

The Pelican Brief Study Guide

The Pelican Brief by John Grisham

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Plot Summary

After a consummate professional assassinates two Supreme Court justices, the surviving justices, the FBI, the CIA, the White House, a law professor in New Orleans, and his beautiful, brilliant student/lover, look for a motive. Darby Shaw discovers the link, which she describes in the "pelican brief," which kills those who know about it, but is ultimately published and brings the mighty down.

Two of nine Supreme Court Justices refuse FBI bodyguards and are murdered within hours of one another—crippled, cantankerous old Rosenberg in his bed and young Jensen in a gay porno theater. The White House is overjoyed at the prospect of filling two seats before the general election when Democrats might prevail and thwart an ideological takeover by the right. The Court and constitutional law scholars play amateur sleuth. Law student Darby Shaw looks for who might most benefit and produces what becomes known as the "pelican brief." She rejects her own thesis, but boyfriend/professor Thomas Callahan takes it to his old friend, Gavin Verheek, Special Counsel to FBI Director Voyles, who passes it upstairs until it reaches the White House and spawns paranoia. This deepens when Washington Post reporter Gray Grantham publishes an insider tip naming two potential nominees. His article also inspires an anonymous call from a frightened lawyer claiming inside information about the murders. The President authorizes a CIA investigation, freezing out the FBI.

Within 24 hours of the brief reaching Washington, someone blows up Callahan but misses Shaw. She flees, phones Verheek, but refuses FBI protection. The CIA finds her easily and debates taking her into protective custody. Verheek comes to New Orleans for the funeral and to find and protect Shaw, while in Washington, Grantham publishes a planted story about the terrorist Khamel, and falls under surveillance. Garcia stops calling and Grantham looks for him, needle-in-a-haystack fashion. In New Orleans, Shaw survives another murder attempt, phones Grantham, and arranges to meet Verheek, not knowing that Khamel is about to impersonate him. When he dies before her eyes, Shaw flees New Orleans for New York

Verheek's death motivates Voyles to disobey the White House and the FBI and CIA ally. Grantham comes to New York, begins falling in love with Shaw, and learns details about the pelican brief, which he sells to his editors: Victor Mattiece is determined to squash tiny Green Fund's federal lawsuit; it means enough to him financially to remove two environmentalists from the bench. Reporter and law student investigate effectively, but Grantham holds off writing until he can name Mattiece, which requires finding Garcia. When the White House dispatches someone to confront Mattiece, he admits the assassinations, but kills the messenger. They learn Garcia's identity, but he is dead. His widow allows Shaw to impersonate her to obtain an affidavit and videotape, which they rush to the Post. The editors and corporate lawyer agree it is damning proof of the story. Those implicated are allowed to comment. Voyles alone does and offers to help brave Shaw run and escape her nightmare. In the Caribbean, Shaw recovers emotionally and when Grantham shows up, they agree to live together month-by-month.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

From his wheelchair, 91-year-old Supreme Court Justice Abraham Rosenberg watches a mob of 50,000 demonstrators. Each justice has at least two FBI agents assigned full-time. Rosenberg is proud that 80% of the death threats are aimed at him. When he falls asleep, his senior law clerk, Jason Kline, returns to work.

Meanwhile, an anxious Chief Justice John Runyan meets with his clerks, the captain of the Supreme Court police, three FBI agents, and FBI Deputy Director K. O. Lewis about security. The FBI is most concerned about Rosenberg and Jensen, who exclude agents from their homes.

The youngest justice, Glenn Jensen is not fond of women, is skeptical about free speech, and consistently protects the environment. He is reviewing the case of Ronald Dumond, who sued the family of his late male lover for barring him from the funeral. Jensen rejects FBI security.

Attractive young Darby Shaw arrives late to Thomas Callahan's lecture on constitutional law at Tulane University. Callahan wonders if anyone suspects they are lovers. Shaw uses her knowledge of constitutional law to show up another student.

That night "Sam", who is really Khamel, an ominous killer wanted in nine countries for amazing feats of terror, is making his American debut, and meets with "Luke", who is excited to work with him again. Khamel will receive \$4 million for his plan.

Rosenberg's male nurse, Frederic, falls asleep a short time after Rosenberg. Sgt. Ferguson of the Supreme Court police, sits outside Rosenberg's rear door, and the FBI is parked across the street. Around 10 PM, Khamel emerges from the upstairs bedroom closet, pumps three shots with a .22 automatic into the two victims' heads, kills Ferguson, then leaves.

Having eluded his FBI agents, Jensen sits in the Montrose Theatre, watching gay porno movies. Khamel sits down behind Jensen, then breaks Jensen's neck with a rope and strangling him. Within seconds, he is outside, bound for a Paris flight from Dulles Airport.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The first chapters introduce most of the major characters and show the two assassinations around which the rest of the book develops. Khamel is shown as a consummate professional, admirable despite his bloody job. He is paid \$10 million to kill two Supreme Court justices. Soon everyone—the surviving justices, the FBI, the CIA,

the White House, and a law professor in New Orleans and his beautiful, brilliant student/lover—will be trying to figure out a link.



Chapters 4-9

Chapters 4-9 Summary

The President hears the details about the two deaths from Chief-of-Staff, Fletcher Coal, said by many to be the real boss. Coal declares this the "perfect crisis," unifying people and allowing the White House to restructure the court without blame. FBI Director F. Denton Voyles and CIA Director Robert Gminski arrive to meet with the President. Voyles insists that Rosenberg and Jensen are dead because they alone refused to cooperate. Gminski is shocked at the President's suggestion that the CIA could be involved.

Shaw awakens before dawn in Callahan's apartment on Dauphine St. in the French Quarter. She hears the news of the deaths on TV, and wakes Callahan, who shocked then perplexed at Jensen's death. Shaw sees that someone cannot afford a Democratic victory next year, with three octogenarians on the court. While morbid, the timing is perfect.

The directors interrupt the President's putting practice. Gminski swears that the CIA is not involved. Voyles presents technical reports and summarizes: these are clean jobs by a professional assassin. When the directors leave, the President tells Coal he wants the list of potential nominees for the Supreme court to be "young conservative white men."

Voyles orders three hundred agents to investigate Nelson Muncie for the murders, whose twelve-year-old niece's murderer's death sentence had been overturned by Rosenberg. Bent on revenge, it could have been Muncie who ordered Rosenberg's murder.

Justice Ben Thurow, a former federal prosecutor, wants to use the months while they wait for two appointments to solve the killings. He is convinced it is an attempt to manipulate and realign the Court. After the funerals, Runyan agrees to assign Kline to Thurow's project.

Drunk and depressed, Callahan is certain the killers are right-wing vigilantes, but Shaw is not; hate groups are too obvious, and Rosenberg's death is likely someone more sinister. At the Tulane law library, Shaw reviews summaries pending in the eleven appellate courts.

In the Hoover Building, top FBI people listen to Voyles and study thin reports. Special Agent Eric East, a ten-year veteran, will lead the investigation. East concentrates his team on who hires the killers. Only Muncie, whose lawyers are hostile and claim he is out of the country, is a viable suspect.



Shaw skips class Thursday to study Rosenberg's work. Anything that showed controversy interested Rosenberg. Hatred could explain his murder, but not Jensen's too; Yount and Manning are more hateable. Jensen is too erratic to take seriously.

On Friday, Callahan calls his old friend Gavin Verheek, who is working around the clock since the bodies have been found. He cannot provide inside information on the nominees. Callahan is as secretive about his current girlfriend. Verheek is researching pending cases looking for voting patterns, like every con law scholar, including Shaw.

Shaw goes to the Federal Building in Lafayette to review trial information on a bitter case that has been running for seven years. One plaintiff faces thirty-eight wealthy corporate defendants, claiming that the trial verdict had been bought.

Nauseated at the content, a man watches pornographic gay movies at the Montrose. He is visiting his third smut house in ninety minutes. He is part of a non-violent organization that demolishes "enemy structures". He inserts a black box in a seat cushion and sets the timer. At 4 AM, twenty-two DC smut houses will be flash-fried.

Chapters 4-9 Analysis

The White House is informed, and the stereotypical weak-kneed, image- and ratings-obsessed Republican President and his cutthroat, dominating young Chief of Staff see an opportunity for political gain: two seats on the Supreme Court open conveniently before the general election in which the Democrats might prevail and thwart an ideological takeover by the right. Animosity between the White House and both the FBI and CIA is high and mutual. Voyles is determined not to let the Bureau look bad and throws massive resources at trivial suspects, while the Court and every constitutional law scholar begin playing amateur sleuth. Jensen's murder cannot be reconciled with a hate crime. How homosexuality divides America in the 1990s is a constant refrain. An important character going forward, Gavin Verheek, Special Counsel to Voyles and Callahan's old friend, is introduced. Note his special interest in Callahan's latest girlfriend, who is shown among the sleuths. The plot thickens when self-righteous arsonists plant bombs in 22 Washington "smut houses." Officialdom is already overwhelmed before the explosions.



Chapters 10-14

Chapters 10-14 Summary

East, Voyles, and Lewis attend a report on the fire bombings in the Oval Office. The Underground Army (UA) claims responsibility for fifty-four explosions in Washington, Baltimore, and Atlanta. Coal presents a list of eight nominees to the Supreme Court to be vetted without their knowledge. Voyles states that background checks cannot be kept quiet, and Lewis assures the President that the FBI will keep strict confidence but cannot control those it interviews.

Shaw has been playing detective and neglecting Callahan for four days. He hopes to get laid before flying to DC for a conference, but she wants to chat. Until there are arrests, Shaw is not convinced of who is behind the killings and bombings. She discards her own theory because there is no common thread, but Callahan agrees to read her brief.

Sarge has worked in the West Wing for thirty years, picking up information and leaking it to Gray Grantham of the Washington Post. Today, Sarge talks about how the President is excited about restructuring the Court. Pryce from Idaho and MacLawrence from Vermont are two of the eight names the President and Coal want vetted.

Verheek meets with Callahan and says that Voyles is berserk over the leak in the Post. Coal could have leaked the two names so the real nominees appear more moderate. Verheek wants to meet Shaw, amused that Callahan has finally fallen hard. Callahan holds out for the list of names before he will confirm monogamy. Verheek is baffled by the murders. Callahan asks Verheek to read Shaw's brief.

Garcia, a frightened lawyer claiming to have information about Jensen and Rosenberg that could get him killed, contacts Grantham, but insists on talking later. Grantham traces Garcia to 15th St. in Pentagon City.

Verheek reads Shaw's brief, which has her name, address, and phone number on it. More than a brief, it is a succinct, fascinating story about a lawsuit in Louisiana, one showing an implausible trail to the removal of Rosenberg and Jensen. Verheek is sure Shaw's suspect is on no one's list, but has the brief delivered to Eric East.

Voyles sends Lewis and East to face Coal. Interpol is eighty percent certain Khamel the terrorist arrived in Paris from Dulles ten hours after Jensen is found. East hands him Shaw's brief as "a new wrinkle". Voyles thinks it a long shot but wants the White House to sweat, because the President's name appears in it, and says that Lewis and East are to play it up as an important theory. Coal tells the President about this unlikely suspect, someone they know. Although illegal, Coal wants the CIA to investigate before the FBI can.



Shaw's desire to be a lawyer stemmed from a lawyer's mishandling of the lawsuit of her parents' deaths. She makes wise investments, lives modestly, and pays her own way. After four days of playing detective, Shaw goes back to being a student. The spies watching Callahan's building are sure it is Shaw and enjoy watching her walk away.

The FBI and CIA guys talk about the terror in the White House over the "little pelican thing." The President hates Voyles, and fears his reelection will be destroyed if the press gets a hold of the story. Gminski wants to stay out of it but cannot, and agrees that the CIA will go through the motions for a week. Grantham again reassures Garcia that he will not tape him without permission, then traces him to Pennsylvania Ave. near the Justice Department.

Chapters 10-14 Analysis

White House paranoia grows, as the President demands arrests without probable cause, amusing the FBI men, who are primed to use the still unnamed "pelican brief" as a joke. Paranoia deepens when Washington Post reporter Gray Grantham publishes an insider tip from the West Wing including the names of two potential nominees. This article inspires a pre-dawn call from a frightened, anonymous lawyer claiming inside information about the justices' murders. It will take most of the novel before that information comes out fully. When Callahan flies to DC, he brings Shaw's interesting brief for Verheek to read. Sure that Shaw's suspect is on no FBI list, Verheek passes it along until it reaches Voyles, who sees it as a way to make the White House sweat. Rubbing Shaw's brief in Coal's face backfires, when he gets the President to authorize a preemptive CIA investigation, because the suspect is someone Coal and the President know. Note that Interpol claims to see Khamel in Paris hours after the murder, an odd departure from the assassin's usual meticulous habits, and Shaw's name, address, and phone number—not Callahan's—are on the brief's cover sheet, but someone staking out his house identifies her.



Chapters 15-19

Chapters 15-19 Summary

Shaw argues with Callahan, who gets into his car alone and is blown up in an explosion. A cop named Sgt. Rupert drags her to another car, but disappears when another cop car shows up. Shaw passes out. When she wakes up she discovers there is no Sgt. Rupert and the car she had been placed in has fake tags. She leaves the hospital the police brought her to and rents a hotel room.

Shaw phones Verheek, who admits that the Director has read and liked the brief but is unaware who outside FBI has seen it. She tells him about Callahan's death, her survival, and meeting the killers who now follow her. Verheek says he will meet with the Director.

The President hates being in the dark and is envious of Coal. Voyles refuses to meet with Coal but meets with the President, who asks for the scoop on the pelican brief. Voyles has not sent the brief to New Orleans or contacted the office, but lies and says its being investigated.

The President shifts to Khamel and is shocked that the terrorist investigation rates an equal level of agents as the pelican investigation. He expresses confidence in Voyles' work, then orders Voyles to leave it alone for a couple of weeks and concentrate elsewhere. Coal, who has been spying on the meeting, enjoys his nasty reputation and makes plans to plant rumors about Khamel in the newspapers.

Verheek tells Lewis that he thinks the real target is the author of the pelican brief, not Callahan. Verheek is outraged when Lewis tells him Voyles had shut down the federal investigation. Verheek intends not to give up. He gets a call from Shaw, who is in disguise and in hiding, presumably from billionaires who killed two justices and a law professor and are now after her. She promises to stay in touch.

Grantham has someone take pictures of Garcia, who calls Grantham again. Garcia has a family and is scared. He most likely is a lawyer in private practice, as illustrated by his expensive clothing.

Grantham reads an internal White House memo about Khamel, given to him by Sarge, via Cleve. He gets background information on the terrorist, suggests Coal is leaking a hot story about someone with links to Libya, Iran, and Iraq, and ensures a front-page story by 9 PM and includes two dissimilar pictures of Khamel.

Shaw is still alive, sleeping with a can of Mace, dying her hair, and staying in the crowded city, frequently changing hotels and outfits. She contacts Alice Clark, her best friend.



Gminski learns that Shaw is on the 15th floor of the Marriott, easily traceable because of her use of credit cards. Gminski sees this hunt for Shaw as proof that the brief is on-target and the suspect is desperate. The CIA agents discuss illegally snatching her.

Shaw hears from Voyles, and forces him to admit whoever wants Rosenberg and Jensen dead killed Callahan after he revealed the pelican brief. She is suspicious of the phone call, and sneaks out of the hotel.

The Post cites a confidential source to profile Khamel, who goes from killing for his beliefs to being a well-paid mercenary. Voyles tells Lewis the President wants Grantham tailed around the clock. Voyles believes the President thinks his own people have leaked information.

L. Matthew Barr runs "The Unit", heading a \$4 million operation thanks to Coal, who now wants around-the-clock surveillance on Grantham and Sarge—and to "eliminate" Sarge. Barr suspects that the pat Khamel story is a plant, and is sure he will never be caught. Khamel demands \$10-\$20 million per job.

Mrs. Chen allows Alice Stark into Shaw's apartment, where Stark sees that the computer, discs, and papers have been tampered with or taken. She prints out the hard drive directory, then meets Shaw, who is scared. She does not want to endanger Stark, but Stark wants to help. Shaw asks her to attend the memorial service, watch everything, and spread word she has gone to Denver, but will return next semester.

Verheek attempts to find Shaw, leaving messages about town, hoping she will contact him.

Chapters 15-19 Analysis

Someone blows up Thomas Callahan but misses Darby Shaw because the lovers fight over his excessive drinking. When she discovers she has been in the hands of bogus policemen, Shaw flees, avoiding contact with any law enforcement body. She informs Verheek but refuses FBI protection. Eventually she badgers him into admitting the timing cannot be coincidental. The President has frozen the FBI investigation of the pelican brief and handed it under wraps and illegally to the CIA, which finds Shaw easily and debates taking her into protective custody. Verheek comes for the funeral and wants to take her in to save her. Meanwhile, Grantham hires a photographer to shoot Garcia, and publishes the Coal's planted story about the terrorist; Coal sets his personal goon squad on Grantham's tale and suspects Sarge. Desperate, Shaw has her best friend confirm that her apartment has been entered and data stolen, and asks her to spread rumors she has gone to Denver. Verheek risks his job by suggesting the FBI needs to talk to Shaw. At least one law student knows enough to demand to see a badge. Shaw has learned not to use her credit cards and is changing her appearance and residency on a regular basis, giving her a better chance to beat the survival odds.



Chapters 20-25

Chapters 20-25 Summary

Before dawn on Saturday, Grantham hears from Garcia, who calls and says he thinks he knows why the justices died and now feels threatened. He hangs up, and later Grantham hears from a woman in New Orleans who fills him in on the "pelican brief", a theory about who killed the justices. Shaw gives herself the codename Pelican, and says she'll call back after Grantham verifies the Callahan murder.

Shaw watches Callahan's service from the third floor of Newcomb Hall. Suddenly, she sees the thin man from the Sheraton lobby. After he is gone, another man in a green Tulane sweatshirt emerges, follows him, and disappears. Shaw is sure the place is crawling with spies.

Khamel has hidden out in Havana, but now takes a boat to Biloxi. He meets Luke, finds out from Luke where the red Pontiac is parked, then kills him. He meets Sneller, who passes on yearbook photos of Shaw. Sneller cannot comment on who makes the bomb that killed Callahan, but provides information on Shaw and her location. Khamel studies her intriguing face, knowing he can kill her, but feeling it a shame.

After the funeral, Verheek prowls several bars, pretending to be FBI. On the phone, he warns Shaw to quit playing a game she does not understand, saying that he is not sure who is after her but suspects a White House cover-up, forcing the FBI to back off. She tells him about the bogus cop Rupert and the cowboy who questioned her and disappear; they must have been Plan B and she had been 1-2 minutes away from a bullet in the head. She also reports seeing Thin Man and Stump at the memorial. She says she will call tomorrow. Meanwhile, in DC, Grantham's Volvo is bugged.

Shaw begins thinking like a fastidious killer, and carefully heads outside. Cowboy spots her and figures she is bound for Jackson Sq. Shaw spots Stump in a sidewalk café, hesitates, and the chase begins. She eludes Stump by shouting "Rape!" in a crowd of football fans, who take Stump out. She hides in a sports bar.

Snell phones Khamel next door to tell him his men have lost Shaw. Snell gives Khamel Verheek's room number and shares information about him. Khamel enters Verheek's room with gloves, a silenced .22, and a tape recorder, and settles down in the closet.

Shaw calls Verheek, who invites her to go to DC under FBI guard. They arrange a meeting for noon on Monday. After the phone conversation, Khamel kills Verheek and stages a suicide scene to buy him time. By Tuesday, when it would be declared a homicide, Shaw will be dead and Khamel will be in Managua.

Sources at the White House or the Justice Department know nothing about the pelican brief, but the New Orleans paper verifies the Callahan murder. Shaw calls Grantham on Monday, telling him she would have been killed along with Callahan, and now has four



goons chasing her. She gives her full name, status at Tulane, and relationship with Callahan, and tells Grantham he should get access to presidential campaign disclosure forms. Shaw will not divulge the killer's name to keep Grantham from being put on the hit list. Grantham shows his editor, Smith Keen, the Callahan story and explains the deadly link between the FBI and the mysterious pelican brief. Keen green lights the story, but wants hourly updates.

Grantham's photographer, Croft, continues to seek Garcia out in crowds of dark-suited lawyers.

Coal tells the President about the "really bad news". Grantham has called Zikman about the pelican brief, meaning either it has been leaked or he is bluffing or fishing. Coal insists the brief is harmless unless their "friend" is indeed guilty—in which case, their "asses are cooked". Voyles will say that the President ordered him to ignore his "friend", and the papers will cry cover-up, ending the reelection bid.

Shaw is ready to give in and have the FBI protect her, and arrives at her meeting place. She sees someone matching Verheek's description and follows him into the store.

Shaw and Khamel, who she thinks is Verheek, are together when a man shoots Khamel in the head with a gun then flees. As he fights off death, Khamel wails in Egyptian. Shaw runs away, and wonders how this dark Egyptian could be nicknamed "Dutch" and feels the killer looks somehow familiar.

Chapters 20-25 Analysis

Garcia stops calling and Grantham hires Croft to find him needle-in-a-haystack fashion. In New Orleans, Verheek prowls college bars, putting the word out that he must find Shaw. She survives another murder attempt and phones Grantham twice, showing fear. She also phones Verheek, arranging to meet next day, not knowing Khamel is recording the call and will stand in for the murdered FBI lawyer. Khamel is more fully profiled, concentrating on his linguistic talents, just in time to be murdered in public. Shaw wisely flees New Orleans.



Chapters 26-31

Chapters 26-31 Summary

Voyles learns Verheek had been murdered. East has learned that Verheek was snooping around on the pelican brief, trying to bring in the girl that called him. Voyles figures the girl is dead, but has ordered agents to find her if possible. The FBI will investigate, crack the case, get indictments, and be heroes; if the press gets wind, Voyles will make sure the country learns about the cover-up of a presidential pal. If the man behind the murders is indeed Mattiece, it will be a difficult task.

Meanwhile, Coal and Barr talk about Grantham. They must determine what he knows and how. Barr has bugged the car phone but not the apartment, and his Post phone is impossible.

Trope of the FBI and Booker of the CIA meet again. The CIA has lost Shaw. Booker mentions Mattiece. Had Mattiece not started killing people, the brief would have been ignored. The conspirators are gone, so they must find Mattiece and the girl who has vanished and trusts no one.

Shaw phones Grantham and tells him how the dead lawyer fits into the puzzle. She has fled to New York and wants him to come there. Grantham agrees to not use her name. He begins to feel chivalrous, knowing she trusts him exclusively. He will protect her and make it work.

Coal meets with the President to discuss names on the list, which includes a woman, a black, and a Cuban, which angers the President as he'd asked for only tough, young, conservative white males. He has a right to reward friends and punish enemies. Coal will push the tough black man in order to get the President to go with the woman—basic manipulation. Two weeks after the justices die, the President still believes this has been a "wonderful tragedy".

After a circuitous route, Grantham meets with Shaw, who shares what she knows. She believes she is currently safe but knows they will both be hunted when the story comes out. She relaxes and trusts Grantham, who tries not to gawk at her beauty and then realizes she is a widow in mourning.

In 1930, oil is discovered in Louisiana and the rape of nature begins. In 1979, Victor Mattiece hits big in Terrebonne Parish, caps the wells, and keeps it quiet while buying up surrounding lands under a myriad of corporate names. During the 1980s downturn, Mattiece attracts Arab investors, and he sprinkles money among politicians to get permission to gouge through the marshes and swamps, foreseeing profits of \$1-\$3 billion. Suddenly, an obscure environmental outfit, Green Fund, files an unprecedented federal lawsuit to stop dredging and drilling. Mattiece goes "over the edge" in his determination to make the lawsuit go away while he moves to greater invisibility in the



Bahamas. He continues making political contributions to build up favors to call in one day.

The two Green Fund lawyers identify over 30 separate defendants, a maze of joint ventures, limited partnerships, and corporate associations, who have a legion of high-priced lawyers. The judge denies all of their motions for relief. The heart of the oil reserve is a natural refuge for waterfowl, towards which Louisianans are sympathetic, and Green Fund makes the nearly extinct brown pelican the icon for pesticide contamination. The bitter suit goes to trial in Lake Charles, and after ten weeks, Green Fund loses, as expected. The oil companies have spent millions proving oil money means jobs. The judge, however, believes that Green Fund has proven its point about the pelican, so he keeps the injunction in place during the expected appeal.

Green Fund appeals to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals (New Orleans), its appeal should be "perfected" in a month and go before a three-member panel in 24 months. The loser request a hearing before the full panel (another 3-4 months), which can affirm, reverse, or remand the verdict, in whole or in part. If either side is unhappy, they can appeal to the Supreme Court, which every year gets thousands of appeals and selects a few. Given the money, pressure, and issues, this one is likely to be heard in 3-5 years. By then, Rosenberg might be dead of natural causes, but a Democratic President might replace him with someone else that Mattiece does not like. It is not public knowledge that Mattiece is behind the litigation. There are 38 corporate defendants and no individuals. Shaw includes in the brief a photograph of a younger shadowy looking Mattiece grinning at the then-Vice President at a Republican fundraiser. Many think Mattiece is deranged.

Shaw's research includes two large, rich, Republican law firms in DC. Grantham suggests Garcia can be of help, if he indeed works for one of those firms.

Executive Editor Jackson Feldman and Grantham's editor Keen are dazed by the story. Grantham goes in search of Garcia, who could validate some of Shaw's information. As he does so, he is warned by Sarge, via Cleve, that he may be bugged. Grantham warns Sarge that the pelican brief is deadly. Meanwhile, in Georgetown, Rupert learns in a coffee shop that everyone is panicking because the deranged "number one bad guy" is sending in big boys with big guns. The girl heads the list.

Chapters 26-31 Analysis

Voyles prepares to disobey the White House and break the case, for Verheek's sake. Another clandestine FBI/CIA meeting occurs in the park, and the agencies seem to ally against a clear White House cover-up. Gminski withholds this from the President, whom Coal is manipulating into choosing his favored nominees. The President's prejudices are brought out nicely. Grantham comes to New York, begins falling in love with Shaw, and learns fully about the pelican brief. He sells the story to his editors, who warn that it is not worth dying over. Beginning with a disquisition on Louisiana geography, how Victor Mattiece leads fellow oilmen in opposing tiny Green Fund's federal lawsuit, Shaw

explains what she has found out and the legal procedures ahead. The danger to everyone involved continues to build.



Chapters 32-36

Chapters 32-36 Summary

Shaw investigates the law firms Mattiece uses, searching for Garcia. She phones Grantham at the Post, and he warns her that his home phone is probably bugged and he is being followed. Shaw knows she should flee instead of helping Grantham. After hanging up, she's shocked to see Stump limp by.

Croft finds Garcia and informs Grantham, who approaches the man he thinks is Garcia, David M. Underwood. However, the man informs Grantham he's made a mistake, and Grantham leaves.

Feldman says there is enough information for a big Times scoop over the weekend, but Callahan pushes for holding off, as he's promised Shaw that he will not write the story until Mattiece can be named. The editors fume about losing the story until Feldman decides that if the Times runs something in the morning, they will decide how to react. Otherwise, Grantham will investigate what the Times knows.

Barr reads the "nasty" brief in the limousine, although Coal could have explained the memorized document. The President is not happy with the brief but not alarmed. Voyles has agreed to leave it alone, but may have reneged. Barr points to obstruction of justice if the brief is true. Coal is more concerned with reelection than criminal charges and a Mattiece scandal could ruin that. Coal knows that he will have to take the blame and resign. Barr says that people dying prove the brief is true. Coal tells him to find Mattiece and establish a link that the President knows nothing about. If Barr convinces Mattiece that the end is near, he will tell his secrets before disappearing. In the meantime, Coal intends to nominate two rabid "nature lovers" for the court, initiate FBI and Justice Department investigations into Mattiece, leak the story, and ride out the storm. They will portray Mattiece as a good citizen back when the photograph is taken and condemn him now as a madman. Coal should have a location on Mattiece by Sunday.

Grantham is eager to hear from Sarge if there is talk in the West Wing over a Times investigation on the pelican brief. Shaw has put herself in danger with Stump by using a credit card, and takes a train to Newark.

While the President would prefer to sleep late and then play golf, Attorney General Richard Horton believes that events in New Orleans demand a formal grand jury investigation into the justices' deaths. The President is galled that Horton knows about the brief and wonders how many other people do. Coal hopes it can all just go away. The President suggests waiting a week, which is better than Horton had hoped. Coal hands Horton the list of four "bird-watcher" judges to check out.

Grantham will know by tomorrow what the Times knows. Grantham shows Feldman Shaw's picture and says he thinks she is coming to DC, they are being careful, and he



thinks he is being followed and bugged. Within minutes, Shaw calls from the Tabard Inn, tells him about spotting Stump in Manhattan, and says if he shows up in DC she will just surrender. She arranges to meet Grantham at a restaurant.

At the restaurant, Grantham says he believes she is safe, but she doubts it. She is interested only in finding Garcia and fleeing. She tells him about another death, Chad Brunet, who gave money to Green Fund. Stories appeared about in him the New Orleans newspapers and he supposedly committed suicide while camping in Louisiana. It is a big blow to Green Fund.

When the Sunday Times has nothing about the case, Grantham calls Keen and asks him to pick him up outside the Marbury. They drive to Virginia, talking about how if they fail to find Garcia, Shaw has given permission to use everything but her name. She is convinced that she is as good as dead. Plan B is to go after Mattiece's two big law firms in DC, pursuing the conspiracy lawyer. Some lawyer(s) advise Mattiece to kill Rosenberg and Jensen. They will break when reporters start calling everyone in the firm.

Returning to his room, Grantham is asked by a maid if he has forgotten something, since he just left ten minutes earlier. He panics and heads to find Shaw. At the law library at Georgetown, Shaw collects the names of partners and associates for the firm Martindale-Hubbell.

Barr flies to Fort Lauderdale. He briefs Coal, who declares Grantham and Rifkin at the Times have gone crazy. Barr reports Grantham's disappearance and not using his phones, but knows he will have to show up in the newsroom. Coal orders Rifkin bugged and asks how Mattiece would react to seeing the story splashed across the Post, and suggests that Barr exaggerate that in hopes that Mattiece will "snuff out" the story.

Grantham meets with Shaw, letting her know Keen has his room number. Shaw is angry he has told anyone, reminding him that what is fun-and-games and a Pulitzer for a stud reporter is life-and-death for her. He feels like a spanked first-grader.

The next morning, Shaw and Grantham are looking for someone who had worked with Garcia and who can identify him, and they set out on an investigation. Shaw poses as Sandra Jernigan, a partner at White and Blazeovich, and phones the Georgetown law school placement office, asking help reconstructing payroll records on last summer's clerks. Shaw fits in with the other law students as she spreads out her paperwork. Grantham arrives with the list of contact information, and they get information from the registrar's office. Shaw decides to contact Akers and Kaas, leaving the at-homes Maylor, Reinhart, and Wilson for Grantham to see. Shaw cannot reach Ratliff or Linney.

James Maylor, Laura Kaas, and Ellen Reinhard have worked at White and Blazeovich but cannot help identify Garcia. Grantham heads to Wesley Heights to seek Edward Linney, and Shaw approaches Michael Akers, who says the firm is a bunch of thugs who should be disbarred. Everything is political there. Shaw next talks to JoAnne Ratliff, who also cannot identify Garcia.



Shaw and Grantham have lunch, then catch Judith Wilson, who also cannot identify Garcia. Grantham identifies how the pelican brief is a different story from Watergate, which was just a stupid burglary and bungled cover-up, while this is masterfully planned. Once Mattiece is linked and the cat is out of the bag, they go for Administration cover-up. Garcia holds the key.

They learn that Linney, someone else they are seeking, has been at Parklane Hospital, a posh detox center in Silver Spring, for a month. They learn he is in Room 22 but cannot have visitors, but Shaw sneaks in anyway.

Linney is happy to see a beautiful, non-medical face, and recognizes the photo, recalls that he works in oil and gas on the 9th floor, and with difficulty remembers his name: C. Morgan. As she leaves, Shaw digs through her Martindale-Hubbell notes and confirms a Curtis D. Morgan, age 29. Shaw and Grantham hurry to the law office, with Rupert behind them, radioing ahead.

Chapters 32-36 Analysis

This section shows a fine reporter and top-notch law student in action, both investigating. Grantham has a knack for stepping on toes and several times steps on Shaws' hard enough for her to considering leaving. What for him is a game is for her life-and-death. Elsewhere, the heat is going up in the White House, where everyone wants to cover themselves. The editors at the Post want simply to beat the New York Times to the story. The references to Watergate as a minor event by comparison add a rich layer of background detail for anyone who remembers those days and the cooperation between the rival newspapers when the White House covers up and threatens legal action. Grantham holds out to tell the full story, centering on Mattiece, claiming to disregard a potential Pulitzer Prize. Grantham and Shaw's legwork comes up with Garcia's real name, but the murderers are back on their trail. Her wire for money will be seen as the key to their discovery.



Chapters 37-40

Chapters 37-40 Summary

After a carefully executed trip, ensuring he doesn't know where he is, Barr learns that Coal has sent him to see Mattiece, who does not want to see him. Finally, Barr meets with a gaunt man with long gray hair and beard wearing gym shorts. Mattiece does not flinch at mention of the pelican report, in which two reporters are showing interest, denounces the "clowns in Washington" for the problems, confirms the brief, and shuffles away. Barr is killed by Larry, Mattiece's assistant.

Shaw fakes her way into Morgan's office, but a scowling partner, Jarreld Schwabe, tells her that Morgan is dead. Shaw stays in character as a rich indignant client, demanding to know why she is not informed (no record) and how he dies (street mugging), and storming out loudly.

Grantham phones Keen, seeking information on Morgan's murder. Grantham and Shaw chat about Louisiana, the Pelican State, losing most of the birds to pesticides in the 1960s, but the legislature then transplanting birds from Florida to restore the very swamp that Mattiece intends to destroy. Shaw realizes she no longer wants to participate in law, she just wants to keep alive. Keen passes on three messages to Grantham from a cop, Cleve, requesting an urgent meeting.

Sneller's private jet lands in Washington. Shaw had wired money from a New Orleans bank to Grantham's account. The bank had been owned by Sneller's clients, which is how he got the tip. His men head to DC to deal with Grantham and Shaw.

Grantham and Shaw meet with Tom Kupchek, Morgan's widow's father, who won't allow them to talk to his daughter. They leave, and Grantham offers to help Shaw vanish. She rejects his sexual advances, saying it is too soon and she is scared to death.

Grantham leaves Shaw, unhappy she is leaving. He calls Cleve, who says the White House has put Sarge on medical leave for 90 days to get him out of the bunker. Sarge thinks that Grantham is in danger because the West Wing Gestapo (Coal and Birchfield) is obsessed with what he knows. Only the President may speak to the press without Coal's permission.

Beverly Morgan calls Grantham and speaks to him of Garcia's heavy workload and how the company turned out to be cutthroats, thugs, and scum. Beverly says he may look through their legal papers in a lockbox at First Columbia Bank. They drive over to get the key to the lockbox.

Sneller plans to cover the Post building on 15th St. and the Morgan house. Sneller thinks about Shaw walking away from a meeting with Khamel and dodging bullets and bombs from the best in the business. He wants to congratulate her, not kill her.



Shaw impersonates Beverly Morgan and gets the brown envelope and videotape from the lockbox. The manila envelope contains a four-page affidavit, sworn to under oath before a notary public. It is dated the day before the last call to Grantham. Morgan declares he has worked in the oil and gas section of White and Blazeovich for five years. Among his clients is Victor Mattiece, whom he never meets but is well known to senior partners. The supervising partner for the Louisiana lawsuit, on which harvesting vast amounts of oil and natural gas depend, is F. Sims Wakefield, who is close to Mattiece and often visits him in the Bahamas. The firm is not directly involved in the trial and appeal, but Wakefield sees everything that touches the pelican brief. Morgan works ten hours a week on peripheral matters and bills through Wakefield. He believes rumors that the firm is working for a percentage of the harvest—an unheard of 10% of net profits.

On or about 28 September, Morgan goes to Wakefield's office, but leaves with his files when Wakefield's phone call continues. At 2 PM, he realizes he has inadvertently picked up a handwritten memo that so terrifies him that he makes a copy. It is from senior partner Marty Velmano to Wakefield, advising that Rosenberg and Jensen be "retired". In the affidavit, Morgan calls Velmano a "ruthless shark". Ten minutes after Morgan hides his copy, Wakefield storms in, rummages his desk, and retrieves the memo. Shocked at such paranoia and hysterics, Morgan arranges his office to reveal overnight tampering. Seeing it, he grows careful. He notices odd looks from Wakefield and increased visits by Velmano. When Rosenberg and Jensen are killed, Morgan feels that Mattiece is behind it. He is taken off the pelican case, has his workload increased, knows he is being followed, and fears for his life. When the reading ends, Grantham alerts Keen to gather the editors. They find Notary Public Emily Stanford, who verifies her signature and recognizes Garcia/Morgan. Thin Man is pretending to panhandle in a wheelchair outside the Post, but the couple runs by too fast for him to pull his gun.

Chapters 37-40 Analysis

Barr is brutally eliminated during his mission to Mattiece, who is described as a Howard Hughes-type eccentric living in the Bahamas. In the first of her daring acting roles, Shaw learns that Garcia/Morgan is dead. Sneller, heretofore seen as Khamel's cautious middle man, lands in Washington to head the death squad that has discovered Shaw's whereabouts through collusion with her bank. The widow Morgan wants to help and Shaw impersonates her to obtain an affidavit and videotape confession, which they rush to the Post, which Sneller's men have staked out, setting up the novel's finale.



Chapters 41-45

Chapters 41-45 Summary

Grantham and Shaw meet with Keen, Feldman, and Krauthammer, plus two assistant managing editors and an attorney, Vince Litsky. They watch the tape, which is of Morgan in his kitchen on 12 October, who indicates that if anyone is watching the tape, that means he is dead. He reads his affidavit. Schwabe is sinister enough to be in the conspiracy, but Morgan can only name Wakefield, Velmano, and Einstein.

Grantham gives the short version of how he finds Morgan and Krauthammer is ready to run the story. Grantham is given two hours to write the story and the lawyer insists on reading it before it is published.

Shaw and Grantham work together. Shaw sees someone watching the Post as he had earlier from a different location and points him out to Grantham. The man is seen again, as is Stump, which proves that Shaw, not Grantham, is the target. As the editing ends, Grantham suggests phoning the White House, FBI, and White and Blazeovich for comments, after 5 PM, so no one can seek a restraining order.

Feldman approves the second draft. Grantham calls the FBI, and Voyles calls back, saying he is coming over for a man-to-man. Grantham next calls the White House and asks for Coal, whom he advises he is taping, and talks about Mattiece's contributions. Coal assures him they are legal, and denies any attempt at obstructing an FBI investigation. The editors admire Coal's cool as he sits in hot water.

Voyles and Lewis look like Mafia dons. Voyles swaggers as humbly as possible. The editors are tense. Feldman offers them a draft, saying they welcome their comments, but are going to press in an hour. While they read, Feldman and Keen listen in on Grantham's call to Velmano, who again threatens to sue and denies the memo.

Voyles provides the FBI's response, both on and off the record, confirming that the FBI had received the brief and submitted it to Coal. No action had been taken until Verheek is murdered, six days later, at which point the FBI launches a massive investigation of Mattiece who, if found, will be arrested. Off the record, he says twelve days ago the President asks him to back off Mattiece in order not to harm his reelection chances. Voyles has it on tape, but will let no one listen until the President denies the conversation.

Shaw agrees to talk with Voyles, who wonders what she will do next and offers to help. Off the record, he reveals that Khamel must have listened in on her last conversation with Verheek, killed him, and impersonated him. A CIA contract killer, Rupert, kills Khamel. The CIA has been monitoring Mattiece since he begins dealing with Libya, and Rupert is one of dozens of CIA personnel watching and protecting Shaw. Mattiece killing people legitimizes the brief. Because the FBI knows far less about this than the CIA, it



moves more slowly. One reason the FBI sends the brief to the White House is to get it into Gminski's hands, knowing he will circumvent laws and figure things out fast.

Shaw is glad to have the mysteries resolved, but wants to escape to some deserted beach house. She's offered FBI protection and escape by Voyles and considers it. At 7 PM, the editors approve the story. The Post's owner has refused the President's request to postpone the story, and Feldman's friend, Judge Roland, has declined a White and Blazeovich request for an injunction.

Grantham is sad not knowing where Shaw is headed and not being invited to visit later. Shaw reflects that she is a different person, ready to live in a different place. She is getting to like this cocky, abrasive, jaded reporter. She chooses to go to Atlanta, a huge, busy airport. She will do her usual four-airports-in-one-night routine just to feel safe and land somewhere in the Caribbean. She promises to call or write when she settles.

At 11 PM, Velmano, Wakefield, Schwabe, Einstein, and the retired Cortz are drinking Scotch in Velmano's office. Cortz finishes a phone chat with Mattiece's aide. The crazy man has washed his hands of the firm. Schwabe suggests that Velmano and Wakefield, who alone are named by Grantham, flee to Europe; however, with six children, Wakefield cannot run or confess to his wife. He heads to his office, claiming he is fine, and before he can lose his nerve fires a .38 into his brain. Meanwhile, in Dumbarton Oaks, at 12:20 AM, Voyles gets out of the limo and jams a newspaper into Coal's face. He yells at him about personally delivering a subpoena and indictment, and leaving the President with new idiots to tell him what to do.

By 4:30, CNN has the story, and the networks go live from the White House, which has no comment. Keen assumes correctly that Grantham will want a long vacation soon, but he is the man of the hour and must pick up the pieces.

After eight days of sun, broiled fish, island fruit, and plenty of sleep, Shaw decides she might not be ruined. She is resigned to death if Mattiece's men manage to find her after her zigzagging, but believes no one is behind her. She spends time with Callahan's memory and mourns properly, determined to leave all guilt and pain on this island before moving on.

Grantham at Shaw's house. They kiss and hold one another. Coal has quit, taking the fall, but is unlikely to be indicted. The President is dumb but innocent. Velmano, Schwabe, and Einstein have been indicted, but Velmano has vanished. Mattiece and four of his people are indicted. Once Grantham realizes there is no White House cover-up, he loses steam. They walk in silence until she says she has missed him. He figures he will stay as long as she wants him and they settle on a month at a time.

Chapters 41-45 Analysis

Grantham and Shaw make it safely inside the Post building and join the editors (and corporate lawyer) in reviewing the Garcia/Morgan videotape. All agree it is damning and the story is written and reviewed. Those mentioned negatively in the story are allowed



to comment. Only Voyles does so, and his character is greatly humanized in the process. He conveniently explains some of the plot twists and offers his services in helping brave Shaw run away from the nightmare. The story closes in the islands, watching Shaw's emotional recovery. When Grantham shows up, it seems clear she will make it. He adds a few closing details on the story and they agree to live together month-by-month.



Characters

Darby Shaw

A 24-year-old third-year law student at Tulane University, Shaw is Professor Thomas Callahan's current lover and star pupil. She wears baggy clothes that male students suspect cover a fabulous body. She has dark red, shoulder-length hair, and long legs: a perfect cheerleader look. A native of Denver, she graduates college magna cum laude in biology, is second in her class at Tulane, and is looking to be number one. She recites facts on virtually any case, and hopes after passing the bar to sue chemical companies for trashing the environment. She also intends a malpractice suit against the lawyer who botches her late father's estate, leaving her with a sizeable nest egg (increased by sound investments), but needing to live frugally.

It takes the womanizing Callahan a month to get Shaw to go to dinner and longer to get her into bed. He has not kept his promise to cut back on alcohol, but she finds it amusing to see a 45-year old professor struck with puppy love. She loves him too. Callahan goes on a drinking binge when his idol, Supreme Court Justice Abraham Rosenberg, is assassinated the same night as Justice Glenn Jensen. Shaw suspects a conspiracy and spends a week researching cases likely to make it to the Supreme Court that would inspire murder. She produces a heavily annotated, 13-page, double-spaced brief, clearly written, without double-talk and legal lingo, about a lawsuit in Louisiana. Her name, address, and phone number are on the cover sheet.

Callahan takes the brief, whose thesis Shaw has dismissed, to Washington, shares it with a friend in the FBI, Gavin Verheek, who passes it upstairs. Within 24 hours, Callahan is killed by a car bomb; Shaw escapes only because they have been quarreling about his driving drunk. Shaw disappears into the swirling French Quarter, regularly changing her appearance, cutting and dying her hair, and trusting no one, including Verheek, who offers FBI protection. She also phones Washington Post reporter Gray Grantham, suggesting she may soon want to "spill her guts," having written a document that is causing so many deaths. Verheek comes to New Orleans for Callahan's funeral and is killed by Khamel, who impersonates him to get close to Shaw, who is nearly convinced of Verheek's friendship. The impersonator is killed and Shaw races out of town, coming by an expensive, circuitous route to New York and ultimately Washington, where she twice impersonates people to gather information and evidence that proves the brief. When the story is written, Shaw accepts FBI help in escaping. On St. Thomas, she makes peace with Callahan's memory and on a lonely beach embraces Grantham as her new love. She is done with the law.

Gray S. Grantham

A reporter for the Washington Post, Grantham is a 38-year-old night owl, divorced seven years without children, who lives alone with a cat. He drives a Volvo and alternates



between listed and unlisted phone numbers. He is currently listed. Six years previously, he authors a book on HUD scandals that does not sell well. Occasionally, he gets inside information from a seemingly blind janitor in the West Wing, Sarge, and uses the services of a paroled drug offender whenever he needs a sleazy "halfass private investigator." Croft likes to work for Grantham, who does not pretend to be pious when he needs dirt

After two Supreme Court justices are murdered, Grantham hears from Sarge about the joy this brings the White House and the names of two potential replacement justices, both archconservatives. When Grantham publishes this, he hears from an attorney who is obviously anxious to get information about the murders off his chest but is too afraid for his family to talk. After three phone conversations, "Garcia" vanishes, but thanks to Croft, Grantham has surveillance photographs. While he sets Croft to finding Garcia, Grantham publishes a White House leak about the international assassin Khamel. The FBI begins tailing Grantham and bugs his phones.

Tulane Law School student Darby Shaw calls to ask if he has heard of the "pelican brief," and explains how she has nearly been killed for writing it. Grantham begins verifying facts as further attempts force her to flee New Orleans for New York. She gives explicit orders for the circuitous route Grantham must take if she wants to meet her. Grantham realizes this is the biggest news story in 20 years, but it must be independently corroborated. Back in Washington, they intensify the search for Garcia, discover he is truly Curtis Morgan, recently deceased. From his embittered widow they learn of a secret lockbox that they retrieve. The sworn affidavit, photocopied memo, and videotape it contains are sufficient proof to publish. Grantham splits writing duties with Shaw, who has seen killers outside the building. Certain to win a Pulitzer Prize for the story, Grantham is depressed that Shaw vanishes with but a vague promise to phone or write someday. He sees through tying up the threads of the story but grows bored when it looks as though there is no Watergate-type cover-up. Hearing from Shaw, he flies to meet her on St. Thomas. He is no longer a cocky, abrasive, jaded reporter.

Thomas Callahan

A popular constitutional law professor at Tulane University, the 45-year-old Callahan is an alcoholic who, therefore, schedules no early classes. He affects a "liberal-chic-academic" look. He has a "history of closeness with female students." Never before has he fallen in love as he has with brilliant and beautiful Darby Shaw. Unlike his Georgetown University classmates from 20 years ago who are working 70-hour weeks in "pressurized law factories" (as he tries for six months after school), Callahan sleeps late, works five hours a day, and his \$70,000 a year pays for his bungalow, Porsche, and liquor. His old pals are making half a million a year and schmoozing with CEOs and senators, but he does not envy them. He flies to Washington, DC, to visit his best friend in school, Gavin Verheek, Special Counselor to the Director, FBI, a week after learning that his hero, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Abraham Rosenberg, "the last of the great judicial activists," has been murdered. Callahan goes on a violent drinking binge,



cancelling classes, and lamenting the oncoming death of the Constitution when archconservatives take their places.

During Callahan's binge, Shaw develops a theory of who would most benefit from these sudden "retirements," Justice Glenn Jensen having been killed the same night. Callahan takes a copy of her "pelican brief" to a Washington conference and gives it to Verheek to read. Callahan flies home, drinks too much while celebrating with Shaw, gets angry at her suggestion she drive, jumps in his Porsche, hits the gas, and is blown to pieces by a powerful bomb. The probable target, Shaw, survives, becomes paranoid, and goes into hiding. Verheek comes for Callahan's funeral, asks around the college bars for Shaw, attracting too much attention, and is killed by the justices' killer. That same killer nearly kills Shaw while impersonating Verheek, but is himself murdered by a CIA operative. As she runs and later teams up with Washington Post reporter Gray Grantham to verify the story to where it can be published, Shaw puts off mourning Callahan properly and his memory fades. When the story is told, she disappears to the Caribbean and says her proper goodbyes so she can begin a new life with Grantham.

L. Matthew Barr

Commander of "The Unit," a \$4 million arm of the Committee to Reelect the President (CRP), Barr is an ex-Marine, ex-CIA, ex-spy, and ex-felon, employed by Fletcher Coal, White House Chief of Staff. As ordered, Barr bugs the car and apartment phones of Washington Post reporter Gray Grantham, but knows better than to try to infiltrate the newspaper's offices. Barr is sent to the Caribbean to learn the truth from Victor Mattiece. The trip with blacked out windows and massive guards causes Barr to curse Coal and want to abandon the mission, but he reminds himself of his training and skill. Barr learns the truth, but does not live to bring the information home. He is killed in the same fashion as Justice Jensen, his neck broken and strangled.

Fletcher Coal

The White House Chief of Staff, Coal at 37 runs the operation for a weak, disinterested President. He is the boy wonder who rescues a failing campaign as a guileful manipulator and nasty henchman. Coal hates the directors of the CIA and the FBI—and it is fully mutual. He stands during meetings like a sentry at the window, and paces annoyingly like der Führer before the President's desk. The President hates Coal's perfection. He is said to work 20 hours a day, seven days a week, 5 AM until 11 PM, and fires subordinates who fail to put in 80 hours a week against his 120. He drinks only water, eats from vending machines, has perfect recall, devours information, is never relaxed, and sleeps 3-5 hours a night. His appearance is always perfect.

Coal is happiest when tensions are thick. He is the organizer and boss of "The Unit," secret \$4 million division of the Committee to Reelect the President (CRP). With an office in a tacky building on M St. in Georgetown, the Unit consists of trained thugs who do Republican dirty tricks. The ex-Marine, ex-CIA, ex-spy, and ex-felon L. Matthew Barr



who heads the Unit considers Coal, his benefactor, a truly dangerous man. Coal orders him to follow Washington Post journalist Gray Grantham around the clock and bug his car, apartment, and office (Barr does the first two but knows the third is impossible). In a state of near panic about the political implications of the pelican brief, Coal dispatches Barr to the Caribbean to learn the truth from Victor Mattiece, but Barr does not live to bring the information home. When Grantham corroborates his story and gives Coal an opportunity to comment, he effectively has no comment. FBI Director Voyles happily carries a copy of the paper to Coal's home in Dumbarton Oaks, pounds on the door, gets him on the porch in his pajamas and robe, shoves his picture in his face, and declares he looks forward to delivering subpoenas and indictments. As expected, Coal takes the heat for his boss and resigns, but is not expected to be indicted.

Croft

A paroled drug offender who once takes photographs for the Washington Post but now freelances as a sleazy "halfass private investigator," Croft likes to work for Grantham, who does not pretend to be pious when he needs dirt. Grantham lends Croft his Volvo to stake out the phone booth from which an anonymous tipster, Garcia, has called earlier. Croft shoots two rolls in two minutes. Memorizing the face, Croft then goes morning, noon, and night to the courthouse to look for Garcia and, on another tip, to the offices of White and Blazeovich, where he spots his man. By this point, if he had other clients, he would tell Grantham to forget the boring gig.

Eric East

The FBI Special Agent assigned to lead the Rosenberg/Jensen murder investigation, East is the first agent to receive the draft of Darby Shaw's "pelican brief" from Special Counsel to the Director Gavin Verheek. He passes it to Director F. Denton Voyles, who finds it a long-shot, but has East give it to Fletcher Coal in order to make him and the President sweat a bit

Robert Gminski

The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), generally regarded as dim-witted and not meticulous about observing legal boundaries, Gminski is shocked to be asked by the President if the CIA has anything to do with the murder of Supreme Court Justice Abraham Rosenberg for his well-known opposition to national security measures. The habitual knuckle-cracker receives a copy of the "pelican brief," from which the FBI has been told to step back, and is told to look into it quickly and quietly. Already watching Victor Mattiece because of his Libyan connections, Gminski sees peril to the brief's author, Darby Shaw, orders surveillance, and personally flies to New Orleans to see if they can bring her in.



Glenn Jensen

At 48, Jensen is the youngest U.S. Supreme Court Justice. He flip-flops ideologically, angering Republicans by his vow to "find compassion and rule with it." Jensen has the lowest production of opinions on the court and is consistent in protecting the environment. He takes Prozac for depression and is rumored to be gay. His confirmation process six years earlier is turbulent. Jensen lives alone in a 7th-floor apartment and, like Justice Abraham Rosenberg, refuses FBI protection. He enjoys sneaking out at night, playing cat-and-mouse with the bodyguards. Fear of getting caught in gay porn theaters obsesses him soon after his confirmation, and a close call when one theatre catches fire has kept him away from the movies for two months. The urge returns, however, and legmen for assassin Khamel plot his schedule. Jensen dies in the balcony of the Montrose Theatre, neck broken and garroted. His mother wants a private Episcopal funeral and burial in Providence, RI. The President and colleagues are afraid to eulogize him, given where he dies. Rosenberg's death hours earlier could be considered vengeance, but erratic Jensen suggests a political motivation.

Smith Keen

Gray S. Grantham's editor at the Washington Post, Keen has a strict "open door" policy, which Grantham breaks to tell him what he has learned about the Rosenberg/Jensen murders, including contact with the author of the mysterious pelican brief, who believes she is the intended victim in Callahan's murder. If Darby Shaw contacts Grantham again, this will be a helluva story requiring massive, flawless verification before it can run. Keen green-lights it, but wants to be updated hourly. Keen's car is bugged by those hunting for Shaw, and a conversation with Callahan gives the killers his address. As Grantham and Shaw go incognito, Keen champions the story with the rest of the editorial staff and, realizing at the end that Grantham will want to slip away to the Caribbean to be with beautiful Darby Shaw, asks him to tie up the final threads before leaving.

Khamel

The novel's most enigmatic character, Khamel, at 40-45 years old, can kill with anything, speaks 12 languages, and is considered the most proficient and expensive assassin in the world, demanding \$10-\$20 million per job. He is currently under contract to the reclusive oil baron Victor Mattiese and being locally handled by attorney Edwin Sneller. Khamel is wanted in nine countries. Among his most famous jobs since beginning killing at age 15 are the British ambassador to Nigeria, 17 Israeli soldiers on the West Bank in 1990, a German banker and his family in 1985, and a 1981 attempt on the Pope. After killing Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen without leaving a clue or witness, Khamel flies by commercial jet to Paris, where security cameras spot him and Interpol informs the CIA. It is a sloppy mistake.



When local assets fail to kill Darby Shaw in New Orleans, Khamel is ordered in. At the time, he is enjoying Fidel Castro's hospitality in Cuba. Castro had once been a target, but Khamel admires him too much, confesses, and stages his own mock death by ambush. Sneller provides yearbook photos that Khamel finds intriguing, knowing he can kill her, but feeling it a shame. Khamel breaks into the hotel room of FBI attorney Gavin Verheek, who is trying to help Shaw, tapes a conversation in which they arrange a carefully coded meeting, kills Verheek, and impersonates him for the meeting, looking for the first opportunity to kill Shaw. Before he can, a man elbows through the crowd and fires a bullet into Khamel's brain. He crawls, yelling in Arabic, clinging to life. Later, it is learned the killer is on the CIA payroll and has been watching out for Shaw.

Jason Kline

Justice Abraham Rosenberg's senior law clerk, Kline likes Justice Thurow's idea of reviewing cases pending in circuit courts. Chief Justice Runyan assigns him to work with him after the funerals.

K.O. Lewis

The Deputy Director of the FBI, Lewis appears repeatedly throughout the novel either at the side of Director F. Denton Voyles or as his representative on delicate or unsavory missions. He hand delivers the "pelican brief" to White House Chief of Staff Fletcher Coal.

Archibald Manning

A justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Manning cooperates with security and is said to be afraid of his shadow. He becomes the senior justice after Abraham Rosenberg's murder. When the justices discuss motives, Manning says he often wants to shoot Rosenberg himself, despite loving him as a brother, as he gradually becomes a symbol of what is wrong in the U.S. Manning is sure that the motivation is retribution. Hating both flying and funerals, Manning does not go to Providence for Jensen's funeral.

Victor Mattiece

The multi-millionaire whom Darby Shaw names as the man behind the Rosenberg/Jensen murders, Mattiece owns a half-dozen homes in as many countries, jets, and boats, and is rarely in the U.S. Had Mattiece not gone berserk and started killing people, the "pelican brief" would have been ignored. With the probable gunman, Khamel, dead, the probable bagman elusive, and the conspirators gone, the FBI and CIA concentrate on finding Mattiece.

In 1979, Mattiece, a Cajun from Lafayette, LA, who has made and lost several oil fortunes, hits big in Terrebonne Parish, caps the wells, and quietly buys up surrounding



lands under a myriad of corporate names. He loves politics, hates publicity, and is paranoid and reclusive. During the 1980s downturn, he attracts Arab investors, and sprinkles money among politicians to get permission to gouge through the marshes and swamps, foreseeing profits of \$1-\$3 billion. Talking with Libya puts Mattiece on the CIA watch list, and agents follow his dealings in Louisiana. When an obscure environmental outfit, Green Fund, files a federal lawsuit to stop dredging and drilling. Mattiece goes "over the edge" in his determination to make the lawsuit go away. He moves to greater invisibility in the Bahamas, where he indulges such quirks as always walking on paths of cotton towels which no one else may touch. He is gaunt, gray, and unkempt.

Andrew McDowell

A 61-year-old U.S. Supreme Court Justice, McDowell is the closest to a friend Glenn Jensen has on the court. He is, nevertheless, relieved not to have to say a few words at the funeral, horrified and embarrassed by the circumstances of Jensen's death. He claims not to suspect Jensen's homosexuality.

The Morgans

The Morgans of suburban Arlington, VA, provide corroboration for the facts contained in the "pelican file." Curtis Morgan is an overworked 29-year-old corporate attorney making \$80,000 a year working for White and Blazeovich in Washington, DC. He is a nice-looking, clean-cut, light skinned Hispanic, expensively dressed, and disgruntled. When Curtis accidentally discovers a memo linking partners Velmano, Wakefield, and Einstein to the murder of Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen, he makes a copy and calls Washington Post reporter Gray Grantham, wanting to blow the whistle but fearing for his family's safety. He claims not to have eaten or slept in a week and knows he is being bugged and followed. He gives the alias Garcia, calls back twice, but fails to meet Grantham. Grantham, meanwhile, figures out Garcia's identity and is closing in for a forced meeting when he learns the lawyer is dead.

Grantham finds his widow Beverly Anne Morgan, née Kupchek, whose angry, defensive father turns him rudely away. Beverly phones Grantham next morning, talks bitterly about White and Blazeovich, and mentions finding a secret lockbox that her husband recently buys (along with term life insurance). Beverly turns over the key and gives permission to publish anything that does not demean her husband. Grantham discovers that before muggers supposedly kill him, Morgan/Garcia swears an detailed affidavit and records a damning videotape that confirms the details in the brief and seals the case against the lawyers and their reclusive client.

Nelson Muncie

A rich, reclusive Florida industrialist who idolizes his 12-year-old niece, Muncie snaps when she is raped and murdered by Buck Tyrone, who confesses in writing, is convicted, and sentenced to death. Justice Abraham Rosenberg, however, writes a



convoluted Fifth Amendment decision that throws out the confession. Muncie apparently has Tyrone and his lawyer killed and has indicated he wants Rosenberg dead. This motivation closely parallels what comes out in the "pelican brief."

The President

Never named, the President is strikingly handsome, speaks with a soothing baritone, has a forehead that wrinkles with profound shows of feigned emotion. He practices putting in the Oval Office, changes clothes continually, and likes his brown cardigan when it becomes clear the public is attracted to the grandfatherly look. He has thought about taking a mistress when "The Queen" is traveling, but feels too old, tired, and Republican. Not a details person, the President leaves those to Fletcher Coal, his Chief-of-Staff, whose energy and perfect recall he resents and mentally likens to Hitler. The President hates the Director of the FBI (it is mutual) and looks down on the Director of the CIA, whom he must, nevertheless, trust to investigate the "pelican brief" when it reaches the Oval Office. The President's biggest concern is to be reelected in a year and he sees the murder of Rosenberg and Jensen as presenting him his destiny: putting two squeaky-clean archconservative males on the Supreme Court. When the pelican brief links him with a shady political contributor from a decade ago, the President grows paranoid and allows Coal to become more draconian. At the end of the novel, it appears that the President has not obstructed justice but he seems unlikely to win another term in office.

Abraham Rosenberg

A curmudgeonly, 91-year-old U.S. Supreme Court justice, Rosenberg is paralyzed after his second stroke seven years earlier but refuses to retire until there is a Democratic president, lest the Constitution be endangered. The last of the old-time liberals, Rosenberg puts government before business, individuals before government, and the environment before everything. In 34 years, he writes 1,200 opinions, amazing constitutional scholars. Refusing FBI protection, Rosenberg is shot dead in his bed, and opinion is divided over whether the killing is retribution or has a political motivation; the latter becomes clear when Justice Glenn Jensen is also assassinated. Rosenberg is the hero of Tulane University Law Professor Thomas Callahan, whose drunken mourning inspires his premier student and lover, Darby Shaw, to investigate who would most benefit from two sudden vacancies on the Court. The results are the "pelican brief," which holds that oil baron Victor Mattiece needs a non-environmentalist on the Court soon. A non-practicing Jew, Rosenberg asks that his cremains be scattered over a Sioux Indian reservation in South Dakota.

John Runyan

The Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Runyan is a tough conservative, Republican-appointed, and hated by most minorities. He occupies an office on the main



floor of the Supreme Court building, which is more ornate and larger than colleagues. He prefers to be called "Chief." He tries unsuccessfully to get justices Rosenberg and Jensen to accept FBI protection like the other brethren. When they are assassinated, he plans the funeral and provisionally accepts the idea of the Supreme Court clerks reviewing upcoming cases for a motive.

Rupert

A bushy-haired character, first seen wearing a ball cap and Saints jacket, and claiming to be a sergeant in the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), Rupert remains on the periphery of the novel. He drags a badly injured Darby Shaw to an unmarked car, and deposits her in the passenger's seat, where a partner in jeans and cowboy boots promises help after she answers a few questions. They flee when uniformed cops arrive, and Shaw is constantly looking over her shoulder in fear of him. At the conclusion, the FBI Director tells her that Rupert is a professional killer under contract to the CIA. He had sincerely been trying to help her in New Orleans and is the figure who shoots the assassin Khamel, who is looking for a chance to kill her while posing as Gavin Verheek.

Sarge

Sarge (real name: Milton Hardy) is old and black with white hair springing in all directions. He always wears thick sunglasses, and encourages White House coworkers to think he is half-blind. He has worked in the West Wing for 30 years, picking up information from important people who ignore him. When he learns something important enough, he leaks it carefully to Gray Grantham of the Washington Post, arranging meetings through his son, Cleve, a Washington, DC, patrolman. Sarge leaks the joy that justice Rosenberg and Jensen's deaths brings the President who gets to nominate two archconservatives. Sarge names two candidates. When Grantham publishes the information, the White House grows paranoid. Unable to risk meeting, Sarge passes information to Grantham until he is put on a 90-day leave to get him out of the way.

Edwin Sneller

One of Victor Mattiece's lawyers, Sneller coordinates details of illegal activities like Khamel's assassination of Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen and the murder of Darby Shaw. Sneller is pictured renting hotel rooms adjacent to the killer, providing photographs, maps, itineraries, and arranging for escape vehicles. When Shaw proves cunning and elusive, Mattiece is furious and orders a futile search in New York City. When she is found in Washington, Sneller is understaffed and knows they will not prevent Shaw's talking.



Alice Stark

Darby Shaw's best friend in the Tulane law school, Stark accepts a mission to check out Shaw's apartment and finds signs that all useful data have been removed. They meet in an oyster bar, and Stark insists she is not afraid to help. Shaw asks her to attend the memorial service, watch everything, and spread word she has gone to Denver, but will return next semester.

Ben Thurow

A 68-year-old U.S. Supreme Court justice, Thurow is a former federal prosecutor who wants his brethren to look into the Rosenberg/Jensen murders rather than leave it to the FBI.

Trope and Booker

Aging agents of the FBI and CIA respectively, Trope and Book meet in Dupont Circle near the White House, whenever their bosses, F. Denton Voyles and Robert Gminski, respectively, need to iron out details away from official channels.

Gavin Verheek

One of Thomas Callahan's best friends at the Georgetown law school 20 years previously, Verheek drops out of lucrative private practice to work for the FBI as Special Counsel to the Director, F. Denton Voyles. Verheek is overwhelmed with work following the assassination of Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen, but the friends meet while Callahan is in DC. Verheek can divulge nothing and wants to talk about Callahan's latest young lover. He is on his third wife, who is worth about \$5 million but is neurotic and depressed. Verheek is amused that Callahan has finally fallen in love and agrees to join them in St. Thomas over Thanksgiving. Still in a drunken stupor in the morning, Verheek reads Darby Shaw's fascinating pelican brief before passing it to Special Agent Eric East. When the man behind the assassinations learns of the brief, he orders everyone who knows about it killed. Callahan is first. Verheek flies to New Orleans for his funeral and is frustrated in trying to get Shaw to trust him and the FBI. He spends several nights barhopping and handing out his card seeking to contact her. The assassin, Khamel, breaks into Verheek's hotel room, records him arranging a meeting with Shaw, kills Verheek, and makes it look like a suicide. The truth comes out in the autopsy, and the FBI rallies to find who has killed one of their own.

F. Denton Voyles

The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Voyles is portrayed as gruff, blunt, sneering, stocky, trench-coated, gum chewing, cigar smoking man worrying about



a second heart attack. He has served under three presidents and has no respect for the current one, who lets his hated Chief of Staff, Fletcher Coal, push him around. When he gets a copy of the pelican brief from his Special Counsel, Gavin Verheek, Voyles forwards it to the White House, little guessing the havoc to come, largely because its embarrassing photograph of the President shaking hands with Victor Mattiece will annoy them. Voyles secretly tapes an Oval Office session in which he is told to pull back and he obeys until Verheek is murdered. When allowed to comment about the Washington Post story, Voyles covers himself, but off the record, fills in Darby Shaw and Gray Grantham on details and offers his private plane to fly her to safety.



Objects/Places

The Pelican Brief

More than a brief, the pelican brief is a succinct, fascinating story about a lawsuit in Louisiana. It consists of four pages of facts, three pages of histories of the parties, a page of trial summary, a mention of an appeal, and three pages showing an implausible trail to the removal of Rosenberg and Jensen. Brilliant Tulane law student Shaw, the author, seems to lose steam at the end, but is clear, free of double-talk and legal lingo, and compelling. Shaw concludes that recluse oil mogul Victor Mattiece stands to gain from their deaths and includes a photograph of the President shaking hands with him a decade earlier. Soon after completing the work, Shaw discards her own theory.

The pelican brief begins circulating, with Shaw's name, address, and phone number on the cover sheet. Her professor and lover, Thomas Callahan, gives it to an old friend, Gavin Verheek, who is Special Counsel to FBI Director F. Denton Voyles. Having never heard of Mattiece, Verheek passes it to Special Agent Eric East and it is copied an unknown number of times before it reaches the Director's desk. Because of the embarrassing photograph, Voyles sends the brief to the White House to annoy the President, whom he despises. It causes panic, because no one knows for sure if it is authentic. Presidential Chief of Staff Fletcher Coal makes one copy for CIA Director Robert Gminski, hoping he can find out fast and quietly if it is true. Having watched Mattiece for years, the CIA is better prepared than the FBI to respond, even if the President had not ordered the FBI to back off. Mattiece panics and pays to have anyone who knows of the brief killed: Callahan and Shaw (she escapes), Verheek, and a young lawyer, Curtis Morgan (known as Garcia). Fearing for his life, Morgan prepares documentation on the assassination that allows the Washington Post to publish the story. Shaw feels guilty for producing something as lethal as the pelican brief.

Central Intelligence Agency

The chief U.S. law agency for international spying, the CIA is headquartered in Langley, VA, and is often referred to simply as Langley. It is depicted as fierce rivals with the FBI, but the two current directors have worked out an unofficial way of sharing information and planning. Headed by Robert Gminski, the CIA is kept up to date on the murder of Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen, largely because the President wants to be sure no one in there harbors resentment against Rosenberg's views on spying. While it is illegal for the CIA to conduct investigations within the U.S., Gminski is ordered to look into the "pelican brief" before the FBI manages to rally its forces. Only at the end of the novel is it revealed that the CIA has been watching New Orleans-based oil mogul Victor Mattiece for a decade, since he made business contacts with the government of Libya. Thus, the CIA knows about his machinations before his name comes up in the pelican brief and assets on the ground are there when Darby Shaw needs protection



from Mattiece's thugs. A man whom she fears is trying to kill her turns out to be the hired killer on the CIA payroll who kills Khamel before he can kill Shaw.

Committee to Reelect the President

A Republican PAC operating out of plush Rosslyn, VA, across the Potomac River from Georgetown, the CRP is seen chiefly through its unofficial division dubbed "The Unit." With an annual budget of \$4 million, L. Matthew Barr has an office in a tacky building on M St. in Georgetown. The ex-Marine, ex-CIA, ex-spy, and ex-felon heads a \$4 million operation thanks to Presidential Chief of Staff Fletcher Coal, who wants his trained thugs to follow Washington Post journalist Gray Grantham around the clock to see where he is getting such good material. Coal dispatches Barr to learn the truth from Victor Mattiece, but Barr does not live to bring the information home.

Federal Bureau of Investigations

The chief U.S. law enforcement agency, the FBI works out of the Hoover Building in Washington DC. It is depicted as fierce rivals with the Central Intelligence Agency, whose actions are by law restricted to overseas operations, but the two current directors have worked out an unofficial way of sharing information and planning. Unlike most works of fiction, this novel does not show inherent animosity between the FBI and local police forces. It is often referred to as "The Bureau" with a certain sense of awe.

The novel opens with the FBI providing two Special Agents per justice of the Supreme Court, in light of increased death threats. When two justices, Rosenberg and Jensen, refuse protection and are assassinated, Director F. Denton Voyles assigns Special Agent Eric East to lead the investigation, anticipating weeks or months of work. Voyles has a list of ten suspects; each is assigned 6-20 special agents whose team leaders report daily. Voyles emphasizes confidentiality and secrecy around the bloodhound press. When Voyle's Special Counsel, Gavin Verheek, gets a copy of the pelican brief, it makes its way up to Denton, who sends it to the White House to shake them up with what he believes is a hoax. The President orders Voyles not to pursue the prime suspect in the brief, and he obeys until Verheek is found murdered. In the end, he admits that lacking the knowledge and perspective of the CIA at the start of the case, the FBI is slow getting up to speed.

Georgetown

A generally fashionable section of Washington, DC, Georgetown provides many scenes in the novel. Justice Abraham Rosenberg owns a townhouse on Volta Street, where he is murdered in his bed. The plot is finalized in the Four Seasons Hotel, by phone calls in adjoining rooms between the international assassin Khamel and a timid lawyer, Edwin F. Sneller. Presidential Chief of Staff Fletcher Coal lives in the Dumbarton Oaks section of Georgetown. Georgetown University is shown briefly as Gray Grantham and Darby Shaw finagle class schedules out of the registrar and talk to several students who have



clerked for White and Blazeovich. Shaw sees the law school as a carbon copy of Tulane. Her late professor and lover, Thomas Callahan, and his murdered best friend, Gavin Verheek, are both Georgetown alumni and recall the horrors of law school. "The Unit" is housed in a tacky area around M St.

Green Fund

An obscure environmental outfit, Green Fund files an unprecedented federal lawsuit to stop dredging and drilling for oil in Louisiana. Victor Mattiece, who has been buying up property around the secret fields, goes "over the edge" in his determination to make the lawsuit go away while moving to greater invisibility in the Bahamas. As a result, a massive and unscrupulous army of law firms faces the two-person plaintiff team. The trial goes against Green Fund, but the judge orders an injunction against drilling pending an expected appeal. Green Fund alleges the verdict is bought.

Montrose Theatre

The gay pornography establishment in which Justice Glenn Jensen is murdered, the Montrose is one of 22 Washington, DC smut houses, closed and deserted, that the Underground Army (UA) flash fries at precisely 4 AM, part of a campaign of 54 attacks in Washington, Baltimore, and Atlanta.

New Orleans, LA

Still muggy and warm in October, New Orleans is depicted through college life at Tulane University and through the French Quarter. The Tulane law school is shown through Professor Thomas Callahan's packed theater-style classroom and the tiny Rogers Chapel from which he is buried, while his grieving lover and student, Darby Shaw, watches from the third floor of adjacent Newcomb Hall, fearing for her life. She is also shown working in the law library, looking for patterns in the murder of Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen. After attending Callahan's funeral, his old friend, Gavin Verheek, spends several night barhopping in the college area, trying to locate Shaw.

Callahan's apartment is on Dauphine St. in the French Quarter, which comes alive slowly in the morning after nights of revelry. Callahan dies in a parking lot three blocks from Moutons Restaurant when his car is firebombed. Shaw would have been with him had they not been fighting about his drinking. She is taken to busy Charity Hospital on St. Charles, but flees because she does not know whom to trust. Rampart, mentioned many times, is a major thoroughfare through the French Quarter. Shaw is shaken when killers chase her through the French Quarter and fail to catch her only when rowdy drunken Saints fans intervene. New Orleans is shown as an avid football city that takes defeat well. Shaw finally flees New Orleans after the man she believes is Callahan's old friend but is really a paid assassin, is killed boarding a river boat.



The Supreme Court Building

The novel opens showing a massive demonstration outside the Supreme Court Building in Washington, DC, an annual event marking the beginning of a new session the first Monday in October. The Court has its own police force, which is on riot patrol. Due to an increased volume of threats against the justices, the FBI has assigned two Special Agents per Justice, but Rosenberg and Jensen do not cooperate and are brutally murdered. The inside of the Chief Justice's ornate office is pictured as the senior justices discuss funerals and figuring out who has killed their brethren and for what political motive. The staff of clerks is shown as having a lively, unofficial communication network.

The Washington Post

The premier newspaper in the nation's capital, the Post is shown pursuing the story contained in the pelican brief, when ace investigative reporter Gray S. Grantham is contacted by the brief's author, Darby Shaw and a skittish young corporate lawyer who calls himself Garcia. Both are frightened for their lives. Grantham is shown collecting information from a source in the White House, from a sleazy pot-smoking freelance photographer, and making hundreds of phone calls, most of which do not pan out. He declares this is a typical part of his job. As all the pieces fall together to where the editors and corporate lawyer agree it can be printed, the atmosphere is like when reporting on a minor burglary at the Watergate grows into a White House scandal that topples Richard M. Nixon. The various editors range from cautious to giddy. The bitter historical rivalry between the Post and the New York Times is emphasized. In the end, the publisher is found during a trip to China and leaned on by the White House to delay publication. He boldly refuses to be intimidated. Sure to win a Pulitzer Prize, Grantham tires of the story as it appears there is no White House cover-up, and goes to the Caribbean to find true love.

White and Blazeovich

The enormous Washington, DC, law firm that handles the affairs of reclusive millionaire Victor Mattiece, White and Blazeovich alienates the associates that it overworks. One, Curtis Morgan, discovers a memo linking partners Velmano, Wakefield, and Einstein to the murder of Supreme Court justices Rosenberg and Jensen in order to improve the client's chances of winning an environmental case in the Supreme Court. When a law student figures it out and her brief ends up in the hands of the FBI and White House, Mattiece orders anyone who knows about the brief killed. Morgan, using the alias Garcia, wants to blow the whistle but worries about his family. Muggers allegedly kill him, after he swears an affidavit and records a damning videotape. Legal clerks, alienated after working for the summer at White and Blazeovich, help piece the picture together. When the Washington Post asks for comment about the breaking story, Schwabe is defiant and tries unsuccessfully to get an injunction. Wakefield commits suicide. Velmano is indicted but flees the country.



The White House

The home of the President of the United States, the White House figures prominently in the novel. Most scenes occur in the Oval Office, the President's office, where the incumbent spends his time practicing putting in his stocking feet whenever possible. His Chief of Staff, Fletcher Coal, actually runs the office. Coal has a secret room where he can watch and listen to what goes on in the Oval Office. The President sleeps upstairs, often alone when his wife, "The Queen" is on the road. He has considered taking a mistress but is too tired and Republican. The offices in the West Wing are cleaned by an elderly janitor, Sarge, believed to be blind and deaf, which allows him to see and hear sensitive things, which he shares with Washington Post reported Gray Grantham. Once word of the pelican brief gets out, the White House goes into siege mentality, with Coal demanding to clear anything that goes out. Grantham hopes that the story will result in obstruction of justice charges as during Watergate, but the President appears not to have broken the law. His reelection seems doubtful, however.



Themes

The Environment

Commitment to environmentalism is the lynchpin of protagonist Darby Shaw's "pelican brief," and a consistent theme throughout John Grisham's *The Pelican Brief*. When the oldest and youngest members of the Supreme Court are assassinated in a single night, Shaw is one of a host of scholars looking for a motive. Justice Rosenberg has alienated almost everyone during his 34 years on the bench. The last of the 1960s-era liberals, Rosenberg puts government before business, individuals before government, and the environment before everything. Any radical group could want him dead. Jensen's vow to "find compassion and rule with it" annoys the Republicans who put him on the Court and his rumored homosexuality angers the radical right, but his voting record is inconsistent—except on environmental matters. Seeing this coincidence, Shaw searches for a federal case that on ultimate appeal to the Supreme Court might benefit from two fewer environmentally activist judges.

Shaw finds it in a case brought by a tiny environmental group, Green Fund, to stop dredging and drilling for oil in Louisiana. The State of Louisiana has for decades looked the other way because taxes on oil and natural gas support government at all levels in the state and the industry is a major source of high-paying jobs. When the state bird, the brown pelican, is driven nearly to extinction, the state is motivated to stop the use of pesticides that contribute to the dying out and rebuild the populations of endangered birds with new stock from Florida. The crisis comes when millionaire Victor Mattiece discovers rich oil fields, which he keeps secret while buying up surrounding properties, waiting for the moment to strike it big. He needs to dredge access canals to the oil field, which would destroy the habitat of the replenished flocks. Green Fund sues and Mattiece goes "over the edge" in his determination to make the lawsuit go away. A massive and unscrupulous army of law firms faces the two-person plaintiff team. The trial goes against Green Fund, but the judge orders an injunction against drilling pending an expected appeal. Green Fund alleges the verdict is bought. Mattiece is unwilling to risk his chances in an appeal to the Supreme Court and has the justices murdered.

The President is overjoyed at having two seats to fill with ultraconservative white men and consistently mocks the "tree-huggers." When the pelican brief becomes known, linking him however tangentially with Mattiece, he for political reasons nominates two environmentalists. Ecology is no more than a political gambit.

Politics

Politics lies at the center of John Grisham's *The Pelican Brief*, and it is presented as a supremely cynical science. Money is power. The unelected bureaucracy is ascendant over those whom the people put in office. The rich spread vast amounts of money to



both parties through PACs in preparation for needing to call in a favor. The Republicans have long controlled the White House, although the last election requires an unscrupulous young wiz kid to snatch victory from defeat for the wishy-washy but handsome and personable vice president heading the ticket. In the general election looming a year away, the Democrats are shown wringing their hands for lack of a better candidate and the President has only to avoid doing anything to lose the election. His approval rating is in the low fifties and his Chief of Staff is constantly plotting ways of improving this.

It comes when two justices on the U.S. Supreme Court are assassinated in a single night. Every politician on Capitol Hill rallies to call for investigations and retribution, but joy fills the officially mourning White House at the prospect of giving the right an unstoppable majority on the court. The late Justice Rosenberg is the last of the 1960s-era liberals and Justice Jensen proves less of a doctrinaire conservative than had been hoped. Republicans presidents have already loaded the Supreme Court with conservatives, and two more will allow the rollback of hated liberal tendencies. The President insists on only ultraconservative, squeaky-clean male judges on the list. The murders remove the danger of losing the coming election and having a Democrat name elderly and infirm Rosenberg's successor.

Death

People die like flies in John Grisham's *The Pelican Brief*, and because of two characters, death is also an intellectual theme. Curmudgeonly 91-year-old U.S. Supreme Court Justice Abraham Rosenberg has been paralyzed in a wheelchair and on oxygen for seven years since suffering a second stroke, but refuses to retire until a Democratic is in the White House to name his successor. Otherwise, he is content to die and rejects the FBI bodyguard that all of his colleagues endure, save one. That justice, Glenn Jensen, is a closet homosexual who scoffs at gays risking death from AIDS and abuse. Both are brutally assassinated in the opening pages.

The assassin Khamel is, at 40-45 years old, considered the most proficient and expensive assassin in the world, demanding \$10-\$20 million per job. He is wanted in nine countries and has been working since age 15. He assassinates the justices for \$10 million on orders from the reclusive oil baron Victor Mattiese, who later orders him from Cuba (where he once refuses to assassinate Castro out of admiration) to New Orleans when local assets fail to kill Darby Shaw. Grisham goes to considerable length to show how ideology and long practice have made Khamel accept that some day he will die—and even look forward to it. However, when another mercenary elbows through the crowd and shoots him before he can kill Shaw, he crawls, yelling in Arabic, clinging to every extra second of life.

Many die violently in *The Pelican Brief* and the overall effect causes one to lament the loss of so much talent, energy, and potential. Jensen has contributed little to the Court but as the youngest justice could be expected to come into his own. Tulane law professor Thomas Callahan brings life to a boring subject and has at age 45 fallen in



love for the first time. His girlfriend Shaw is shown as a de facto widow. Gavin Verheek is contributing to the work of the FBI at the price of a failing marriage. Lawyer Curtis Morgan is enduring brutal overwork because he is earning \$80,000 a year at age 29. He wants out. When he realizes he will be murdered for a memo he has seen, he prepares for death, taking out insurance, renting a lockbox, and filling it with evidence that he knows will be seen only after his death. He hopes whoever does see the evidence will avenge him, or, if the killers find it, that they go straight to hell.

Style

Point of View

In *The Pelican Brief*, John Grisham adopts the third person omniscient viewpoint for narrative portions, using no intermediate narrator. Dialogue is, of course, in the first person. Befitting a mystery, clues are doled out gradually, and paired characters often debate the current body of knowledge. As the principals are lawyers, law students, and journalists, such churning of the evidence is appropriate and effectively handled. It is not clear until the end who all of the people pursuing Darby Shaw, author of the pelican brief, are. The final threads are tied off when the FBI Director tells Shaw what he knows and apologizes for the Bureau sending in the troops so slowly that friends of hers are killed and she is nearly taken out at least three times. The Director also shares what he believes to be the part played by the CIA—the rival agencies having agreed behind the scenes to cooperate on this case.

Many scenes take place in the Oval Office and presidential limousine. Here Grisham delights in showing an incompetent President and his Hitlerian chief of staff. The Nixon White House, with its secret tapings and dirty tricks squad is never far out of focus, particularly because it is the *Washington Post* that begins investigating the pelican brief as it had the Watergate burglary. In the newsroom, the parallel is made explicit. Reporter Gray Grantham, who expects to win a Pulitzer Prize for this story, grows tired of it once it becomes clear that there is no White House cover-up, and flies off into the sunset to meet Shaw. He is shown throughout their professional acquaintance feeling "sophomoric" around her.

Grisham takes time to describe the rape of Louisiana by oil and natural gas interests and the workings of the federal court system, particularly the appeals process in the eleven circuit courts and how cases come before the Supreme Court. He has a Republican president up for re-election in a year drooling over the opportunity to name two archconservatives to replace murdered liberals. The political compromises he must make are handled tongue-in-cheek, and questions of sexual and racial discrimination and ethical violations are raised and sloughed off without preaching. The intrigue is always high and the bad guys all wear black hats. Only the FBI Director is humanized in the end.

Setting

The Pelican Brief by John Grisham opens on the first Monday in October in an unspecified year preceding a general election—therefore, 1991, 1995, or 1999. The main action covers three weeks, from the opening of a new session of the Supreme Court through the publication in the *Washington Post* of the story of how and why a deranged, incredibly rich, and reclusive oilman pays to have two justices assassinated on a single night. A law professor at Tulane University in New Orleans idolizes one of



the dead justices, and his student/lover takes time to analyze who would most benefit from the justices' sudden "retirement." She rejects her own thesis, but it is so well written and compelling that the professor shares it with an old college friend, who serves as legal counsel to the FBI Director. Within 24 hours, the professor dies in a car bombing in New Orleans, and Darby Shaw, the author, flees into the French Quarter, changing her appearance and lodging constantly. Considerable local color is built into these scenes and the paranoia in a White House under a weak president and Hitlerian chief of staff.

After two additional close calls, Shaw flees to New York where she meets up with reporter Gray Grantham of the Post. He has heard of the pelican brief and is already working on corroborating aspects. She spots her pursuers in Manhattan and flees to Washington, DC. Numerous hotels are sketched as they struggle to stay alive, and vignettes are offered of a newsroom, banks, law schools, libraries, and a sinister law office. Two Caribbean beach houses are shown. In one, a presidential henchman is killed, and in the other Shaw and Grantham decide to live together.

Language and Meaning

The Pelican Brief by John Grisham combines politics, law, and journalism into a fast-paced mystery-adventure. Inevitably, delving into these subjects requires a certain amount of technical language, but Grisham sets up situations that allow a character proficient in an area to explain it to a novice without sounding condescending (for example, how an appellate court can affirm, reverse, or remand a trial court verdict, in whole or in part; law student Darby Shaw explains "remand" to journalist Gray Grantham and another time informs him that one wears a suit and files a lawsuit). Shaw researches who might benefit from killing two Supreme Court justices. A lawyer who reads the draft "pelican brief" remarks how clear, compelling, and free of jargon it is, adding that she will never make it as a lawyer in the employ of the U.S. government. Grisham approaches most of the book with tongue firmly in cheek.

Most of the characters are on the cynical side and at odds with one another on scales running from mild annoyance to outright hatred. The FBI Director sends the pelican brief to the White House primarily to stir up trouble. He does not believe its thesis, but it contains an embarrassing picture of the President with a shady fundraiser. Everyone hates and fears the presidential Chief of Staff, a stereotype nerdy political bully. The Nixon White House is the model, and scenes in the newsroom of the Washington Post make the parallel clear; this is the paper that in the 1970s refuses to let go of the Watergate burglary story until it banners "Nixon Quits!" The legal system from training through the representation of shady characters to suggesting illegal activities takes a heavy hit in the novel as does political fundraising. The Republicans happen to be in power and looking to pack the Supreme Court with archconservative males, but there is no suggestion that Democrats are not also capable of dirty tricks. They simply lack opportunity at present.



For most of the novel, Shaw is on the run for her life, learning remarkable survival skills, yearning for the simple, happy life she had just weeks before. She regrets writing the pelican brief, which has caused only death and terror. She trusts no one, and Grisham lends many pages to her internal struggle to relearn trust. The final chapters, after the dramatic climax, show her achieving that goal.

Structure

The Pelican Brief by John Grisham consists of forty-five untitled chapters, which vary considerably in length. Longer chapters are divided into scenes set off by extra spacing and the initial two words in all capitals, allowing the interweaving of multiple plot threads. The novel flows smoothly and generally chronologically without larger division. The first part shows Washington, DC, beset with the usual protests marking the opening of a Supreme Court session and security on the justices. It also portrays a secret romance between a law professor and his beautiful, brilliant student in New Orleans. Two justices are assassinated, one of whom the professor idolizes, and the student takes time off to figure out who might benefit from their sudden "retirement."

When the resulting paper, which comes to be known as the pelican brief, begins to circulate, those who know about it begin dying violently. The author, Darby Shaw, is nearly killed, goes into hiding, has several close calls, and trusting no one, contacts a reporter who is already intrigued by the brief. Shaw flees circuitously to New York and then Washington, relentlessly followed every time she leaves a paper trail. Working together Shaw and Gray Grantham find collaboration for her story, allowing it to be published and the bad guys to begin getting their due. Having grown close during the ordeal, they end up lovers on a Caribbean island.

Woven into this matrix are many rich, colorful threads showing life and work in the Supreme Court building, the White House, several law schools, the teeming French Quarter of New Orleans, a large impersonal law office, the newsroom of the Washington Post, and a demented oil mogul's island hideaway. The threads dealing with Shaw's pursuers build tension and who they all are, for whom they work, and what their intentions towards her are, are brought out only at the end, rather artificially, as the FBI Director summarizes what he knows.



Quotes

"Runyan made no effort to hide his anxiety. Working from a confidential FBI summary, he read the names of individuals and groups suspected of threats. The Klan, the Aryans, the Nazis, the Palestinians, the black separatists, the pro-lifers, the homophobics. Even the IRA. Everyone, it seemed, but the Rotarians and the Boy Scouts. A Middle East group backed by the Iranians had threatened blood on American oil in retaliation for the deaths of two justice ministers in Tehran. There was absolutely no evidence the murders were linked to the U.S. A new domestic terrorist unit of recent fame known as the Underground Army had killed a federal trial judge in Texas with a car bomb. No arrests had been made, but the UA claimed responsibility. It was also the prime suspect in a dozen bombings of ACLU offices, but its work was very clean," Chapter 1, p. 4.

" 'I didn't know he was gay.'

" 'Not much doubt about it now. This is the perfect crisis, Mr. President. Think of it. It's not our fault. No one can blame us. And the nation will be shocked into some degree of solidarity. It's rally around the leader time. It's just great. No downside.'

"The President sipped a cup of coffee and stared at the papers on his desk. 'And I'll get to restructure the Court.'

" 'That's the best part. It'll be your legacy. I've already called Duvall at Justice and instructed him to contact Horton and begin a preliminary list of nominees. Horton gave a speech in Omaha last night, but he's flying in now. I suggest we meet with him later this morning.'

"The President nodded with his customary approval of Coal's suggestions. He allowed Coal to sweat the details. He had never been a detail man himself. 'Any suspects?'" Chapter 4, p. 32.

"She wrote well, in the standard, scholarly legal fashion of long sentences filed with large words. But she was clear. She avoided the double-talk and legal lingo most students strive so desperately for. She would never make it as an attorney employed by the United States Government.

"Gavin had never heard of her suspect, and was certain it was not on anyone's list. Technically, it was not a brief, but more of a story about a lawsuit in Louisiana. She told the facts succinctly, and made them interesting. Fascinating, really. He was not skimming.

"The facts took four pages, then she filled the next three with brief histories of the parties. It dragged a bit here, but he kept reading. He was hooked. On page eight, the brief or whatever it was summarized the trial. On nine, it mentioned the appeal, and the final three pages laid an implausible trail to the removal of Rosenberg and Jensen from the Court. Callahan said she had already discarded this theory, and she appeared to lose steam at the end," Chapter 13, pp. 96-97.

"Darby leaned on the side of the building a few feet from the parking lot's exit. She



looked at the street, and almost hoped for a cop. She would rather have him arrested than dead.

"It was too far to walk. She would watch him drive away, then call a cab, then ignore him for a week. At least a week. Have a nice one, she repeated to herself. He gunned it again and squealed tires.

"The explosion knocked her to the sidewalk. She landed on all fours, face down, stunned for a second, then immediately aware of the heat and the tiny pieces of fiery debris falling in the street. She gaped in horror at the parking lot. The Porsche flipped in a perfect violent somersault and landed upside down. The tires and wheels and doors and fenders slung free. The car was a brilliant fireball, roaring away with flames instantly devouring it," Chapter 15, p. 109.

"She thought about this. it made sense, but they had found her so easily. 'I'm listening. You haven't talked to the Director, but the FBI's taking no action. Why not?'

" 'I'm not sure. He made the decision yesterday to back off the pelican brief, and gave instructions to leave it alone. That's all I can tell you.'

" 'That's not very much. Does he know about Thomas? Does he know that I'm supposed to be dead because I wrote it and forty-eight hours after Thomas gave it to you, his old buddy from law school, they, whoever in hell they are, tried to kill both of us? Does he know all this, Gavin?'

" 'I don't think so.'

" 'That means no, doesn't it?'

" 'Yes. It means no.'

" 'Okay, listen to me. Do you think he was killed because of the brief?'

" 'Probably.'

" 'That means yes, doesn't it?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Thanks. If Thomas was murdered because of the brief, then we know who killed him. And if we know who killed Thomas, then we know who killed Rosenberg and Jensen. Right?'

"Verheek hesitated.

" 'Just say yes, dammit!' Darby snapped.

" 'I'll say probably.'

" 'Fine. Probably means yes for a lawyer. I know it's the best you can do. It is a very strong probably, yet you're telling me the FBI is backing off my little suspect.'

" 'Settle down, Darby. Let's meet tonight and talk about it. I could save your life,'"

Chapter 18, pp. 139-140.

"The ringing in her ears had stopped, but she still heard the gunshot and saw him on all fours, rocking back and forth, trying to live just a moment longer. Thomas had once referred to him as Dutch Verheek, but said the nickname was dropped after law school when they became serious about their careers. Dutch Verheek was not an Egyptian.

"She had caught just a glimpse of his killer as he was running away. There was something familiar about him. He had glanced to his right just once as he was running, and something clicked. But she was screaming and hysterical, and it was a blur



"Everything blurred. Halfway to Baton Rouge, she fell into a deep sleep," Chapter 25, pp. 198-199.

" 'Whatever. There are some powerful people afraid of what I know. If I tell you, it could kill you. I've seen the bodies, okay, Gray? I've heard bombs and gunshots. I saw a man's brains yesterday, and I have no idea who he was or why he was killed, except that he knew about the pelican brief. I thought he was my friend. I trusted him with my life, and he was shot in the head in front of fifty people. As I watched him die, it occurred to me that perhaps he was not my friend. I read the paper this morning, and I realize he was definitely not my friend,'" Chapter 27, p. 209.

"Darby studied the picture. It was a man on a busy sidewalk. The face was clear. 'I take it he didn't pose for this.'

" 'Not exactly.' Grantham was pacing.

" 'Then how'd you get it?'

" 'I cannot reveal my sources.'

"She slid it onto the coffee table, and rubbed her eyes. 'You're scaring me, Grantham. This has a sleazy feel to it. Tell me it's not sleazy.'

" 'It's just a little sleazy, okay. The kid was using the same pay phone, and that's a mistake.'

" 'Yes, I know. That's a mistake.'

" 'And I wanted to know what he looked like.'

" 'Did you ask if you could take his photograph?'

" 'No.'

" 'Then it's sleazy as hell.

" 'Okay. It's sleazy as hell. But I did it, and there it is, and it could be our link to Mattiece.'

" 'Our link?'

" 'Yes, our link. I thought you wanted to nail Mattiece.'

" 'Did I say that? I want him to pay, but I'd rather leave him alone. He's made a believer out of me, Gray. I've seen enough blood to last me a long time. You take this ball and run with it.'

"He didn't hear this. he walked behind her to the window, then back to the bar. 'You mentioned two firms. What's the other?'" Chapter 30, pp. 230-231.

" 'I'm convinced, okay?'

" 'Listen, hotshot, you'd better be convinced. One more screwup and we're dead. I'm out of lucky breaks. Do you understand?'

" 'Yes! I swear I understand.'

" 'Get a room here. Tomorrow night, if we're alive, I'll find you another small hotel.'

" 'What if this place is full?'

" 'Then you can sleep in my bathroom with the door closed.'

"She was dead serious. He felt like a first-grader who'd just received his first spanking. They didn't speak for five minutes.

" 'So how'd they find me?' he finally asked.

" 'I would assume the phones in your apartment are tapped, and your car is bugged.'



And I would assume Smith Keen's car is also wired. These people are not amateurs,'" Chapter 35, p. 274.

"Barr could not look at him. 'Is it true, Mr. Mattiece? That's all I want to know.'

"Behind Barr, a door opened without a sound. Larry, in his socks and avoiding the towels, eased forward two steps and stopped.

"Mattiece walked on the towels to a glass door, and opened it. He looked outside and spoke softly. 'Of course it's true.' He walked through the door, and closed it slowly behind him. Barr watched as the idiot shuffled along a sidewalk toward the sand dunes.

"What now? he thought. Perhaps Emil would come get him. Perhaps.

"Larry inched forward with a rope, and Barr did not hear or feel anything until it was too late. Mattiece did not want blood in his gazebo, so Larry simply broke the neck and choked him until it was over," Chapter 38, p. 299.

"On a black screen was the date—October 12. Then Curtis Morgan was sitting at a table in a kitchen. He held a switch that evidently worked the camera.

" 'My name is Curtis Morgan, and since you're watching this, I'm probably dead.' It was a helluva first sentence. The men grimaced and inched closer.

" 'Today is October 12, and I'm doing this at my house. I'm alone. My wife is at the doctor. I should be at work, but I called in sick. My wife knows nothing about any of this. I've told no one. Since you're watching this, you've also seen this. [He holds up the affidavit.] This is an affidavit I've signed, and I plan to leave it with this video, probably in a safe deposit box in a bank downtown. I'll read the affidavit, and discuss other things,'" Chapter 41, p. 331.

"The foot play reminded her of Thomas. He'd get half drunk and smear polish around the nails. With the jet humming and shaking softly, he was suddenly many miles removed from her. He'd been dead for two weeks, but it seemed much longer. There'd been so many changes. It was better this way. If she was at Tulane, walking by his office, seeing his classroom, talking to the other professors, staring at his apartment from the street, it would be awfully painful. The little reminders are nice for the long run, but during the mourning they get in the way. She was a different person now, with a different life in a different place.

"And a different man was rubbing her feet. He was an ass at first, cocky and abrasive, a typical reporter. But he was thawing rapidly, and under the jaded layer she was finding a warm man who obviously liked her very much.

" 'Tomorrow's a big day for you,' she said," Chapter 43, pp. 358-359.

Topics for Discussion

How are Khamel and Barr's murders similar and how do they differ? What do they say about trained professionals?

Why are Nelson Muncie and his murdered niece discussed at such length early in the novel? How does Justice Rosenberg's real murderer resemble and differ from Muncie?

What function does the Underground Army and its firebombing of pornography theaters play in the novel? Is this subplot over- or underplayed?

Darby Shaw has ethical problems with the surveillance photographs of Garcia, shot because in Gray Grantham's mind the end justifies the means. How would you weigh the issue?

Does FBI Director Voyles' description of the clandestine CIA mission in New Orleans square with Rupert's first meeting with Darby Shaw after the explosion? Could he have convinced her at that point he is on her side? Do he and Stump appear to be working at odds?

Is this novel more anti-gay or anti-Arab? Explain.

Grisham includes numerous references to Nazi figures and institutions. Are they fitting? Is this still an effective tool a half century after World War II?