of view of private detective Elvis Cole. Cole has a keen eye and boasts a solid judge of character, and so as a narrator he is trustworthy and clever. Even when he deals with personally distressing situations, he is honest and fair. The point of view shifts to omniscient third person perspective during flashback sequences and brief glimpses into the mind of the killer. These third-person episodes allow the reader to learn more about Joe Pike, who is the subject of the flashbacks, and also remain in sync with the killer, who the narrator might use to detail the next step of his plot to murder the next victim. This unique combination of perspectives offers a balance between the point of view of the main character and an investigator who is close to the central conflict of the novel, with the underlying background information that explains the mannerisms of his closest friend, and the thought process of the man he is attempting to apprehend.

## Setting

The novel is set in present-day Los Angeles. Los Angeles plays a major role in the tone of the book. Culturally, Los Angeles is a relatively liberal city made up of many different ethnic groups. It also has a well-developed criminal element. Murder is not an unheard-of event, so the detectives can work on a single homicide relatively undisturbed by the press. However, once the news of a serial killer leaks out, the press can hinder the investigation and frighten possible suspects away. The far-reaching network of media news is something that has blossomed in recent years, so if the novel were set in Los Angeles fifty years ago, the idea that reporters could frighten away a murderer might be ridiculous.

The "ticking clock" of the investigation, set off by the journalists who spread the word about the killer, heightens jurisdictional tension between the police and the detectives. The entire novel takes place over a matter of days, and within that brief time frame the professional, personal, and physical health of nearly every involved individual comes into danger. This condensed timeline affects the pace of the novel, as well as the hurried decisions that the characters must make.

## Language and Meaning

The tone of the novel is generally unadorned and clipped. Few characters have time for poetry, since the investigation develops at such a rapid pace. This overall reserved tone, however, allows the brief moments of eloquence to shine. For example, Elvis Cole makes several poignant observations about the nature of navigation, the possibility of redemption, and the necessity of love. These observations are notable only because



they are surrounded on all sides by voices dealing in evidence, facts, and problem-solving.

The character's voices differ slightly, but all come across as well-educated people without a regional dialect. Even Lucy, whose accent is allegedly heavily southern, speaks with the same vocabulary and attitude as most of the other characters. Joe Pike is the major exception to this trend, because he speaks rarely and as little as possible. His statements are unemotional and simple, straightforwardly honest but never fully explained.

Most of the specialized vocabulary in the novel deals with investigational tools and police department slang or terminology. Otherwise, the vocabulary is relatively straightforward and generally easy to understand in the context of the storyline.

## Structure

The novel is divided into two parts that make up forty-three chapters. The chapters vary in length depending on the pace of the action at that time. For example, once Cole and Dolan discover the identity of the killer, the chapters become shorter and move at a faster pace, to emulate the rapidity with which the detectives must move to capture their killer. The bulk of the text is well-balanced between narrative in the voice of Elvis Cole, and dialogue with other characters.

Periodically, flashback sequences interrupt the action of the present investigation in order to reveal an episode in the life of Joe Pike. These flashbacks describe Pike's abusive childhood, his experiences in the military, both the beginning and the end of his relationship with Karen Garcia, and the death of his partner, Abel Wozniak. Since Pike is a reticent man who would never have discussions about his psychological history or emotionally resonant experiences, these flashbacks give the reader insight into a character who would otherwise remain a total mystery. Similar interruptions take the story into the mind of the killer. In these episodes, the killer plans to kill Eugene Dersh, another victim, Paulette Wozniak, and even Joe Pike. More importantly, however, these brief glimpses into Sobek's mind serve the same purpose as do the flashbacks for Joe Pike: they allow the reader to know a character who is otherwise silent and unexplained.

The major plotline follows various investigators as they work to uncover the identity of a serial killer who has been murdering Los Angeles residents for nearly two years. Working simultaneously with that major plot are various permutations of the desperate love story. Dolan loves Cole, but Cole cannot return her love. Pike and Paulette are deeply in love, but cannot shame Paulette's husband's memory by acting on their passion. Sobek loves Lennie DeVille, and needs to avenge the death of the only father-figure that he has ever known.



## Quotes

"I stayed out on the balcony and watched Lucy. She was moving from box to box as if she could no more decide what to unpack next than where to put the couch. She had been like that since she arrived from Louisiana, and it wasn't like her. We had been in a long-distance relationship for two years, but now we had made a very real move to further the relationship, and she had carried the weight of it. She's the one who had left her friends. She's the one who had left her home. She was the one taking the risk." Chap. 1, p. 14

"We asked the people at the flower shop if they had seen anything, but they hadn't. We asked every shopkeeper in the strip mall and most of the employees, but they all said no. I hoped they had seen something to indicate that Karen was safe, but deep down, where your blood runs cold, I knew they hadn't." Chap. 2, p. 25

"Officer Pike took off his dark glasses and looked at her. She felt her breath catch. His eyes were the most liquid blue, the blue of the sky over the high deserts of Sonora, the blue of the ocean where it has no bottom and is infinitely clean. But it wasn't the blue that stopped her breath. For just a moment when the glasses were first pulled away, she could have sworn that those eyes were filled with the most terrible and long-endured pain." Chap. 3, p. 34

"Behind us, Frank Garcia said, 'When my little girl went missing yesterday, I called these people, but they didn't do a goddamned thing. I knew where she was going. I told'm where to look, but no, they said they couldn't do anything. Now I'm supposed to trust these same people to find who killed her? No. That will never happen.'" Chap. 5, p. 44

"Life is tough when the world smells like poop." Chap. 6, p. 51

"'Dolan?' Her eyes came to me, but nothing else moved. 'As long as we're working together, we might as well be pleasant, don't you think?'  
'We're not working together. You're here like one of the roaches that live under the coffee machine. The sooner you're gone, the faster I can go back to being a cop. We clear on that?'" Chap. 8, p. 70

"Some of us find our way with a single light to guide us; others lose themselves even when the star field is as sharp as a neon ceiling. Ethics may not be situational, but feelings are. We learn to adjust, and, over time, the stars we use to guide ourselves come to reside within rather than without." Chap. 12, p. 119

"Someone had been stalking people in the streets of Los Angeles for almost two years. If the vics are connected, you call the shooter a hit man. If they're random, there's another name. Serial killer." Chap. 12, p. 123

"[Dolan's] hand was cool and dry and strong. I liked the way it felt, and felt a faraway stab of guilt that I liked it a little too much." Chap. 13, p. 131



"Are you sure you wouldn't like to stay for dinner?"

"Dolan went to the door, then gazed back at Lucy.

'Thanks, anyway, but there probably wouldn't be enough for both of us.'

"Lucy smiled the nice smile again. 'No. There isn't.'" Chap. 18, p. 177

"I once was close to a man . . . who is a good and decent man, who had been married and faithful to his wife for all of those years . . . until the day he left her and married another woman. When he told me the news, I said I hadn't known he and his wife were having problems, and he said he hadn't known, either. His wife was devastated, and my friend was horribly guilty. I asked him, the way friends will, what happened. He said, 'I fell in love.' He had met a woman while in line at their bank and in the course of a single conversation his world turned upside-down and would never be the same. Blindsided by love." Chap. 19, p. 185

". . . all I had was something that no one else seemed to have: An absolute and complete belief that Joe Pike was telling the truth. I did not doubt him. I would not. They could have a videotape of Joe walking into that house, and if Joe pointed at the television and said, 'That's not me,' I would believe him." Chap. 24, p. 232

"Pike told me what had happened, and how. As he spoke, he picked up the cat and held it, and I thought that there were times when even tough men needed to feel a beating heart." Chap. 30, p. 287

"We weren't mad because we liked different movies, or I had been rude to her friends. We were mad because she had given me a choice between herself and Joe, and she felt I'd chosen Joe. I guess she was right, but I didn't know what to do about that. If she gave me the same choice again, I would decide the same way, and I wasn't sure what that said about me, or us." Chap. 31, p. 293

"I stared at the stables and thought about the horses within; I couldn't see them, but I heard them and smelled them. They snorted and whinnied and talked to each other, I guess, and were real even though they were beyond my sight. Life is often like that, with realities layered over other realities, mostly hidden but always there. You can't always see them, but if you listen to their clues, you'll recognize them all the same." Chap. 36, p. 344

"There isn't so much love in the world that you can turn it away when it's offered." Chap. 40, p. 367





## Topics for Discussion

Who is the greater villain in the novel, Laurence Sobek or Harvey Krantz?

What role does the city of Los Angeles play in this novel? How would the novel be different if it were set in a different city?

Is love too powerful to fight? Can a person fight the pull of love?

A requiem is a prayer, service, or song performed at a funeral, on behalf of the souls of the departed. How is this novel a requiem? Does this novel deal more in death or in life?

Does Elvis Cole make the right decision when he chooses to defend Pike over protecting Lucy?

If the villain is behind bars, does it matter if the detective who put him there did it for selfish or selfless reasons? Does motive matter?

After he kills Sobek and runs from the police, does Joe Pike deserve redemption?