

The Poet Study Guide

The Poet by Michael Connelly

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Plot Summary

"The Poet," by Michael Connelly, begins with Denver news reporter Jack McEvoy being informed that his twin brother Sean is dead. Sean was a member of the Crimes Against Persons Unit (CAPs) in the Denver Police Department. According to two of Sean's men, Harold Wexler and Ray St. Louis, Sean committed suicide while parked in his car at Bear Lake.

Although Jack and Sean were twins, they hadn't spoken much in the last few months. The brothers had had an argument about the Theresa Lofton case, Sean's obsession and the elusive topic of a story for Jack. In general the brothers' relationship was good and Jack takes the death hard. As a result, Jack decides to write about Sean's death and never fully believes that it was a suicide.

Jack begins to conduct a lengthy investigation that takes him to places he never would have dreamed of going. Several facts about Sean's case are suspect and Jack believes Sean was murdered. As Jack's theories begin to pan out, Sean's old partner realizes that Jack is right. Sean McEvoy was murdered.

The case leads Jack to investigate other police murders intended to appear as suicides. The main link seems to be cryptic notes left at the crime scenes. Each is taken from a quote from Edgar Allan Poe; most are from poems and stories while one that does not seem to fit is actually the quote of Poe's last words.

As the investigation heats up, Jack becomes involved in the FBI's investigation of the serial killer referred to as the Poet. Jack is quickly pushed to the side until he convinces the FBI team leader that he has information that the agency needs in order to solve the case. Jack and the team leader, Bob Backus, make a deal - Jack's information for an exclusive story.

Jack meets Rachael Walling, the lead agent on the case, and the two quickly become involved in an intimate relationship. The relationship is both good and bad for both, the bad part being that it clouds Jack's judgment regarding the facts.

The case takes Jack to Quantico, Phoenix and LA as the trail of pedophile William Gladden heats up. It is clear that the elusive Gladden is responsible for the murders of the children but the killing of the cops is not yet clear.

Along the way, a pedophile network is uncovered. Jack makes friends with a former reporter who sets him up and steals the story for a front page byline in the LA Times.

Jack and Rachel's ex-husband Gordon Thorson develop instant animosity and Jack believes that Thorson has been leaking information to the press.

The story accelerates when Gladden is located and a sting is set up to capture him. In the melee, Thorson is killed. Jack tries to get Gladden to confess but there is something



off about the man's comments. Gladden manages to shoot himself while Jack holds the gun.

After Gladden's death, Jack begins to realize that while he was responsible for the children's murders, Gladden was not the poet. Jack begins to thread together facts that lead directly to Rachel as being the Poet. Jack fights against the facts but finally cannot deny it and reports it to Backus. Backus supposedly sets up a sting but when Jack is taken to a secure location, Backus confesses that he is the Poet and drugs Jack with the intention of molesting him and then killing him. Rachel appears and shoots Backus, who manages to get away.

The relationship between Jack and Rachel seems to be irreparably damaged. Backus' body is found but there is no proof that the body is really his and Jack and the agents know that Backus will return someday.

Jack stays in LA after the case is closed. Jack writes a book and hopes that Rachel will return while trying to ward off the nightmares from his contact with evil.



Chapters 1-10

Chapters 1-10 Summary

Chapter 1 of "The Poet" by Michael Connelly begins with Denver news reporter Jack McEvoy being informed that his twin brother Sean is dead. Sean was a member of the Crimes Against Persons Unit (CAPS) in the Denver Police Department. According to two of Sean's men, Harold Wexler and Ray St. Louis, Sean committed suicide while parked in his car at Bear Lake.

Jack recalls the last good night he spent with Sean before the Theresa Lofton case. The brothers sat drinking beer at "Pints Of," a cop bar in Denver. Previously Sean had told Jack about the concept of "the limit." Each homicide cop has a limit on the number of dead bodies he could see before the cop is forced to retire or becomes so mentally disturbed that he "eats a bullet." Sean claimed that the limit was different for every cop and one might not know the number until it was reached. According to Sean, some cops serve 20 years without ever hitting the limit; others didn't make it that long.

The author recounts the Theresa Lofton case, the one that became Sean's obsession.

Because of the manner of Lofton's death, the case was compared to the infamous Black Dahlia murder that took place in Los Angeles in 1947. The tabloids referred to Theresa Lofton as the "White Dahlia" due to the fact that she was found in a snowy field.

The case was hot for nearly two weeks before other crimes stepped in to take its place. Several of the cops, including Sean McEvoy, kept mum about the case and worked "as if they felt no obligation to talk to the public at all." Since the police refused to talk about the case with the media, the media took it upon itself to conduct its own investigation, "numbing the reading and television-watching public with sordid details about the victim's life that actually had nothing to do with anything."

Wexler and St. Louis ask Jack to accompany them to Sean's house in Boulder so they could notify Sean's wife, Riley, of the suicide.

Chapter 2 details the visit to Boulder and the notification of Sean's death. Naturally, Riley becomes hysterical and although Jack is in the same condition, he attempts to comfort his sister-in-law.

Neither Jack nor Riley wants to believe that Sean committed suicide.

Jack talks about his relationship with his editor at the Rocky Mountain News. Jack also recounts his failure to write about the Theresa Lofton case and the argument with Sean that ensued.

Jack asks a lot of questions about Sean's suicide, including whether or not Sean was working on a case at the time of his death. Although Wexler and St. Louis won't officially



comment, Jack knows that Sean was scheduled to meet somebody at Bear Lake that night. Jack deduces that this "someone" has information about the Theresa Lofton case.

Jack tells the Rocky's editor, Greg Glenn, that he wants to write a story about Sean's death. The police had reported that Sean was found in Estes Park at Bear Lake in an unmarked car. A park ranger discovered Sean when he heard a shot and went to investigate a noise. The police revealed information regarding a note left at the scene but did not disclose the contents.

According to Jack, his entire life changed after he decided to write about Sean. "As clearly as you can chart anyone's life in retrospect, mine changed with that one sentence, in that one moment when I told Glenn what I would do. I thought I knew something about death then. I thought I knew about evil. But I didn't know anything."

Chapter 3 discusses William Gladden, a convicted pedophile who is watching the children ride the merry-go-round at the Santa Monica Pier.

Chapter 4 begins with Jack McEvoy going to the Rocky Mountain News library where he speaks to Laurie Prine, the librarian who frequently assists Jack with research. Jack begins to research police suicides despite Laurie's concern.

Jack meets with Detective Robert Scalari, the lead investigator on Sean's death. The men argue over Jack's request for information. Scalari tells Jack that the case is closed and that he will have to go elsewhere for information.

Chapter 5 begins with Jack wanting to review the details on the Theresa Lofton case. Jack feels that if he's going to write about Sean's death it would be important to understand the case and Sean's obsession.

The Theresa Lofton case is reviewed in detail. The reports on the Lofton case were chronological and it was determined that Theresa Lofton did not know her killer. Jack realizes that the cops had been very thorough in their investigation. Eventually, the only two cops left investigating the case were Wexler and Sean. Eventually, it was just Sean. Jack reads that the file had been sent to the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (VICAP) for a psychological analysis and a copy was also sent to FBI agent Rachel Walling.

Chapter 6 begins with Jack arriving at Bear Lake. The parking lot is deserted, just as it must have been when Sean arrived that night. Jack approaches the ranger who reported the shooting.

Jack visits Riley and realizes a strong resemblance between his sister-in-law and Theresa Lofton. Jack tells Riley that he is going to write about Sean. Riley says she will not stop Jack and is unable to hold back the flood of grief and anger.

Jack visits Sean's grave and tries to make some sense out of the whole story.



Chapter 7 returns to William Gladden as he stands at a railing watching the children. Gladden feels safe in the belief that the other parents must think he is watching his child on the carousel. Gladden takes a photograph of a five-year-old girl riding on the carousel before he notices a man leaning on the rail to his right. Gladden thinks that the man must be a pervert or a cop. As Gladden leaves the scene he erases the photos on his digital camera. Gladden throws a trash can into the water and calls man overboard as a distraction. Gladden sees two beach cops and tells them that the perp is in the water and that they should get a boat right away.

Gladden hides out in a pizzeria waiting for a chance to get away. Gladden realizes that he will not be able to go back for the carousel and decides to tell others on the network about the incident. Gladden suddenly feels a presence and opens his eyes to find the two cops from the pier. Gladden is taken into custody. Gladden doesn't worry over much as he has a false identity. All Gladden has to do is to prevent the cops from finding his car.

The cops take Gladden to the Santa Monica Police Department, where he is questioned. The cops are ruthless, but Gladden has spent many nights studying the law and knows that he can't be charged simply because they suspect his activities. Gladden is finally able to call a lawyer, one recommended by the network, and the two men make a deal to get Gladden out of jail as soon as possible.

Chapter 8 returns to Jack, who is sleepless thinking about the Lofton case and how it relates to Sean's death. Jack details his house and state of his life as he checks in with the Rocky Mountain News. Jack receives a message from Laurie Prine indicating that she has found some interesting information for him.

The Rocky Mountain newsroom is deserted when Jack arrives on Monday morning. Greg Glenn is in his office. Jack thinks about going to a larger newspaper and recalls refusing an offer with the LA Times. The offer had been used to gain his current position.

Jack reviews the stories supplied by Laurie Prine. As Jack is reading the stories, his mother calls and wants to know why he is going to write about Sean. His mother is angry and thinks that the story will do damage. Mother and son argue as usual.

Jack continues to read articles from the major newspapers in the country and becomes excited when he finds a story about a Chicago cop that allegedly committed suicide. Found along with the body was a poetic quote. The reporter noted that the quote was taken from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Haunted Palace," which originally appeared in Poe's famous short story "The Fall of the House of Usher." Suddenly the final note in the Lofton file begins to make sense. The cops had assumed the word was "RUSHER" but now Jack recalls that the main character in "The Fall of the House of Usher" is Roderick Usher or R. Usher.

The quote left with Sean's body, "Out of space, Out of time," turns out to be part of another Poe poem titled "Dream-land." Jack realizes that he must fly to Chicago and attempts to convince Glenn to authorize the trip. Glenn refuses telling Jack that he



needs more proof to go to Chicago and any contact with the FBI can be made by phone.

Chapter 9 begins with Jack finishing his notes on the case. Jack calls and speaks to Riley asking her about Sean's gloves. Riley is in bad shape and Jack doesn't know how to help her.

Jack tries to convince Wexler to look at Sean's car and Wexler finally agrees. Jack finally convinces Wexler that Sean was not alone on the night he died.

Jack goes to see Riley and tells her that it is likely Sean was murdered. Although Jack had withheld some information from Wexler, he tells Riley everything. Jack makes Riley promise not to tell his parents.

Chapter 10 returns to Gladden as he is being led into the courtroom. Gladden meets Krasner, his attorney, and the men discuss how to proceed with the case. Gladden and Krasner appear before the judge and after a lengthy argument it is agreed that Gladden will be released on \$50,000 bail.

Chapters 1-10 Analysis

Jack McEvoy is a reporter with the Rocky Mountain News. Jack is a bit of a rogue and enjoys his status as a reporter with few boundaries. Jack writes about murders, not restricted by deadlines as his co-workers are. This puts Jack in an enviable position and is also the reason he has been kept separated from the other reporters. Greg Glenn, Jack's boss, puts up with Jack's personality, which can sometimes be obstinate, because they are friends and Jack is an asset to the newspaper.

The apparent suicide of Sean McEvoy strikes Jack too close to home. As an identical twin, Jack not only sees Sean in that car but also himself. This leads to a great deal of soul searching, regret, grief, and anger. Jack is angry that Sean's co-workers believe the suicide and have already begun to distance themselves from the disgraced officer. Jack continues to rely on some of Sean's co-workers for information, most notably Harold Wexler who was Sean's partner and very close friend.

It is well known that Jack and Sean were different in many ways. While the brothers sought to keep their appearances different enough so that people would not realize that they were identical twins, their personalities were also worlds apart. Sean was responsible and driven while Jack was laid back and a dreamer searching for the one thing that would make him happy.

Because of an argument between brothers, Jack has not seen Sean's wife/widow, Riley, in quite some time. The pair manages to put aside the strain as much as possible but Jack's guilt does not subside.



Jack's training as a reporter often outweighs his grief and once he manages to latch on to the first clue regarding Sean's death, there is no stopping him. Even Wexler begins to see the clues that were missed and must deal with the guilt and anger all over again.

Jack is reluctant to reveal what he knows to anyone other than Riley, in case he might be wrong. Jack does tell Wexler most everything but waits to see if his theories are correct.

Jack's relationship with his parents is almost non-existent and severely strained at the best of times. The problems began when the Sarah McEvoy drowned and Jack was blamed.

William Gladden is a pedophile. It is obvious that Gladden has been practicing this behavior for a long time. This is made clear by the references to serving jail time with a man named Horace who taught Gladden a great deal about the laws surrounding pedophilia and also introduced him to "the PTL network," which is comprised of a group of pedophiles. The network exists to keep others informed about their activities, share photos, and in Gladden's case, is a big benefit when it comes time to find an attorney.

The cops that arrest Gladden are sickened by his vile behavior. Oddly enough, Gladden does not believe that he has done anything wrong. Gladden purposely irritates one of the cops who, on more than one occasion, must be reminded to resist from striking the man. The cops realize that Gladden is savvy to the law and everyone in the interrogation room realizes that there are no legal reasons to book Gladden on his suspected activities. Still, the cops threaten to put Gladden in general population where pedophiles are considered to be the lowest life form and often don't make it out alive. Gladden's attorney prevents that and Gladden is finally released on bail.



Chapters 11-19

Chapters 11-19 Summary

Chapter 11 starts with Jack's arrival in Chicago. Jack had gone to journalism school in the city and was sad when he could not get a good job and was forced to return to Denver. Jack often revisited the city to visit friends and favorite haunts but eventually the trips became infrequent. Unfortunately Jack would not have much time in Chicago as he was only permitted to spend 24 hours in the city. The author details Jack's trek through the city and goes to the location where a child had been murdered the year before. Jack tries to reconcile the facts between this case and the one involving Theresa Lofton but there are not many common factors. The only common factors seem to be that both victims were missing for 24 hours before being discovered, both bodies had been mutilated, and both were connected to a daycare center. Other than that, Lofton is a 19-year-old white female and Bobby Smathers was a black male child.

Detective Lawrence Washington, the lead investigator on the Bobby Smathers case, works at the Area Three headquarters which also houses the Cook County First Municipal District Court. Jack visits Washington to get more information. Jack meets Washington and understandably, the homicide investigator, known as "Larry Legs," is wary about Jack's claims to have information on a case that still has a strong hold on the department. Washington consents to speak to Jack privately. Legs becomes angry when he discovers that Jack is a reporter until Jack says that he believes Washington's partner, John Brooks, may have been murdered. Jack tells Washington about Sean's case and is not surprised to be faced with skepticism and more than a little hostility. Despite any misgivings Washington agrees to listen to Jack's story and declines contact information for Wexler. Washington never gives anything away to Jack but Jack can tell that he has just confirmed the theory that Washington had been carrying in his gut all along. Washington tells Jack to go back to the hotel that he needs to think about the story and do some checking on everything that Jack has told him.

In chapter 12, Jack waits anxiously for Larry Legs to contact him at the hotel. Just as Jack is ready to believe that Larry has blown him off, the detective shows up at Jack's door. Legs takes Jack to see the neighborhood where John Brooks grew up. Legs talks about the history between Brooks and himself including that they were best friends from childhood on. Legs shares his theory about Brooks' apparent suicide and how he knew it wasn't true.

Washington contacts Wexler, who is extremely angry with Jack about leaving out the connection to Edgar Allan Poe. The park ranger had consented to being hypnotized and remembered that Sean was only wearing one glove when he was found. The Denver cops are completely convinced of Jack's story.

Washington and Jack discuss the possibility of other cops being victims of the Poet.



In chapter 13 Gladden logs on to the PTL club network and receives a private message thanking him for the warning. There is a lengthy message from Gladden to his kindred spirits saying that he knows his identity and "religion" will soon be made public.

Gladden calls the police department and wants to retrieve his camera. The cops are too anxious to return the camera and Gladden knows they have information about him. Housekeeping comes to Gladden's room shortly after the phone call, and Gladden realizes that he made a horrible mistake when the housekeeper sees a pornographic photo on his laptop. Gladden decides that the housekeeper must die.

Chapter 14 begins with Jack arriving at the Law Enforcement Foundation in Washington, D.C. Jack meets with Michael Warren from the public affairs office and attempts to get an audience with Nathan Ford, the man who is involved in the police suicide study. Warren tells Jack that the FBI is involved. Warren seems to soften when Jack recognizes his name as a former LA Times reporter. Jack tells Warren the story about Sean and the related cases.

Warren takes Jack to meet Dr. Nathan Ford and Oline Frederick, a researcher connected to the FBI investigation. Jack retells the story. Jack asks for access to the FBI files on police suicides. Eventually Jack learns that he will have to go through paper files to sort out cases that are likely connected to the ones in Denver and Chicago. Ford denies access and Warren suggests that Jack contact with the FBI. Jack asks Warren for help, who refuses Jack's request to break into the agency's computer.

In chapter 15 Jack waits at his hotel hoping that Warren will contact him. Meanwhile, he updates files and speaks to Greg Glenn, who is excited about Jack's progress. Jack begins to realize that the story is big enough to warrant attention from major newspapers in the country and it may be the ticket to getting him out Denver.

Warren finally arrives at the hotel. Warren gives Jack a list of 13 homicide cops that fit into the scenario. Warren tells Jack that they will have to go through the files that night so that the FBI doesn't confiscate them the next day. Jack learns that Rachel Walling is the FBI agent in charge of the case. Warren tells Jack that Walling is hard as nails and will be no help in the investigation.

Warren makes Jack promise that his identity will be kept secret or else he could lose his job. Jack makes the promise.

Warren and Jack access the protocol files on the suicides. As they return to Warren's office to make photocopies of the documents they get a scare when they discover the janitor in the room. The files are copied and the men leave the building. Warren admits to missing the life of a reporter but says that he had to choose a safer job for his wife and children.

Chapter 16 begins with Jack reading the police files. The main thing Jack is looking for in the files with some kind of poetic reference. In the end, Jack finds four possible cases that fit the profile. Warren calls and Jack tells him the news. Reading Poe late at night gives Jack nightmares.



In chapter 17, Gladden wishes he could leave LA, but knows that there are too many things to do before he can get on the road. Gladden begins to disguise himself preparing for flight. While waiting for news of the housekeeper's death, Gladden reads poetry by Edgar Allan Poe. Gladden leaves his hotel room and realizes that since he used his last fake ID he would have to set up a mail drop and trade more photos to get another. Gladden picks up a newspaper and is disturbed to find that the housekeeper's murder has not been reported. Gladden finds a photo of a young child playing in a nearby park. Gladden calls the front desk at the hotel and apologizes to the woman working at the desk. Gladden had been rude to her earlier and he offers her money to come over for a "good time."

Chapter 18 begins with Jack calling Laurie Prine. Jack asks for another search. Prine finds a case in Baltimore relating to Jack's request. Jack asks for details and then requests that corresponding files be sent to his inbox.

Jack tracks down Dan Bledsoe, the partner of the Baltimore cop was murdered. Jack speaks to Bledsoe, who denies that there was a note at his partner's crime scene. Jack finally convinces Bledsoe to tell him what was in the note and then quickly connects it to a poem by Poe.

In chapter 19 Jack rushes back to his hotel hoping to get in contact with Greg Glenn before he goes in to his afternoon meetings. Before Jack can get into his hotel room he is accosted by FBI agent Rachel Walling and arrested for stealing the protocols regarding the other supposed suicides. Although Walling has clearly violated many of Jack's rights, she scoffs at the possibility of Jack reporting her to her superiors.

The exchange between Jack and Walling goes on until Jack realizes that Walling was not there on official business and was simply trying to get information. As much as Jack wants to walk away from Walling he knows that he needs her.

Chapters 11-19 Analysis

Jack's personality and barrage of facts serve him well when it comes to connecting with law enforcement officials. The cop suicides are a difficult topic to broach and Jack is often met with skepticism and anger. The first person Jack meets with is Larry "Legs" Washington, a Chicago cop whose partner supposedly committed suicide. Washington is angry when he finds out that Jack is a reporter.

Jack tells his story and although Washington doesn't want to accept it, Jack can tell that he has just confirmed Washington's theory. Washington gives Jack a glimpse into his grief when he takes the reporter to the place where he and Brooks grew up. The background of the two friends, even before they were cops, lets Jack know that there is nothing that could cause Brooks to commit suicide. Additionally, there were two shots fired. Washington believes that the second shot was to plant the gun shot residue on Brooks' hands.



Gladden's visit to the PTL network is like a trip home. The network is a place where he can be his true self and not worry about judgment. It suggests that Gladden had a dissatisfying home life and felt the need to find a family of choice, preferably one that would accept his lifestyle and self-proclaimed "religion."

Gladden knows that it is nearing the end for him. It will not be long before the cops uncover his true identity, even if Krasner is able to fudge the record of Gladden's prints. Gladden is prepared for the worst.

Despite the evidence against him, Gladden claims that the police will never find him. Gladden intends to tell his entire story to the network, comfortable in the knowledge that his laptop, Boswell, will hold no judgment as Gladden tells the world who he truly is and what he has done.

Jack's trip to Washington, D.C. may be both the best and worst thing that could have happened to him and the case. Jack is denied a meeting with Dr. Nathan Ford, who is heading up the suicide investigation. Jack meets with Michael Warren, a former reporter. Although Warren seems to be strictly by the book, Jack can tell that Warren misses being a reporter and envies Jack's position. Warren, whether he is aware of it or not, is clearly an ally.

After Ford stonewalls Jack, Warren reluctantly steps in. Warren will not grant Jack access to the computer files since it would be a felony and he would lose a job that represents safety to his family. Warren's actions speak volumes when he agrees to help Jack. Warren wants back in the game.

Jack's meeting with Dan Bledsoe reveals a former cop that has been beaten down by the system. Bledsoe has always known that his partner did not commit suicide. After Jack tells the story, Bledsoe admits that there was a note and once again, Jack confirms the gut feelings of another cop. It is clear that Bledsoe wants nothing from the investigation except to reinstate his old partner's good stead and to ensure that McCafferty's wife will finally get the widow's pension that she deserves.

Jack's meeting with Rachel Walling is not a pleasant one. Walling's attempts to get Jack's cooperation fail miserably when Jack calls her on incorrect information. Walling relents and the two share information. It is clear that the pair likes one another although the basis for that is not yet evident. There is something about Jack that Walling admires and vice versa.

Gladden is angry that the maid's death has not made the papers. Although Gladden takes pride in being somewhat anonymous, he wants the crimes to be noticed. The photo of the child on the playground may be a coincidence or a plant by the police, the purpose remains to be seen. It is obvious that Gladden will go to the playground and prey upon the wants and needs of poverty-stricken children.

The link between Gladden and Jack begins to come to light when Gladden picks up a volume of works by Poe.



Chapters 20-29

Chapters 20-29 Summary

Walling's bluffs are not very convincing and Jack knows that he holds the upper hand. Walling begins to tell Jack about the case and the suspicion that Jack would attempt to get a copy of the protocols. Jack was found out when a page of his notebook was found in the file room.

Ford had contacted Walling about the meeting with Jack and Warren. Walling was preparing to do a search when she noticed that a search was already being conducted by Warren. Warren was confronted by Walling and Ford and promptly resigned from the public affairs office.

Walling asks Jack how he knew she was bluffing. Jack says that the only person who knew where he was staying was Warren. There were many other factors, such as the lack of hand cuffs, partner, etc.

The pair discusses their information and compares notes on the cases. To date, the FBI has a total of 6 cases fitting the profile, plus the 6 unsolved murders attached to those murder/suicides. Jack had found all 6 but could not link the case in Florida to Poe. In that case, the Poet had used Poe's dying words instead of a line from one of the Poe's works.

Jack fills Walling in about Bledsoe's partner, McCafferty, including the fact that there was a note. Walling becomes angry when Jack refuses to reveal his source.

Walling tells Jack that the FBI has dubbed the serial killer "The Poet."

Jack and Walling both decide that they need each other to solve this case. What they don't know is if they can trust each other.

Chapter 21 begins with Jack arriving at the FBI Academy in Quantico. Walling has arranged for a meeting with Bob Backus, her boss. While Walling consults with Backus, Jack gets permission from Bledsoe to tell his story. Jack also calls Glenn to give him an update.

Jack meets Backus and immediately gets bad attitudes from some of the agents. After a long discussion, it is agreed that Jack can be an authorized observer in the case, privy to all information, as long as he agrees to keep it all off record until Backus gives approval. Containment is imperative if the killer is to be caught.

In chapter 22, Jack sits in on a status meeting with the group in charge of investigating the murders. Backus tells the agents to cut Jack some slack. Walling is assigned to "baby-sit" Jack. Backus talks about new assignments and the fact that the headquarters for the case will be moved to Denver, site of the latest crime.



Backus and the other agents discuss the total number of cases and their related murders. Reports on the suicides/murders are passed out. It is noted that several of them report two shots during the crime. This is highly unusual in a suicide case.

The killer is compared to Poe, as both are morbid men.

One of the agents believes that the profile of the killer can be found in Poe's words. Others scoff.

Details of the cases are covered.

The agents go their separate ways but not until Thorson gives Jack a hard time under the guise of being friendly. Walling points out the obvious, that Thorson is a jerk. Jack will spend the night in Quantico and in the morning he and Walling will fly to Denver.

Chapter 23 details Gladden's latest plan for hiding out while he awaits the arrival of his new camera. Gladden intends to wait at the apartment of the front desk clerk, a former porn star named Darlene. Gladden has murdered Darlene and plans to stay in the apartment until he can safely flee LA. Gladden steals the newspaper from Darlene's neighbor and is ecstatic to see that he made the front page again, after all these years. Gladden reads the stories about himself and how the police had learned his true identity. It is also mentioned that Gladden is wanted as a suspect in the maid's murder.

Chapter 24 begins with Jack and Walling on their way to Denver. The pair exchanges brief histories to pass the time. Walling tells Jack that her father was a cop in Baltimore that committed suicide, which explains why she started the task force. Jack also learns that Thorson had been Walling's husband. Although there is tension between Walling and Thorson neither is willing to budge and be transferred from Quantico.

Along the way, the plane is rerouted to Phoenix when it is discovered that there has been another murder.

Chapter 25 talks about the arrival in Phoenix. Jack and Walling are briefed by two young agents, Mize and Matuzak. The agents connect with the locals and get more details about the homicide. One of the reasons that homicide was suspected was that the victim, Orsulak, had talked about suicide and said that if he ever decided to do it, he would use a gold bullet. The slugs that killed Orsulak were made from ordinary lead.

The locals are amazed when Jack ties the cryptic "suicide note" to Poe's "Dream-land."

Reporters confront Jack outside the funeral home and they are handled by Backus who refuses to give any information.

In chapter 26 Jack and the agents are at the filed office in Phoenix. It is learned that the most recent homicide victim has perforations on his hand, suggesting that he had been pricked with pins shortly before or after death. The presence of some type of chemical in each victim's blood leads the agents to believe that the victims were given some kind of "enhancer" and then hypnotized to make the crime easier for The Poet. Jack finds the



concept of hypnosis to be puzzling, if not ridiculous. Walling explains that years ago, a Vegas nightclub hypnotist, Horace the Hypnotist, was convicted of hypnotizing children to indulge in his pedophilic fantasies. The agents know that Horace is still in jail.

Jack catches onto something said by Backus and learns from Walling that The Poet may have had oral sex with the victims before death.

Chapter 27: Jack and the agents meet with the local FBI. The group has a conference call with agents from each of the 6 cities where the murders occurred.

Each agent fills Backus in on their findings. The one that puzzles the agents most is the one that took place in Florida. There is also a question about the ten month time span between that murder and the next. There seems to be no correlation between the cops.

Jack is asked to talk to Riley about exhuming Sean's body.

Point of contact with the Poet is discussed.

Somehow, Backus, Walling and Jack are shown on CNN coming out of the funeral home in Phoenix. Walling and discuss the media and then Walling's failed marriage to Thorson.

Jack tells Walling about Sarah's accident.

After a failed start, Walling returns to Jack's room and gives him a chance to make a pass. They make love.

Later, after Walling had returned to her room, Jack sees Thorson in the hallway.

Chapter 28: Gladden is annoyed that he never asked Darlene where she kept the remote control for the TV. Gladden is restless and as he is finally beginning to drift off to sleep, he hears a CNN report about a murdered cop in Phoenix.

Chapter 29: Walling wakes Jack with a phone call and reminds him to call Riley. Jack asks about the exhumation and explains as much as possible. Riley confirms that Sean had been sick, hence the cough syrup. Riley was also home sick that day. Then Riley tells Jack that she's pregnant.

On the way to meet with the other agents, Jack tells Walling that Riley has agreed to the exhumation, which saves time in court.

Backus tells the group that the sound bite on CNN tipped off the Poet. The Poet has written a letter which was faxed to Backus. The letter confesses to the killings and includes a clue to the killer's identity. It is surmised that the first murder is the key to the case. It is determined that the fax came from a computer, not a typical fax machine. Other details are discussed and Backus tells the group that for the time being, they will remain in Phoenix.



Chapters 20-29 Analysis

Walling gives Jack information because she knows that there are no other options if she is going to get the necessary information. Although Jack and Walling share information, it is clear that each is wary of the other. Reporters often dislike FBI agents and FBI agents have great disdain for reporters that often interfere with their investigations.

Walling takes Jack to Quantico to meet with her boss, Bob Backus. After much discussion, Jack is allowed to observe the case from the inside. Although the FBI attempts to maintain its upper hand, Jack knows that they need him to get ahead on the case.

Jack is not well received at Quantico for many reasons. The agents dislike that Jack is a reporter and believe that he will break his word to get a story. Jack expected this type of response. Thorson seems to be particularly hostile and Jack is puzzled by the attitude until Walling explains that Thorson is her ex-husband. Matters are made worse later when Thorson sees a disheveled Walling leaving Jack's room late at night.

The author is beginning to weave together the various pieces in the cases. A startling and revealing new development comes when it appears that the victims had been hypnotized before being killed. The reason for this is not known, beyond being able to subdue the victims. Jack learns that the perp may have had sex with the victims before they were killed, that the gun shot may have been used to mask semen or condom lubricant. Jack wishes that he didn't know that particular detail and feels ill. The hypnosis is tied to Horace the Hypnotist and the reader can surmise that it will not be long before the cops connect Horace to the Poet.

The press coverage of the FBI at the funeral home in Arizona is unfortunate yet causes the Poet to step up his game.

The current and future relationship between Walling and Jack is becoming clear. Walling begins to trust Jack, defends him, and eventually gives out information that is supposed to be kept secret. All of this leads up to Walling's intimate encounter with Jack. It is also obvious that Thorson is going to try and create problems for Jack and his ex-wife.

Gladden is restless as he attempts to wait out the five days before he can leave LA. The author shows Gladden's determination and twisted mind as the killer camps out in Darlene's apartment even though she lay dead in the bedroom. Gladden's excitement builds as he realizes that the cops are onto him and is also surprised that they have learned about the cop in Arizona.

Gladden clearly thinks he is smarter than the cops and the FBI and taunts them with a riddle in a note.

The case continues to plague Jack and hits closer to home than ever before. The thought of Sean being violated is almost too much to bear. In addition, Jack has to call

Riley and ask for an exhumation. Riley's pregnancy is clearly the only thing that will keep her going through this time.



Chapters 30-39

Chapters 30-39 Summary

Chapter 30: There is a meeting between the FBI agents and local law enforcement. During the short meeting it is clear that Thorson is upset about Walling's rendezvous with Jack. Walling, Jack and agent Thompson are sent to the Orsulak crime scene. The author details the crime scene and discusses possibilities surrounding Orsulak's death.

Walling interviews two brothers nearby and gets nothing out of the deal but a stolen car stereo. The stereo had been stolen from a Hertz rental car and it is suspected that the car was used by the Poet.

Chapter 31: Thorson calls Jack's room in the morning and asks for Rachel. Jack stalls not sure what to do. Rachel takes the phone and learns that there is a story in the LA Times about the Poet and Jack must be questioned. Greg Glenn calls and is furious about the LA Times story, and he and Jack argue. Glenn wants Jack to come home right away and finish the story. Jack begins to wonder how anyone at the LA Times could have gotten information and decides that it must have been Thorson.

During the meeting with Backus and Thorson Jack learns that it was Michael Warren who had written the story. Jack is furious. Jack confronts Backus and Thorson about the article stating that Warren didn't know the name of the murderer and the information had to have come from the task force. Jack calls off the deal and says he's writing the story. Jack and Thorson argue.

Jack realizes that he might have go back to Denver and worries about his relationship with Rachel. Neither wants the relationship to end.

Chapter 32: Gladden posts another letter to the PTL network. The post is somewhat poetic and reveals that Gladden had been abused.

Chapter 33: Jack convinces Glenn to let him write the story from the hotel in Phoenix. Jack spends the day writing and nervously awaits a phone call from Greg Glenn. Meanwhile, Jack calls his mother and Riley to tell them about the story. Jack also calls Rachel only to find out that she is gone. There's obviously been a break in the case.

Jack anxiously awaits the phone calls that do not come. Meanwhile, Jack reads stories about Horace Goble the hypnotist. Goble had been a practicing psychiatrist in Beverley Hills before he turned his skill in hypnosis into a Vegas nightclub act. Goble was finally arrested when he drugged and molested a young girl at a show. It is not known how many girls were sexually abused by Goble. Experts backed up Goble's story that one will not perform any act under hypnosis that one would not perform ordinarily. It is revealed that Goble was a former member of the CIA and had created a method using drugs and hypnosis to develop a type of mind control. Goble was sentenced to 85 years in the Union Correctional Institute in Raiford. A seemingly



unrelated story is sent to Jack by Laurie Prine. Jack thinks it's a mistake until he reads that the suspected murderer of the maid in LA had served time with Goble. Everything starts to come together.

The phone rings in Jack's room and he picks up expecting it to be Rachel. It is Glenn calling to discuss the story.

Shortly after Glenn's call Thorson calls Jack and tells him the Rachel is not available and that she will not be calling him anytime soon. Jack and Thorson argue. Against Jack's better judgment, he tells Thorson about William Gladden. Thorson scoffs and says that Gladden has been checked out and dropped as a suspect. Jack tries to convince Thorson that Gladden is most likely the guy. Thorson hangs up.

Jack knows that he must go to LA to speak with Detective Thomas. Jack strongly suspects that Rachel and the other agents are in LA, but has no way of knowing where in the city they might be. Jack misleads the front desk clerk into giving him a copy of the bills for the rooms assigned to Backus, Thorson, and Rachel.

Chapter 34: On the airplane to LA Jack checks out all of the phone numbers attached to the room charges. Jack finds a lengthy call from a Thorson to Warren which confirms Jack's suspicions that Thorson is a leak. Jack also calls Warren and tells him off. Jack knows that the entire charade was set up by Warren so he could scoop Jack on the story.

Chapter 35: Jack arrives at the LAPD Hollywood Division to speak to Detective Thomas. Rachel is waiting for him. Jack is furious that he has been lied to and confronts Rachel. The pair discusses Gladden and they trade information. Gladden has messed up by using a known alias. The Best Pals angle finally works out when it is discovered that Gladden was in the Best Pals program with Detective Beltran, the first victim.

Rachel admits to having previously interviewed Gladden and Goble at Raiford. It is suspected that Goble taught Gladden about hypnosis.

Jack meets with Backus and Thorson. The meeting is not pleasant. Jack finds out that the agents are watching Thomas, suspecting that he will be Gladden's next victim. After an argument Jack is let back into the loop.

Chapter 36: Jack checks into the same dive hotel as the agents. Jack visits Rachel's room and the pair picks up where they left off in Phoenix. Jack and Rachel go out for a drink. They discuss Gladden. Rachel confirms Jack's belief that Gladden had been molested.

Rachel asks how Glenn will take it if Jack doesn't submit a follow-up story. Jack says that Glenn will be unhappy and will require some kind of follow-up. Jack expressed concern about the leak and Rachel says that whoever leaked the story will not take a chance of going up against Backus.

Jack finds that the hotel bills from Phoenix are gone.



Chapter 37: Jack learns that he is going to spend the day with Thorson. Neither is happy about it. Once again Jack confronts Thorson about being a leak and Thorson denies it. Thorson warns Jack that Rachel is a cold woman.

Jack and Thorson meet with the Gladden's lawyer who refuses to give any information, even though he is threatened by Thorson. Thorson soon finds the wire transfer from Gladden to Krasner.

Chapter 38: Thorson and Jack go to the Santa Monica Police Department to claim Gladden's possessions. Thorson is angry when he finds out about the camera, but it leads him to check into Gladden's order for a replacement. Thorson and Jack find the camera store where Gladden ordered the camera.

Chapter 39: Jack and the agents meet in the field office and discuss the takedown of Gladden. Rachel calls from Florida to confirm the wire transfers. Brass tells the group about the psychology books found in Gladden's cell along with the Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe.

Rachel calls Jack from Florida and they talk about the case. Rachel asks if Jack and Thorson talked about her today. Jack recalls the comment about the Painted Desert. Jack lies and says that they didn't talk about her and then immediately feels guilty about lying to Rachel.

Chapters 30-39 Analysis

Things begin to come together for the FBI after they investigate the Orsulak murder. Playing hardball with the teens nets them the stolen stereo which leads to Gladden. Once again, Gladden has used an obscure reference, renting a yellow Mustang to correspond with a quote from the Bible.

The animosity between Jack and Thorson grows and is only made worse when Thorson learns about the relationship between Rachel and Jack. The only thing from keeping the men from each other's throat is intervention from Backus and Rachel.

Jack is still convinced that Thorson is the leak and backs up his suspicions when he discovers a lengthy phone call to Warren. Jack is furious with Warren for setting him up and equally angry with himself for not figuring it out sooner. In some ways, Warren has violated some secret code of ethics but in another way, Jack understands the betrayal as something a reporter must do to be on top. The story was obviously Warren's way out of the agency and back into his journalistic career.

Gladden's arrogance finally begins to catch up with him and the agents are prepared to arrest him at the camera shop if not before. As they wait to complete the operation, more evidence comes in to support the case.

Although Thorson remains hostile toward Jack, his attitude is not quite as volatile as before.



Chapters 40-53

Chapters 40-53 Summary

Chapter 40: Gladden paces around his hotel room, trying to avoid the acrid smell coming from Darlene's dead body. Nothing helps to eradicate the smell, but Gladden is ready to leave and convinces himself that he can deal with it for the next short while.

Chapter 41: Gladden calls the camera store to check on delivery of his new digital camera. Thorson answers the call and sends agents to the payphone Gladden had used. Thorson waits for Gladden to call back.

Gladden calls back and Thorson devises a way to stall hoping that agents are in the process of apprehending Gladden at the phone booth. Gladden has switched phone booths and has effectively escaped. The only chance to arrest Gladden now will be when he comes to pick up the camera.

Surveillance goes on throughout the day and nothing happens. Rachel returns from Florida and Backus is not completely pleased to see her. Rachel reminds Backus that she is the lead agent on the case.

Chapter 42: Much to Backus' dismay Jack enters the camera store to take coffee to the agents. A woman comes into the store and attacks Thorson. It is clearly Gladden in drag. Thorson is dead.

Gladden recognizes Jack. Backus calls and speaks to Gladden. Gladden questions Jack about how he was able to get in on the investigation. Jack tells Gladden about Sean's murder. Gladden calls Krasner. Gladden does not like Krasner's suggestions and hangs up on him.

Gladden and Jack argue. Gladden finally tells Jack that he had to kill Sean to save him.

One of the agents throws a concussion grenade into the store, and Jack lunges for Gladden's gun. Jack manages to jam his thumb behind the trigger guard so that the gun could not discharge. Jack finally takes a shot and blows off Gladden's nose. Gladden knows agents are coming through the door and attempts to fire the weapon even though Jack's thumb is still jammed behind the trigger guard. Gladden manages to fire the gun and gets hit in the chest.

Chapter 43: Gladden is surprised that there is no pain. Gladden is relieved that death is near and dies with his eyes open.

Chapter 44: Jack and Gladden are taken to a hospital. Gladden is pronounced dead. Jack's hand is tended to and the doctor tells him that there has been tendon damage.



Jack, Backus and Rachel discuss the incident. Since Gladden had taken out video and sound in the store, Jack relays the man's final words.

Jack calls Glenn and learns that he no longer has the story since he has become a part of it. Another reporter will write the story.

Jack leaves the hospital and he and Rachel check into a hotel.

Chapter 45: Jack and Rachel meet with Backus at the field office. Backus tells them about Darlene. The details of the case come together from the photos sold by Gladden to information about the victims. Jack prepares to give a statement to Rachel.

While waiting to give his statement Jack returns some of the calls he'd received while in hospital. There were calls from book publishers, the media, Dan Bledsoe, and Michael Warren. Bledsoe expresses his thanks to Jack. Jack calls Warren, who is out of the office.

The FBI is hot on the trail of other members of the network. Two agents manage to break into Gladden's PTL account.

Warren tracks down Jack and asks for a story. The men discuss the known facts of the case. Warren tells Jack that Thorson was not his source.

Chapter 46: Jack checks his messages and attempts to contact Greg Glenn. Glenn is in meeting and Jack decides to go out for a walk, where he looks up the name and phone number of a New York agent. The agent is highly interested in Jack's book.

Glenn finally calls back and once again tells Jack that he cannot write the story. Jack withholds information about the newest developments.

Chapter 47: Jack submits his book proposal to the New York agent, and then attempts to uncover the name of Warren's source.

Jack double checks the time the calls were made from Thorson's room and realizes that Thorson was not in the room the time the calls were made. Jack begins to suspect Rachel. Jack calls Backus and asks questions about Thorson's belongings.

Jack calls Bledsoe and asks for a favor. Jack then calls one of the agents in Quantico to confirm some of his theories. Jack's theories are confirmed much to his dismay.

Rachel phones Jack and Jack questions her about where she was at the time the calls were made from Thorson's room.

Chapter 48: Jack calls his parents and there is a stilted reconciliation between Jack and his father.

Bledsoe calls Jack and fills him in on the case about Rachel's father. It is suspected that he had been molesting Rachel and that the details surrounding his death were suspect.



Jack gets in touch with Backus to relay the new information. Backus is concerned about Jack's well-being. Jack tells Backus the story and his theories about why Gladden was not the Poet. Gladden's last statement finally made sense and Jack realizes that Gladden had confessed to killing a child not Jack's adult twin brother. Gladden did not kill Sean.

The loose ends are tied up and Jack explains Rachel's actions and how they were meant to tie Gladden to the murders. Jack also tells Backus about Rachel's childhood. Everything falls together about the murder/suicides and Backus finally believes Jack.

Chapter 49: Backus asks Jack to wear a wire so they can get more evidence on Rachel. A plan is set into motion. Jack and Backus arrived at the "earthquake house" where Jack will supposedly meet Rachel. When they arrive at the house Backus pulls a gun on Jack and admits to being the Poet. Jack learns that Backus was Warren's source.

Backus drugs Jack and is prepared to molest him when Rachel makes her presence known. There is a shoot out. Backus is hit and goes through a plate glass window. Rachel calls for backup.

Chapter 50: Jack wakes up in the federal building and spends the next five hours being interviewed by agents. Jack sees Rachel in the cafeteria and attempts to apologize for his suspicions.

Jack learns that Backus has escaped. Rachel has been put on desk duty for exercising poor judgment in her relationship with Jack. Things go sour between Jack and Rachel and he leaves with the relationship unresolved.

Chapter 51: Backus consoles himself while waiting in a drainage pipe. The gunshot wound was a minor one but was already infected.

Chapter 52: A report is released detailing the discovery of a body in a drainage pipe. Although there is no hard evidence, the body was identified as Bob Backus. Jack and the other agents believe that Backus is still on the loose.

Jack stays in LA and becomes a celebrity journalist. Glenn wants to keep Jack on as a reporter with the Rocky Mountain News even though Jack has taken unpaid leave to write his book. The money that comes from the book will go into a trust fund for Sean and Riley's baby.

Rachel is transferred out of Quantico and goes to Italy. Jack does not expect to hear from her again.

Chapter 53: Jack recounts the case and the evil that he saw in the killer's eyes. Jack will always mourn for Sean and knows that someday he will see the Eidolon again.



Chapters 40-53 Analysis

The author wraps the story up rather quickly, capturing the reader's attention with a flood of details that moves the story along effectively.

It is obvious that Gladden is becoming increasingly disturbed and is prepared to die as long as his story can be told to the world. Gladden's posts on the PTL network show a deep need for understanding and truth. Despite Gladden's mental disabilities, the killer is not devoid of the cunning and skill used throughout his murder spree.

Although Jack has once again been ousted from the case, he is not going to give up on finding Sean's murderer. The rough tactics of the FBI agents net important information. Jack is more convinced than ever that Thorson is Warren's source.

Gladden is tracked to the camera store and the agents and Jack settle in until the arrest can be made.

Gladden fools the agents by dressing in drag. Thorson's death could have been avoided but Rachel surmises that Thorson wanted to be the one to make the arrest or the kill.

Jack shows equal parts of temper and foolishness as he argues with Gladden. The statement made by Gladden makes no sense to Jack. Gladden take the opportunity to end his life by causing the gun to discharge.

Jack's suspicions about Rachel are difficult on Jack emotionally but make too much sense to ignore. Every piece of information Jack gets seems to back up the theory. Jack feels a sense of relief when Backus believes the tale.

Realization hits Jack at the earthquake house when he discovers that Backus is the Poet. Jack is filled with remorse about his suspicions of Rachel and knows that the relationship is probably over.

Although Backus' body is supposedly found, Jack and several agents believe that the body was a plant. Backus will resurface once again, this time as the Eidolon.

In some ways, the case seems to be healing for Jack and his parents. It is clear that Jack intends to become closer to them and to take care of Sean and Riley's unborn child as a form of penance.



Characters

Jack McEvoy

Jack McEvoy is a hotshot reporter for the Rocky Mountain News. He is 34 years old and is the identical twin brother of Sean McEvoy. The resemblance between the two brothers seems to end there. Jack and Sean made a point to look different and develop different personalities. The brothers both have hazel eyes, a lanky build, and light brown hair. While Jack wears glasses, Sean wore contacts. Jack's hair was longer and he had no desire to work out, where as Sean had a crew cut and spent a fair amount of time in the gym.

While Sean was spending time in the military and the police academy, Jack bummed around for several years living in Paris and New York before going to college full-time. Jack had always wanted to be a writer and eventually ended up as a newspaper reporter. Jack's dream of "really writing" has been put on the back burner for nearly 10 years.

Jack's job allows him to work on murder stories as they develop which saves him from the 9-to-5 grind. Greg Glenn, Jack's boss, is relieved when Jack says he's going to write about Sean's murder. As a friend Glenn would never ask Jack to take on such assignment.

There is a strained relationship between the Jack and his parents. When Jack was a child his older sister, Sarah, died in an accident out on a lake. Jack feels that his parents always resented that he lived and Sarah did not.

Sean McEvoy

Sean McEvoy is a lead police officer in the Crimes Against Persons unit of the Denver Police Department. He is 34 years old and the identical twin brother of Jack McEvoy. The resemblance between the two brothers seems to end there. Sean and Jack made a point to look different and develop different personalities. The brothers both have hazel eyes, a lanky build, and light brown hair. While Jack wears glasses, Sean wore contacts. Jack's hair was longer and he had no desire to work out, where as Sean had a crew cut and spent a fair amount of time in the gym.

Sean went into the service right after graduation and eventually entered the police academy. Sean eventually went on to get a college degree so that he could move ahead in the department.

Sean McEvoy is married to Riley McEvoy. The couple lives in Boulder, Colorado and do not have children.



Known as "Mac" to his coworkers, Sean was always thought to be a steady cop although the Theresa Lofton case seems to take a great toll on him. Sean becomes obsessed with the case and continues to work on it on his own time. Despite Sean's altered capacity, neither Jack nor Riley believes that Sean would commit suicide.

Even though all evidence points to the fact that Sean "ate has gun," Jack is determined to prove that his brother was murdered.

The Poet

"The Poet" is a serial killer and the murderer of Sean McEvoy. The Poet is dubbed as such due to the cryptic poetry related messages left at the crime scenes.

Riley McEvoy

Riley McEvoy - Sean McEvoy's wife/widow.

Harold Wexler

Harold Wexler - one of the cops investigating Sean McEvoy's death.

Sarah McEvoy

Sarah McEvoy - older sister of Jack and Sean McEvoy.

Ray St. Louis

Ray St. Louis - one of the cops investigating Sean McEvoy's death.

Greg Glenn

Greg Glenn - Former hot shot reporter now turned editor at the Rocky Mountain news. Glenn is also Jack McEvoy's boss.

Theresa Lofton

Theresa Lofton was a college student brutally murdered near the University of Denver.

Mr. and Mrs. McEvoy

Mr. and Mrs. McEvoy - parents to Jack, Sean and Sarah McEvoy. The McEvoy's became an emotionally unavailable after the death of Sarah and maintain a strained relationship with Jack.



Objects/Places

Denver, Colorado

Michael Connelly's "The Poet" is set mainly in Denver, Colorado. Jack McEvoy is a reporter for the Rocky Mountain News and his brother, Sean McEvoy, works as a member of the Crimes against Persons Unit in the Denver Police Department.

Denver, often referred to as the Mile High City, is known for being situated at the base of the Rockies, the place where Jack McEvoy often escapes to win the life of a news reporter got to be too hectic.

On the outskirts of Denver is Bear Lake the place where the McEvoy family often spent summers. Bear Lake is also the site of Sarah McEvoy's death and the location of Sean McEvoy's reported suicide.

As a general rule, weather in Denver is temperate, and is not often plagued by snowstorms. Because of two unpredicted snowstorms, investigating Sean's murder becomes even more difficult for Jack.

Although Jack McEvoy's case starts out in Denver, his investigation into police suicides quickly leads to other cities including Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles.

The Lofton Case

Theresa Lofton was a college student at the University of Denver when she was murdered. Lofton's body, cut into two pieces, was found at Washington Park. The fact that her body had been dismembered made the homicide a hot topic on national news. Theresa Lofton, originally from Butte, was considered to be an All-American girl, one that worked part-time as a day care worker. Because of the manner of Lofton's death, the case was compared to be infamous Black Dahlia murder that took place in Los Angeles in 1947. The tabloids referred to Theresa Lofton as the "White Dahlia" due to the fact that she was found in a snowy field.

The case was hot for nearly two weeks before other crimes stepped in to take its place. Several of the cops including Sean McEvoy kept mum about the case and worked "as if they felt no obligation to talk to the public at all." The only reason the media found out that Theresa Lofton was cut into pieces was that a photographer came across photos of the crime scene by accident. Since the police refused to talk about the case with the media, the media took it upon itself to conduct its own investigation, "numbing the reading and television-watching public with sordid details about the victim's life that actually had nothing to do with anything."

Many cops have at least one case during their careers that consumes them above all others. The Lofton case was that case for Sean McEvoy.



Los Angeles

Los Angeles - Home to the L.A. Times and place where Jack McEvoy goes to investigate his brother's murder.

Boulder, Colorado

Boulder, Colorado - home to Sean and Riley McEvoy.

Quantico

Quantico - Location of FBI Headquarters.

CAPs Unit

CAPs Unit - the Crimes Against Persons Unit, a division of the police department.

Pints Of

Pints Of - a local pub in Denver.

Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs - home of a cop named Scoto.

Rocky Mountain News

Rocky Mountain News - Jack McEvoy's employer.

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. - The nation's capital. The city is served by the Washington Dulles International Airport.



Themes

Family Relationships

Family Relationships are a strong theme in "The Poet" by Michael Connelly. Jack McEvoy and Sean McEvoy are identical twin brothers. Although very different in many ways, the brothers share a bond that is not often felt by many siblings. This includes a deep sense of what the other is experiencing and perhaps more importantly in this case, it creates a burning desire for Jack to uncover what really happened to his brother that night in Estes Park on Bear Lake. The crime scene photos make it hard for Jack to deny the possibility of Sean's suicide as all the signs are there. As a top reporter, Jack has seen many crime scene photos and knows what to look for in the way of the manner of death.

A strong underlying current in the story is the death of Sarah McEvoy, Jack and Sean's older sister. At age 9, Sarah fell through the ice at Bear Lake and drowned. Jack was with his younger sister but was unable to save her. After the accident, Jack and Sean's parents changed dramatically and became emotionally unavailable. Jack believes that his parents blame him for Sarah's death and wish he would have been the one who died.

As much as Jack wants to help Riley, Sean's widow, the brothers' nearly identical appearance makes it too difficult and Jack is shut out once again.

Determination

Jack McEvoy is not one to take no for an answer. When Jack wanted to write about the Theresa Lofton case, he was stonewalled at every turn by the Denver Police Department, even his own brother. The cops refused to talk about Lofton and were stingy with information on the case. Some of the details were only released through the relentless investigations held by members of the media.

Jack's editor, Greg Glenn, wanted Jack to write about Sean's apparent suicide but would never ask the star reporter to tackle such a sensitive topic. Glenn was relieved when Jack suggested it. The offer would prove to take every ounce of Jack's determination and know how, particularly when the case turned into a nationwide manhunt for The Poet, a serial killer intent on murdering cops and making the deaths appear as suicides.

Along the way, it is Jack's determination is often the only thing that keeps him moving forward with the case. Along the way, Jack is confronted with every type of obstacle from weather to limited cooperation from the Denver Police Department, his limited knowledge of Sean's obsession with the Theresa Lofton case, and the constant battle with the FBI.



Regardless of all the obstacles, Jack McEvoy is on a mission and nothing will stop him from finding out the truth.

Murder/Suicide

"The Poet" by Michael Connelly focuses on the apparent suicide of Sean McEvoy, a leader of the Crimes Against Persons Unit of the Denver Police Department. Sean, also known as "Mac," has apparently committed suicide in Estes Park at the remote Bear Lake. It is winter and therefore the park is deserted save for a park ranger who found Sean's body.

Jack McEvoy, hot shot reporter and Sean's identical twin brother, is not at all convinced that Sean killed himself. Sean was on the force for about 12 years, typically not long enough to be so burned out that he would "eat his gun." Even after Jack sees the crime scene photos, there is a part of him that is not convinced of Sean's suicide. The thing that especially bothers Jack is the cryptic note left on the windshield of Sean's car.

Jack begins to dig into other police suicides across the country. Jack begins to uncover similar cases, all of which were related to cryptic notes extracted from works by Edgar Allen Poe. It becomes clear to Jack that the suicides were in fact murders, all masterminded by a serial killer known as "The Poet."

Jack becomes obsessed with solving the case, not only for his story but for Sean's reputation as well as that of the other murdered cops. The dead cops, denied proper burial and related benefits for their families, deserve better. Jack McEvoy intends to see that they get it while making a pledge to put an end to the murder spree.



Style

Point of View

"The Poet" by Michael Connelly is written in the first-person point of view. The point of view is that of Jack McEvoy, reporter for the Rocky Mountain News. Jack has an unusual job as a murder reporter, investigating and writing about murders that interest him, with no deadlines and few restrictions. When Jack hears that his brother, Sean, has committed suicide, the reader is able to get a sense of the incredible amount of grief and shock experienced by Jack and other members of the family. Although Jack is thoroughly stunned by the news, he immediately begins to question Sean's co-workers, cops in the Crimes Against Persons Unit of the Denver Police Department. Jack's training takes over, in part to shield him from the horrific loss.

Throughout the story, Jack conveys his confusion, doubts and determination about Sean's death. The reader is able to see the war raging within Jack. Part of the character is determined to solve the case for his own sake as well as for the peace of mind of Riley, Sean's widow, and other family and friends. The skilled reporter turns what might have been blind rage and angst into determination to get to the bottom of the story, to find the real truth.

Connelly is a pro at capturing the groundswell of emotions of Jack McEvoy and the reader is able to experience the complete story through the eyes of the brother and veteran reporter.

Setting

Michael Connelly's "The Poet" is set mainly in Denver, Colorado. Jack McEvoy is a reporter for the Rocky Mountain News. The only real competition for the newspaper is the Denver Post, who Jack and the rest of the staff are always eager to beat to the latest headline.

Jack's brother, Sean McEvoy, works as a member of the Crimes against Persons Unit in the Denver Police Department.

Denver, often referred to as the Mile High City, is known for being situated at the base of the Rockies, the place to where Jack McEvoy often escapes when the life of a news reporter got to be too hectic.

On the outskirts of Denver is Bear Lake the place where the McEvoy family often spent summers. Bear Lake is also the site of Sarah McEvoy's death and the location of Sean McEvoy's reported suicide.



As a general rule, weather in Denver is temperate, and is not often plagued by snowstorms. Because of two unpredicted snowstorms, investigating Sean's murder becomes even more difficult for Jack.

Although Jack McEvoy's case starts out in Denver, his investigation into police suicides quickly leads to other cities including Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles.

Language and Meaning

Michael Connelly's "The Poet" uses language relating to two specific occupations: the newspaper business and law enforcement.

Jack McEvoy is a reporter for the Rocky Mountain News. Since Jack is unlike the other reporters, there is much less terminology interspersed throughout the book than there would be otherwise. Still, there are many references to the newspaper business. Common terms and phrases include comments about deadlines, beats, "above the fold," news desk, bullpen, column inches, photography related issues, references made to other legitimate papers as well as the tabloids. All of the terms are either commonly known or are briefly explained.

Jack's brother, Sean McEvoy, works as a member of the Crimes against Persons Unit in the Denver Police Department. Jack has a great deal of contact with members of law enforcement, including Sean's co-workers at CAPS through to the FBI. There are many references to police lingo as well as appropriate medical lingo one might find in reports dealing with murder and suicide. Again, the terms are either well known or are simply explained. At no time do the references clutter or confuse the story.

As the story is placed in Denver, there are no strong regionalisms to explain.

One puzzling aspect to the story is the use of poetic language. The cops can't seem to figure out the meaning of the messages left behind by the poet. Separately, the messages mean little. Strung together, it becomes apparent that the pieces fit together and become obvious excerpts from by Edgar Allen Poe. The Poet enjoys the game of cat and mouse and through the use of the poetic phrases lets Jack McEvoy see the depth of his evil.

Structure

Michael Connelly's "The Poet" is a work of fiction. The book is comprised of 435 pages separated into 53 chapters. The shortest chapter is 1 page in length; the longest chapter is 17 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is eight pages.

The book's overall structure is not strictly chronological. The events surrounding Sean McEvoy's suicide begin with the notification of the death to Jack McEvoy, Sean's identical twin brother by Harold Wexler and Ray St. Louis, co-workers of Sean in the Crimes Against Persons Unit of the Denver Police Department. The apparent suicide of



Sean McEvoy is the crux of the book. Jack is notified first so that he may be present when the cops break the news to Sean's widow, Riley.

Much of the story is told through flashbacks. The use of flashback is an effective tool when using a first person point of view as it allows the reader to discover the history of the characters, both objectively and subjectively, without resorting to "telling" rather than "showing" the crucial parts.

The author is careful to interweave background on Jack McEvoy along with the rest of the family to show the depth of their ties and the causes behind their strained relationships.

The use of the poetic phrases allows the author to foreshadow the other murders and helps Jack to find Sean's killer.



Quotes

"Death is my beat. I make my living from it."
Page 3

"Because the reports were in chronological order, I could see how theories were considered and discarded."
Page 40

"Riley looked as if she had aged 10 years since I had seen her at the funeral."
Page 46

"The Denver papers were feeders for the bigger dailies in New York in L.A. and Chicago and Washington. I probably should've moved on long ago and even turned down an offer with the L.A. Times few years back."
Page 66

"That night, my dream came back. The only recurring nightmare of my entire life."
Page 147

"I sat on the edge of the bed watching CNN for a half-hour, hoping to see the report she had mentioned or anything to take my mind off the disastrous end of the night."
Page 239

"It was the kind of situation where the suitor asks the bride-to-be's father for approval of the marriage. Most of the time, it doesn't really matter what the old man says. It's going to happen."
Page 251

"When you write this... I want you to please keep in mind that we still need to get this man. You have information that could irreparably harm our chances of doing that."
Page 268

"Everything he had just said was dead right and I knew it the moment he said it."
Page 286

"There was a discernible electric buzz in the air, as everyone gathered around the table in the conference room with the million-dollar view."
Page 334



"There was no pain and that surprised him. The blood, gushing through his fingers in over his hands, was warm and comforting."

Page 360

"It's safe, Jack. But safety is a relative thing. The next big one could come along and change everything..."

Page 416

"She stepped back from the edge but I stayed there, staring into the darkness."

Page 423

"I remember their eyes the most. I can't sleep without first thinking of their eyes."

Page 435

Topics for Discussion

Why did The Poet choose to use quotes from Edgar Allan Poe at the murder scenes?

What could Jack McEvoy do to repair the relationship with his parents? Which side is right?

Considering that Sean McEvoy was at least ten years younger than some of his subordinates, how do you think the men regarded him as a leader?

How might the story have worked out differently if Glenn had assigned the story of Sean's murder to Jack? Would the focus have remained the same?

Would the story have had a different impact if the killer had used quotes from another poet?

Examine Jack's relationship with the FBI. Do you think his interaction with the agents was logical and reasonable or irrational?

What was Jack's first clue that the police suicides were connected? What caused him to start a nationwide search?