

The Rocky Road to Romance Study Guide

The Rocky Road to Romance by Janet Evanovich

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Plot Summary

The Rocky Road to Romance tells the story of Daisy Adams, a very busy doctoral student, and the beginning of her love life with Steve Crow. Daisy works multiple jobs to support herself through college, such as writing cookbooks for dog treats and delivering newspapers. After the moderate success of her cookbook, she convinces Steve to give her a five minute spot on his radio station to share her dog treat recipes. In the introduction to the novel, the traffic reporter for Steve's radio station hits a garbage truck and breaks his leg. Daisy petitions to take his place while he recuperates. Though Steve feels misgivings about Daisy's qualifications for the traffic reporting job, he relents as no one else expresses interest in the job.

Soon after Daisy takes the job, romantic sparks fly between Steve and Daisy. Steve even adopts a dog to give him an excuse to see Daisy outside of work. The addition of a dog necessitates the purchase of a larger car and a new house. Steve feels protective of her, and Daisy enjoys his attention. On her second day of traffic reporting, she reports to the scene of a drug dealer's apprehension. When the dealer, the Roach, attempts to get away, Daisy accidentally runs over him with her car. This incident gives her immediate notoriety, which causes Steve to fear for her safety. His fears appear to be well-founded when someone begins attempts on Daisy's life.

At first, Steve attempts to fire Daisy from the traffic reporting job, but she refuses. Then, he insists on a body guard, for which Daisy hires the elderly Elsie Hawkins, who Daisy met while working in the nursing home. After Elsie uses her large handgun to scare away a would-be intruder from Daisy's house, Steve insists that Elsie, Daisy and Daisy's teenage brother, Kevin, move into his newly acquired house. Days after they move in, however, Steve takes Daisy to a fund raiser to meet his Aunt Zena. While there, Daisy accidentally foils an assassination attempt on an international businessman. During news coverage of the incident, the news person mentions that Daisy currently lives with Steve Crow. That evening, Steve's new house suffers from a firebombing.

The multiple attempts on Daisy's life causes the Washington DC police to assign her around-the-clock protection. Not to be deterred, however, Steve holds to a promise to give Daisy a fun day out. He takes Kevin, who is staying with Daisy while her parents are out of town, Elsie and Daisy to a local amusement park. The police protection also tags along. While enjoying their day out, Daisy confesses to Steve that she has grown weary of her studies in geriatric psychology. He listens supportively and turns the conversation to playful flirting when he feels it gets too deep. Once everyone is satisfied with their day out, they pile into Steve's SUV for the trip home. On the way, a large, classic Cadillac attempts to run them off the road. When Elsie takes a few shots at it, the car speeds off. When Steve returns them to his house, they learn that the attackers stole Elsie's car to run them off the highway. Steve begins to doubt that the men after Elsie are the same drug dealer that she ran over, because such actions would undermine his upcoming trial.



Soon after the attack on the highway, Steve's parents drop in for a visit. The Crows enjoy great wealth from oil deposits discovered on their family's Indian reservation. Mrs. Crow assumes Daisy and Steve are engaged. She produces a huge, heirloom diamond ring, which Daisy accepts. Inwardly, however, Daisy begins to panic that the relationship is moving too fast. Soon after this, she tells Steve that she is moving back to her townhouse. However, Steve continues to see Daisy daily, even bribing Kevin with food.

On one such occasion, Steve takes everyone out for fast food. While waiting to order, Elsie spots her Cadillac in the drive thru. She peels out of the parking lot in Steve's SUV, just behind the Cadillac. Kevin, Daisy and Steve scramble into the truck. The police also follow. The chase ends in a nearby subdivision when the Cadillac spins out, and Elsie hits it in the side with the SUV. Three police cars also crash into the pileup. Steve's SUV sustains substantial damage, and the police cars are totaled. The Cadillac emerges without a scratch. Daisy learns that the men after her were actually rival drug dealers of the Roach. They hoped to make him look bad for his upcoming trial.

After the criminal activity dies down and Kevin moves back in with her parents, Daisy tells Steve that she needs a break from their relationship, to finish her dissertation and get her life in order. She agrees to keep the ring, however. She also agrees to allow Steve to spend the night just once, before she begins the break.

Two months later, Daisy speeds to Steve's house on her way to one of her last days as the traffic reporter. She immediately gets sick and blames the stress of her dissertation. Steve hopes that the wait for the results of her paper will come soon. He invites Daisy over for dinner, and she accepts, though she must first see her doctor. She hopes her malady is only the result of a vitamin deficiency.

Late that night, Daisy fails to show up for their date. Steve begins to worry and even calls local hospitals. Finally, she shows up, in tears. She explains that she carries his baby. After waking from a faint, Steve asks if the news of a baby upsets Daisy. She responds negatively, claiming that the tears are only a result of hormones. After both agree to marriage, they toast their new family with sparkling cider.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

The novel opens, early in the morning, in the radio management office of Steve Crow. He enjoys a jelly doughnut as he listens to the traffic report on his station, WZZZ. Steve rejoices in the crazy traffic patterns, because it drives up ratings for his station. He watches with with glee as the jelly from the doughnut drops onto his tie. Happily, he takes off the tie. When his secretary suggests that he forgo wearing the tie altogether, he says to do so would be unprofessional. Steve continues to watch the bustle of the radio newsroom through the glass walls of his office as the next traffic update comes on. Steve describes the technical nature of the traffic report, which involves several radios, CBs and other equipment. Suddenly, the reporter swears loudly, and the editor cuts the live feed. The newsroom continues to listen as the driver curses some unknown problem.

Prologue Analysis

In the introduction, the reader meets Steve Crow, the love interest of Daisy Adams, the protagonist. Steve runs a Washington DC radio station that prides itself on its traffic reports. Steve's early morning routine, including his banter with his secretary, reveals much about his personality. He runs a successful radio station without being an unreasonable boss. He also works well with others, enjoying a good natured joke like anyone else.

Menken's character, however, appears only in this chapter, though the characters sometimes refer to him later. His misfortune with the garbage truck foreshadows a life changing experience for both Daisy and Steve. In this way, the theme of fate steps in to change the lives of these two characters.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In Chapter One, the reader meets the protagonist, Daisy Adams, a graduate student who works several jobs to support herself and her brother as she works on her thesis. One such money making scheme involves writing a cookbook for dog treats. After the publishing of her book, she nagged Steve Crow until he agreed to give her a five minute slot on his radio station. Every Monday, she shares her advice for dog cuisine for five minutes. She enjoys moderate success and more fan mail than any other station employee.

However, she still suffers from money shortages. When she learns that the traffic reporter, Frank Menken, hit a garbage truck and broke his leg, she jumps at the opportunity to temporarily fill the position. With some trepidation, she approaches Steve about the job. Inwardly, Steve fears Daisy is not right for the job. Nevertheless, he finds himself in a bind, needing the position filled right away. No one else in the station accepts the job, despite offers of double Frank's salary. He instructs Daisy to follow him to the garage where the backup traffic car is found.

Steve notices that Daisy appears uncomfortable around him and questions her reason. Daisy explains her discomfort because of his position as her boss. She also answers questions about her work in dog food, which she explains only helps her pay the bills. They then proceed to the traffic route. Steve explains that he will run the radios and scanners, drive and broadcast during the first hour, and Daisy will listen and broadcast during the second hour. Effortlessly, Steve runs the show during the first hour. Between broadcasts, he also gives Daisy some of his personal history, including his early days working for his father's radio station. Daisy listens with amazement. Silently, she berates herself for volunteering for the position. Outwardly, however, she assures Steve that she will learn the job. When her turn comes to broadcast, her mind blanks, and she fails to complete her task. Steve feels a sense of doom about the decision. Still, he decides he will let Daisy continue working, because he does not have a better option.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Daisy Adams lives in many circles. She works on her dissertation for her doctorate in geriatric counseling. In connection with this, she also volunteers at a nearby nursing home. Furthermore, she writes pet food cookbooks, to support herself while in college. In addition to this, she supports her community by working as a school crossing guard. Yet, this is not enough. She takes a paper route and a waitressing job to further pay her bills. The strain of supporting her teenage brother while her parents are out of town taxes her budget further. She sees the traffic reporting job as a way to lighten her schedule. While those around her admire her free loving spirit, they worry that she overtaxes herself.



Love interest sparks immediately when Daisy approaches Steve about the job. Each party involved notices a physical attraction, and more. The close quarters of the traffic car amplify these feelings. Steve desires to protect Daisy immediately, which almost causes him to deny her the job. Much of the nervousness that Steve notices in Daisy stems from her attraction to him, which she never experienced with a man before. This attraction foreshadows the love interest that makes up the main plot of the book.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Steve parks the car at a good vantage point for watching traffic and prepares to leave Daisy on her own for the rest of the afternoon, after only two hours of training. He feels protective towards her already, and very attracted. When he questions her ability, she assures him that she will not give up and that she will learn the job. She enjoys Steve's presence and sadly watches him leave.

Later that evening, Daisy returns home and begins to prepare a simple dinner for herself and her fourteen-year-old brother, Kevin. Suddenly, Steve shows up. Kevin labels Steve as a lecher, but confesses that he hopes to be a lecher someday. Kevin also admires Steve's black, imported sports car. However, Steve regrets buying the car as it attracts strange types of women, including those who leave panties on his windshield. Steve hands over the takeout that he brought to Kevin and takes Daisy out to eat, under the pretense of showing her more about the radio equipment. He does give her a few more instructions about the job, but mostly he fantasizes about becoming more involved with Daisy, romantically. He ignores her questions about the cassette recorder, because he never plans to send her out to do on the scene reporting. They also discuss Daisy's schedule. Steve reacts incredulously at the activities that Daisy takes on. She assures him that none of them will get in the way of her traffic reporting job.

When they return home, Kevin runs out to the car and jumps in to escape Fang, the neighbor's dog for which Daisy often cooks. In an attempt to spend more time with her, Steve offers the use of his dog, which he does not own yet. Daisy excitedly jumps at the idea. They set up a doggie dinner date for the next evening. Just before Steve leaves, he pulls Daisy in for a passionate kiss that leaves them both reeling.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Steve cannot seem to help himself concerning Daisy. When he appears at Daisy's door, he seems almost as surprised as Daisy. He brings takeout, signaling that much of the action in the novel revolves around food, presumably because Daisy's brother, Kevin, eats large quantities on a regular basis, like many teenage boys.

The sports car represents Steve's single days. However, even before meeting Daisy, he grew tired of the car and the attention it attracts. He wearies of removing underwear from the windshield. In order to spend more time with Daisy, he gladly buys a more practical car. When Daisy borrows the sports car, after her's is stolen, she also dislikes the attention, and the underwear. From the beginning, Daisy and Steve have eyes only for each other.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The next day, Daisy pulls up to her spot overlooking the city's traffic once again. She rests momentarily, reviewing the stresses that occurred in her life in the last twenty-four hours. She awakened in the middle of the night, worrying about the state of her house pending another visit from Steve. In a flurry, she cleaned much of her townhouse. Next, Kevin ate all the pancakes for breakfast, as only a fourteen-year-old can. Then, her car stalled in the fast food drive-thru. Finally, she drove the traffic loop, dodging accidents and making her regular radio reports. She dozes for a few minutes before Steve calls her on the unit's car phone. They confirm their dinner date, and she assures him that the job is going well.

Just before her shift ends, she hears a report of gunfire on the police scanner. Daisy calls the information into the station's editor, who sends her to the scene, telling her to use the cassette recorder that Steve neglected to explain. She follows his orders and drives in her news car to a seedy part of the city. In an attempt to get closer to the action, she accidentally runs down the gunman in question. Police thank her for helping both to catch the criminal and to save the little girl he held hostage. In a daze, Daisy watches as the man, a powerful drug dealer, is led away in handcuffs, cursing and threatening Daisy's life. A local television crew interviews her for her role in the apprehension.

Steve learns of Daisy's latest assignment as he drives to the pound to adopt a dog for his date. He reacts angrily, though it is mostly anger born from worry about Daisy's safety. Though people seem to enjoy her twist on traffic reporting, Steve worries that she does not have the credentials to do action reporting. He quickly calls Daisy's car phone to verify that she escaped without injury. She assures him that she is safe. When she mentions Bob, Steve's imaginary dog, Steve quickly turns around to return to the pound. There, he picks out a large sheep dog, which reminds him of the dog in Peter Pan. Attempting to fit Bob into the fancy sports car proves problematic, however. Impulsively, Steve drives to a car dealership to trade in the car for an SUV. Due to the car's high value, however, the salesman refuses to make the trade. Instead, Steve buys the SUV with cash and he, and Bob head to the radio station a half an hour behind schedule.

At Daisy's house, she cooks stir-fry for a voracious Bob. He devours the food and Kevin's chips and looks for more. Steve announces that he plans to take Daisy and Kevin to a fancy restaurant, but Bob complains, loudly, about being left alone. Instead, they drive through for fast food, where Bob's appetite rivals that of Kevin. Once again, they return to Daisy's house, where Bob makes himself comfortable on Daisy's couch. Kevin retreats to his room, and Steve and Daisy take the opportunity to snuggle on the couch. Bob's sprawling position excuses them to sit very close. Quickly, the cuddling turns to embracing and kissing. Only the loud approach of Kevin breaks the embrace.



They quickly compose themselves as Kevin appears, announcing that Daisy is on the evening news.

All three watch as news footage shows the drug dealer threatening Daisy, after which the news reporter identifies her by name. Steve reacts strongly to the discovery. He attempts to fire Daisy from her traffic job, citing that she cannot safely drive alone around the city when such a powerful criminal intends to do her harm. He even offers to pay her as much to stay off the job, a deal that Kevin encourages her to take.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Love causes Steve to do crazy things throughout the book. Spontaneously, he adopts Bob, buys an SUV and a house, all in an attempt to be closer to Daisy, both physically and emotionally. Daisy remains in the dark about the purchases until after the fact. The purchases signal Steve's move from the bachelor life to marriage material. Though the purchase of Bob initially necessitates the subsequent purchases, they also make him more appealing as a husband.

The main subplot of the book, the attempts on Daisy's life by a drug dealer, begins in this chapter. Like her relationship with Steve, the whole situation with the drug dealer happens by fate. Nearly unbelievable events lead not only to the altercation with the Roach, but also to the capture of other criminals as well. In this way, the author applies the theme of fate to each plot in the novel. Also, the subplot of criminal activity gives Steve more excuses to get close to Daisy, which accelerates the progress of their relationship. The resulting sexual tension also permeates the novel, as Steve and Daisy strive to carve private time out of Daisy's very busy schedule.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The morning following their argument about Daisy continuing her traffic reporting job, Daisy meets Steve in the radio station's garage. He admits to possessive, masculine feelings towards Daisy before pulling her close for a passionate kiss. Grudgingly, he sends her on her traffic route, but informs her that he hired a security guard company to accompany her. During her afternoon break at Belle Haven park, she is to choose her body guard, who will protect her from LeRoy, the drug dealer, and his thugs.

When Daisy returns that afternoon, Steve meets her in the parking garage. He explains that he wants to discuss the responsibilities of the job with the new guard. There, Steve and the reader meet Elsie Hawkins. Elsie assures Steve that she passed a security guard course while rehabilitating from hip replacement surgery in the nursing home. Then, she shows off her handgun, describing how her choice shot is one to the "privates." Daisy met Elsie while Elsie recuperated in the nursing home where Daisy works. Steve attempts to get rid of Elsie and hire a more capable looking guard, but neither woman listens to him.

Steve then attempts to schedule a dinner date with Daisy, but she turns him down, explaining that she is too busy. Instead, Steve returns to his condo, where he finds complaints tacked to his door regarding the noise created by his new dog, Bob. On the way out of the building, Bob urinates in the elevator. Steve loads Bob into the SUV and contacts a Realtor about buying a house in a neighborhood nearer to Daisy's house. That night, he buys a new house and moves in the essentials. Steve looks forward to domestic duties he previously scorned, such as barbecuing and gardening.

Once again, the next morning Steve meets Daisy in the garage, this time with Bob in tow. After seeing Daisy's exhaustion, Steve suggests that Daisy drive. He promises to meet them at the park with a fried chicken picnic. That afternoon, Steve and Daisy enjoy a private picnic, while Elsie takes her chicken dinner to the car. Steve describes his childhood to Daisy. Living with his oil tycoon parents involved a number of hired servants that made life seem easy. However, Steve fondly remembers a summer on the reservation with his grandfather, Crow, who lived much simpler, relying on natural light and hard work. After Daisy makes her afternoon traffic report, she relaxes in the grass and falls asleep.

Steve instructs Elsie to let Daisy sleep as long as possible before he leaves for a meeting in the office. On his way back, he hears Elsie attempt the traffic report and smiles, reminding himself that Frank will return soon enough and, in the meantime, people seem to enjoy the lighter version of the traffic reports.



Chapter 4 Analysis

The subplot of the drug dealer allows the author to bring in Elsie Hawkins, an elderly woman whose job as a body guard stands in contradiction to her age and healthy status (she trained for the job while recuperating from hip replacement surgery). Given the details Elsie gives of her past life, this is the same Elsie Hawkins used in other novels by this author, such as *Back to the Bedroom*. She also bears striking resemblance to Stephanie Plum's Grandma Mazur from the Plum mysteries. Both have an affinity for handguns and classic cars.

The author uses some situational irony in Steve's purchase of the house. When faced with marriage, usually the female of the relationship becomes more domestic. However, Steve learns to enjoy household chores even before Daisy agrees to marry him. Just the possibility of marriage to Daisy inspires him to cook and care for his lawn like never before. He also continues his protection of Daisy, sometimes without her knowing, such as when he instructs Elsie to let Daisy sleep as long as possible.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

After work, Steve and Bob drive to their new house, but get hung up in traffic along the way. Steve curses the traffic, remembering why he previously chose a condo close to the station. He wonders if Daisy sits in the same traffic jam before he nears the front of the bottleneck and sees that Daisy's wreck of a car caused the backup.

Later that night, Daisy arrives at Steve's to help him barbecue, as promised. She admires his house, though inwardly she thinks it is too large for a bachelor and a dog. As they take preparations for dinner outside, Steve tells Daisy that security caught a man attempting to deface her news car. When Steve expresses concern for her safety, Daisy points out that he already hired Elsie. This fails to give Steve more confidence about the situation. When Steve's burgers catch fire on the grill, the conversation shifts back to the food. Even Bob refuses to eat the burgers. Daisy and Steve dine instead on peanut butter sandwiches and ice cream in front of the fireplace.

Steve begins to make suggestions about Daisy spending the night, but she refuses, citing her many responsibilities. A few kisses and caresses from Steve, however, breaks through her resolve. They enjoy an episode of passionate sex in front of the fireplace. Soon after, Daisy begins to feel embarrassed by her reaction and overwhelmed by her emotions. Steve makes comments about marriage, which Daisy takes as a joke. Inwardly, Steve admits that he was serious. Daisy leaves Steve's house in quite a rush.

Steve wakes at five o'clock the next morning, and he and Bob jog to Daisy's townhouse. Steve pretends that he routinely jogs through the area at that hour, but Bob beelines for Daisy's bed. After Daisy resists Steve's sexual advances, he offers to help her with her paper route. After an exhausting time delivering papers in Daisy's car, they return in time for Daisy to change into her crossing guard uniform. Steve goes grocery shopping during this time and returns just as Daisy does. He tells Bob that Daisy deserves an easier life. Daisy grabs a doughnut, telling him that she will eat it while she showers and readies for her traffic reporting job. After she disappears, Kevin confirms that she always acts like this. He explains to Steve that Daisy cannot say no to a cause. Steve inwardly laments that Daisy says no to his physical advances.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The author uses irony in a rather humorous way when Steve sees that the traffic jam he curses was caused by Daisy's car. Daisy's old car represents her old life, before she began a relationship with Steve. She makes do with what little she has, whereas Steve thinks nothing of spending large sums of money on cars, houses and food. In another attempt to protect her, Steve eventually arranges to steal Daisy's car and hides it in his garage. Even when Daisy admits to feeling very victimized, Steve keeps the secret. He



only confesses when Daisy agrees to marry him, in the end of the novel. Not to be outdone, Daisy admits that she broke into the garage some weeks ago and found the car.

To both Daisy and Steve, sex represents a commitment. They both seem shocked that their relationship escalated to this point so quickly. However, having gotten that close to Daisy, Steve now refuses to live without her. He longs to take care of her, to lessen her burdens. However, he treads carefully concerning her independence. He never tries to lure her into marriage with his money. Likewise, Daisy seems blind to Steve's wealth, as far as their romance is concerned. The author keeps the plot simple in that respect.

Kevin's role in the novel serves as a buffer. Often, Daisy resists Steve's advances based on Kevin's presence alone. Also, much of the burden on Daisy financially stems from Kevin's outrageous eating habits, which rival those of Bob the dog. Kevin's presence also effects Daisy's reaction to the criminal activity in her life. Though threats on her person upset her, she becomes much more shaken when they threaten to harm Elsie and especially Kevin.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Steve leaves the office in the beginning of Chapter Six to discover Daisy and Elsie talking with two policemen. Incredulously, she tells Steve that someone stole her car. Elsie seconds the surprise, recalling the poor condition of the car. Though Steve treats Daisy sympathetically, inwardly he rejoices that she no longer drives such a wreck. He offers the use of the black sports car, which he no longer drives as Bob does not fit inside. The police instruct her to come to the precinct at a later date to pick up the final report for her insurance. Elsie leaves for a bingo date. Together, Steve and Daisy leave, as well.

Steve notices that, on the ride home, Daisy seems emotional. She says little. Eventually, she admits that the theft makes her feel like a victim in a way she never experienced before. Steve encourages her, telling her that perhaps someone accidentally towed the car away. Daisy brightens at the thought. They arrive at Steve's house, where the sports car sits in the driveway. When Daisy asks why he does not park a car in his garage, Steve replies that it is locked, and he has not found the key. He also assures her that the garage windows were painted black when he moved in. Both Daisy and Steve climb into the sports car for the quick ride to Daisy's townhouse, where Steve left Bob with Kevin. After some initial misgivings, Daisy puts the car in gear and peels out of the driveway. With excitement, she claims she could get used to the powerful car.

Immediately after arriving at Daisy's, Kevin informs them that they have no food. Daisy and Steve take the sports car to the grocery store. When they emerge from the store, Daisy finds a pair of men's underwear on the antennae. Steve points out that the car attracts underwear. They return home and make a simple supper of grilled cheese sandwiches and canned soup.

In the midst of a discussion about the proper grilled cheese, Daisy receives a threatening phone call. In light of the call, Steve insists that they all attend Daisy's lecture together, for safety's sake. Steve also suggests around-the-clock protection. Daisy promises to call Elsie for the extra hours.

When they return home later that evening, Elsie already waits in the driveway in her classic Cadillac. Kevin and Elsie enjoy an immediate affinity. After yet another mysterious call, Elsie pats her pocketbook, which contains her gun, and promises to guard the house. The added protection does little to satisfy Steve's worry, however. He returns home only long enough to pack what he needs to spend the night in surveillance outside of Daisy's townhouse. In his SUV, from the road, he watches for suspicious activity until he drifts to sleep.

In the middle of the night, Steve awakens to gun shots from inside Daisy's home. He rushes in to find Elsie waving her high powered handgun and shooting at a retreating



intruder. Steve begins to call the police but, once he realizes that Elsie probably does not have a license for her gun, he changes his mind. Steve insists that they all move to his house, for safety's sake. Daisy feels more violated and afraid than when her car was stolen. She agrees to the new arrangement, not only for her own safety, but for that of her brother.

Daisy sits in Steve's kitchen, enjoying coffee, when he enters the next morning. Thoughts about teasing him for his tardiness flee when Daisy sees him and feels instant attraction. Outwardly, though, she only questions his presence outside her house the night before. He confesses that he worries about her. Daisy admits to him that Kevin and Elsie left together, leaving them alone in the house.

Steve's plans for the day include a charity dinner, hosted by his Aunt Zena. He also plans to take Daisy as his date. Daisy's presence, Steve hopes, will discourage Aunt Zena's habitual matchmaking. He even pushes it a step further, threatening to tell Aunt Zena that they are engaged. Daisy responds in strong protest. To prove Daisy wrong in her claims of friendship, however, Steve kisses her. The kiss quickly develops into a passionate sexual episode on the kitchen table. They just come to their senses as Kevin and Elsie come through the front door. Quickly, they compose themselves. Steve blames the mess of breakfast dishes and food on Bob.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Since Daisy's old car represents her life without Steve, once it disappears, she becomes more involved with Steve. Steve sees getting rid of her car as a way to protect her from potential danger. Since she fails to allow him to protect her on the job, he takes matters into his own hands concerning her car. Even though she confesses to feeling victimized by the theft, Steve keeps the truth of the car's whereabouts to himself. In fact, the author even keeps this news from the reader until the end of the novel. Both Daisy and the reader assume that the theft relates to the other attempts on her life. Like her relationship with Steve, driving the sports car makes Daisy nervous, at first. However, like her romance, she quickly comes to like the car.

Like a man truly besotted, Steve takes up residence outside of Daisy's townhouse. However, his intuition proves true, when a man breaks into Daisy's house. To Steve, this further proves Daisy's need for his protection. Even Daisy begins to see this. She consents to move into Steve's house. For Daisy's protection, however, Elsie proves capable. In a theme that the author often uses, Elsie strives to be useful, despite her age. Though she often fails to exhibit actual body guard skills, luck often aids her in protecting Daisy.

In multiple ways, Daisy and Steve's relationship deepens in this chapter. Not only does their physical relationship continue, but Steve also makes plans to introduce Daisy to his family. Aunt Zena symbolizes all of Steve's family. Such a move shows his intention of becoming more seriously involved with Daisy, even to the point of marriage. The

charity dinner also alludes to a coming-out party for Daisy, into the life of wealth to which Steve is accustomed. Daisy begins to see how those of money live.

The sexual encounter between Steve and Daisy in the kitchen shows the author's use of humor, even in serious subjects. Often, an incident such as this receives casual treatment, for the enjoyment of the reader, but the characters themselves see the situation seriously. Such antics allow for comic relief



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

As they drive to the charity function, Steve admires Daisy's appropriately classy outfit. He also describes the neighborhood as showy, including large homes and set back, long driveways. He explains that Aunt Zena lives in the city, but the house belongs to one of her clients.

At the party, Steve introduces Daisy to Aunt Zena, who quickly recognizes Daisy as the dog lady from the radio show. Several people at the party recognize Daisy as well, and she gains celebrity status quickly. They even comment on her recent history of nabbing criminals, which Daisy brushes off. Though she sees the notoriety as a part of her job, Steve resents it. He realizes that, as her boss, he should enjoy it. However, as her boyfriend, he wants her to himself. He also wants her to keep a low profile, given the obvious criminals out to get her. After some discussion, Steve moves her away from the crowd to a more private patio area.

Daisy asks Steve about other celebrities at the party. She spots Abdul Rhaman, a well known international businessman who is in town for important trade meetings. Excitedly, Daisy asks for permission to interview him for the station. After a short discussion, Steve relents, and Daisy makes her way back to the car for her voice recorder. On the way back into the house, she spots a well-dressed man who nods at her in acknowledgment. Daisy thinks to herself that the people at the party act friendlier than she anticipated.

Just as Daisy enters the patio, the host's dog runs in front of her. She falls, knocking down the friendly man she had seen earlier. A gun skids across the patio stones. Abdul's security guards immediately apprehend the man, and Abdul himself disappears. Steve explains the situation to a frazzled Daisy even as he escorts her away from the party. She asserts that the ordeal was an accident, though Steve seems to think that she attracts these kinds of events.

In the car, Daisy expresses disappointment at the missed interview. Steve wonders at her priorities and goal-driven life. He asks her if she ever does anything fun. She describes many everyday events as fun, such as seeing a sunrise while on her paper route. This is not the kind of fun Steve had in mind. He promises to plan some "big fun" for them to enjoy. Daisy worries that he intends to do something sexual. She also silently wonders about the intimate teasing that developed between them so suddenly. Moreover, with the questioning of fun in her life, Daisy suddenly feels empty, despite her very busy schedule.

As they pull into Steve's driveway, Daisy encourages him to hire a locksmith to open the garage, but Steve claims he is in no hurry to do so. In Steve's family room, Elsie and Kevin watch the news coverage of Daisy's latest apprehension. At the mention of Daisy's current living arrangements, Steve becomes frustrated that Daisy's safe house



has been compromised. He suspects that Aunt Zena shared this information with the press. Just as Daisy moves to go and study, a car revs loudly down the road. Elsie observes its sounds are very close, just as glass crashes in front of the house. Explosions shake the house.

Though Steve orders everyone to exit the house, they follow him into the living room. There, they find fire racing through the house. Steve and Daisy fight the fire with fire extinguishers while Elsie chips in with the garden hose. Moments later, the fire department arrives.

After the firemen clear the house, Steve learns that the method of explosion was a fire bomb. In light of the growing severity of the threats, Daisy admits their seriousness. They worry her more as they threaten not only her own safety but that of Kevin and Elsie. The lieutenant that takes her statement suggests an out of town vacation, but Daisy refuses, citing her various responsibilities at home. She also refuses to be frightened from her home by the criminals that threaten her. Just before Lieutenant Walker leaves, Elsie assures him that she has the situation under control, which fails to reassure Lieutenant Walker.

The next morning, Steve forces himself awake early, more determined than ever to give Daisy a fun day. He begins the day with a hot breakfast, for which they are joined by the police assigned to be Daisy's around-the-clock protection, and who also went with Daisy for her morning run. After breakfast, the whole group prepares to go to a nearby amusement park for the day. As they drive away, a cleaning service arrives to repair the smoke damage to Steve's house. Elsie admonishes Steve to hurry to her park, as she hopes to enjoy a full day of rides.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The theme of fate continues in Daisy's life, when she accidentally foils the assassination attempt at the charity dinner. The author mostly uses this theme to bring positive elements into the plot. For instance, she foils criminals on two occasions. Also, Elsie spots her Cadillac on two occasions. Fate and irony collide in instances such as the traffic jam, caused by Daisy's car, that stops Steve on his way home from the station.

Despite all of his efforts to the contrary, the reader notices that Steve fails to protect Daisy. His house remains safe only for one day, before the truth about her whereabouts becomes publicized on the news. The mystery now escalates beyond a nuisance and becomes frightening. Each time the criminals attack Daisy, the severity of the attempt rises. Though the first man who broke into her townhouse never hurt anyone before Elsie shot at him, this time they set fire to Steve's house. The next attempt, on the highway, comes even closer to harming one of Daisy's loved ones. Daisy's feelings of fear rise at each attempt, mostly because she fears for the safety of those around her.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Though Steve and Daisy stand in line for a while, they ultimately decide to start with a more mild ride, for which Officer Schmidt looks relieved. Elsie and Kevin decide to brave the coasters, while Schmidt, Steve and Daisy leave to stroll through the park. They sit to enjoy snacks after a while, and Steve asks how Daisy likes the fun day. She claims to enjoy it, though her senses are a little overwhelmed. She enjoys the strolling and people watching more than the coasters and wants to stay to see the park at night.

As they continue to watch people pass in hordes through the park, Daisy becomes pensive. She wonders if other people have more direction in their lives than her. She admits to some dissatisfaction with her life, along with some flagging passion in her doctoral studies. In frustration, she worries that perhaps a life working in the amusement park would be more fulfilling.

Daisy's mood changes though, and she apologizes for the heavy conversation. Steve, however, feels honored that she opened up so candidly to him. After a few supportive comments, he turns the conversation to playful flirting. He reminds her of what happened on his kitchen table. Later when they meet back up with Elsie and Kevin, the two look worse for wear, from coasters and water rides. Elsie promises that she enjoys the park, though she rebuked a burly man who tried to cut in line at the bumper cars.

After dark, they leave the park, heading back to Steve's home. The police officers follow closely behind. When Kevin and Elsie fall asleep, Daisy worries about the intimacy between her and Steve in the darkened car. They remember fonder moments from the day, like their final roller coaster ride, after which Schmidt threw up on his shoe. Daisy remarks that such a full day makes the firebomb seem like it happened long ago. She slips into quiet reflection for a while, until their car jolts from a sideswipe. She looks to see a large, old Cadillac preparing to hit them again. The impact awakens Elsie and Kevin. In response, Elsie pulls out her gun and fires at the offending car, as they speed down the interstate outside of Washington DC.

The car evades them, and they return home. There, Schmidt's replacement officer tells them the car that assaulted them on the highway was indeed a stolen car, registered to Elsie Hawkins. Elsie reacts fairly calmly, remarking that the car looked familiar. Kevin runs into the house, so he can call his friends and describe his unbelievable day. Steve and Daisy retire to Steve's room for a strong drink. Steve realizes that the drink produces a strong effect on Daisy. Steve silently vows to avoid sexual relations tonight. He desires to treat Daisy to a more slow and intimate time for their next romantic interlude.

Instead, he concentrates on the attacks. He theorizes that the Roach, the drug dealer who Daisy ran down, awaits trial. Given that, it would not be beneficial to him to draw



more attention from the police. He asks Daisy if anyone else would mean her harm, but she fails to think of a single suspect. When the conversation turns back to that of their relationship, Steve offers that marriage to him would solve many of Daisy's problems. Daisy reacts in a panic. She feels overwhelmed by thoughts of marriage. When the conversation turns heated, Elsie bursts in to make sure everyone is safe. Elsie encourages the marriage idea. She describes her past loves. Shortly after, Daisy excuses herself, citing that she must be up early in the morning for her crossing guard job.

Chapter 8 Analysis

In another bit of irony, during the trip to the amusement park, which Steve plans as a bit of careless fun, Daisy becomes her most pensive. Without all the pressures of her life, she feels free to unburden herself to Steve. Appropriately, Steve recognizes the seriousness of the conversation and carefully considers her feelings before responding.

In keeping with the lighthearted manner of the novel, much of the rationale is left unexplained. For instance, the author fails to elaborate on how the criminals track Daisy, in Steve's car, all day at an amusement park. Furthermore, the police presence surrounding Daisy fails to prevent any of the activity. In fact, given the criminals motives of making the Roach look bad, the police presence increases their actions. Though no one gives much credit to Elsie's abilities, they prove to be more effective than those of the trained professionals.

The reader enjoys the humorous irony when the criminals use Elsie's car to run Steve's SUV off the road. Classic cars such as Elsie's Cadillac often appear in the author's novels, much like Elsie herself, as old but indestructible. Even though many people write them off as useless, they prove more able than the newer and fancier cars of today. For the mystery plot, Elsie appears as comic relief. Just when the plot turns serious between Daisy and Steve, Elsie appears with her zany attitude to cast a fresh and funny view on the situation of marriage. In this way, the author never allows the mood to become too serious throughout the novel.

The amusement park day stands as the climax of the plot. The climax ends with the incident on the freeway. The falling action starts when Steve begins discussing marriage. This signals the end that, given the genre, the reader knows is coming. Given that, however, Daisy stills experiences many hurdles before she reaches happily ever after.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

When Daisy and Elsie return from her crossing guard job, Steve has breakfast waiting. Daisy announces that she plans to move back into her townhouse. Following this announcement, Elsie questions their plans for marriage. Daisy claims to have good reasons for not marrying Steve. Elsie questions her love for him, and Daisy brushes it off, citing that she wants marriage to be permanent and fears her relationship with Steve is not that kind of relationship. Steve promises to use the same nagging tactics to win Daisy that she used to land her job at the radio station. After a passionate kiss, Elsie and Daisy leave in Steve's black sports car for her job at the radio station. Daisy and Elsie return home that evening, and Steve informs them that no one has found Elsie's car. Steve offers to accompany Daisy the next day while Elsie fills out the appropriate forms at the police station. Next, Kevin reports that he and Bob had a great time, baking and eating a cake. Finally, Steve shows off his homemade spaghetti sauce.

Steve makes several innuendos involving his spaghetti sauce. Finally, Daisy realizes he is actually talking about sauce and not sex. Steve assures her that he will not pressure her into marriage, but plans to make her crazy with wanting him. Momentarily, he turns serious, promising not to let a soul mate slip through his grasp.

When they call everyone to the table, Bob claims one space and refuses to budge. Kevin sets another place, and they pass around the spaghetti. Steve comments that Daisy's traffic reports sounded professional that day. She comments that they are getting easier, and Schmidt followed her very closely. A commotion interrupts dinner when Steve's parents arrive. He introduces them to everyone, including Bob, who continues eating spaghetti at the table. When Steve's mother, Maria, questions the police presence in front of the house, they explain the recent firebombing. She seems to take the news in stride and comments positively on the house. She comments ruefully that they should have gotten Steve a dog when he was younger. Steve enjoys the visit from his parents. He hopes to, after Daisy finishes her dissertation, take her west to meet more of his family. When asked about the reason for the visit, Maria explains that Aunt Zena told them about Daisy's presence at Steve's house. Maria welcomes Daisy to the family. When Maria produces an heirloom ring for Daisy, who she assumes is Steve's fiancée, Steve fails to set the record straight. Daisy decides to play along. Inside, though, she feels incredible anxiety.

Later, alone in the kitchen, Steve asks Daisy how the sudden engagement makes her feel. He asks if that signifies a change of heart towards getting married. She refuses to give a definite answer, but also refuses to marry while Steve's parents are in town. Steve then turns to risqué comments about sex on the table, promising to continue this habit throughout the house. Just as Daisy begins to blush, Elsie appears, asking for the dessert brownies. As Daisy leaves the kitchen, she admonishes Steve to never buy a waffle iron.



Chapter 9 Analysis

In an almost formulaic manner, the reader perceives that the relationship between Steve and Daisy may not work out. Yet, given the tendency of romance novels to have positive outcomes, the reader assumes this will also turn around. The arrival of Steve's parents proves to be just the catalyst that Daisy requires to change her mind about marriage. Although, when she accepts the ring from Mrs. Crow, she still harbors serious misgivings about marriage, the ring produces serious thoughts about a future with Steve.

The author describes the spaghetti dinner in vivid details. Bob's presence at the table, with the rich and classy Crow family, appears ridiculous and funny. Furthermore, Mrs. Crow's calm reaction tells the reader much about her character's down-to-earth outlook on life, despite her wealthy lifestyle. After this discovery, Daisy appears more comfortable with the prospect of joining Steve's family.

In keeping with the genre, sexual innuendos abound throughout the plot, especially when Steve and Daisy converse alone. They joke about everything from spaghetti sauce to kitchen utensils and more. Steve uses the conversations to lighten the mood when he feels it may get too serious. Daisy appears to be caught up in the jokes, because of the high amount of sexual tension between herself and Steve.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Daisy packs her things to move back to her townhouse. When Steve questions her decision, she points to the large diamond on her hand as proof that she fails to think straight in Steve's presence. As Kevin, Daisy and Elsie prepare to leave, Steve invites them over the next morning for breakfast. Kevin and Elsie jump at the invitation, which causes Daisy to rebuke Steve's sneakiness. He promises to use more of it in the future.

Over the course of the week, Daisy realizes that they all spend nearly as much time with Steve as if they still lived with him. He plans parties, games and picnics every day. He continues to use Kevin and Elsie to lure them all back for visits. When she is honest with herself, Daisy admits that she enjoys all the distractions. However, she feels guilty about neglecting her dissertation. As she mentioned to Steve at the amusement park, she feels discontent and uncertainty about her work with the elderly. The death of three patients furthers her depression. However, her police protection is due to end on Saturday, after a quiet week. Furthermore, her parents return the same day, and Kevin will move back in with them. She looks forward to more productive days once she gets her house to herself. When Steve questions her dark mood, however, she blames the weather, and, though Steve does not believe the excuse, he drops the conversation.

For their Friday evening meal, Steve prepares to grill hamburgers. Like every other burger he has attempted, they quickly burn up and fall into the charcoal. Frustrated, he flings his spatula into the neighbor's yard. After some nonsupporting comments by Daisy and Elsie about his grilling ability, Steve suggests they all go out for fast food. Everyone, including Bob, piles into the recently repaired SUV. Two officers, assigned to protect Daisy, follow in their squad car. Moments later, they all get in line at McDonald's.

Just after Elsie finishes ordering her meal and extolling on the fitness virtues of sucking a milkshake through a straw, she spots her Cadillac going through the drive-thru. She grabs Steve's keys and attempts to follow. Quickly, Kevin, Daisy and Steve jump into the SUV before she pulls out of the parking lot. The police follow the SUV, and Steve admonishes Elsie to let the officers take over the chase. She refuses, citing that the police failed to catch the Cadillac the last time. As Elsie pulled up on the Cadillac, a gun appeared and fired at the SUV, skimming a shot off the hood. Elsie, and three police cars follow the Cadillac down a subdivision cul-de-sac. When the Cadillac spins around, Elsie rams it from the side. One police car hits the front of the Cadillac, and the last two police cars slide into the pileup.

Once everyone determines they escaped without injury, Daisy admits she felt more fear when the man in the Cadillac pointed the gun at the SUV than during any of the other close calls she suffered this week. Steve embraces her and offers his support. The police apprehend the men in the Cadillac. Everyone else surveys the damage. Once again, the SUV took serious hits and appears undrivable. All three police cars suffered



total damage. The Cadillac, however, remains without a dent. Elsie proudly proclaims that they do not make cars like that anymore.

The next day, Steve, Daisy and Bob watch a sunset from Daisy's front stoop. After the apprehension, they learned that Daisy's harassment was a result of one of the Roach's rival drug dealers, who hoped to pin the crimes on the Roach before his upcoming trial. Also, Kevin returned to his parents. Daisy reflects on her dissertation work and decides that, if she concentrates, she could finish in two months. Steve senses that she is about to deliver bad news. She insists on the time apart, but consents to keep the engagement ring. She also tells Steve that she loves him. She also consents to allowing Steve to spend one night, before she declares her body off limits for two months.

The plot next picks up after the two month hiatus. Daisy drives Steve's sports car to his house and rushes inside, where she immediately gets sick. She blames the nausea on nerves about her pending dissertation. Steve asks why she still avoids him, though she turned in her dissertation. She bemoans her emotional state. Furthermore, she claims to have no energy for working on her new pet food cookbook. Out of concern for her health, Steve asks her to take the day off, but she refuses as she has only one week until the old traffic reporter returns. Steve invites her over for another attempt at a barbecue, which she consents to, after she goes to an afternoon doctor's appointment. She hopes some of her ill feelings are due to a vitamin deficiency.

Very late that night, Steve worries about Daisy's tardiness for their dinner date. He calls police and local hospitals, but learns nothing. He longs to begin a life with her, in which they share good times and bad. He also wants to tell her the news about Bob, who, it turns out, is female and expecting puppies. At nine o'clock, Daisy appears, having been crying. She announces to Steve that she is expecting his baby. Steve passes out on the spot. When he comes to, he asks why the news of the baby causes Daisy to cry. She explains that it is due in part to her hormones and in part to her joy over the news. Steve proposes marriage, which Daisy accepts. She also shares her decision to continue working at the nursing home, for the time being. She sees birth and old age as a natural part of the process of life. They toast their future with sparkling cider. Steve admits that he arranged for the theft of Daisy's old car. Daisy admits that, a month ago, she broke into his locked garage and discovered her old car hidden there.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The author uses a false ending to add suspense to the novel. It seems that the plot resolves when Daisy moves back to her townhouse, Kevin returns to her parents, and her life quiets down. However, because the novel has not ended, the reader anticipates that something more will happen. Then, the author inserts the twist of Daisy's pregnancy and Steve's confession about Daisy's car. Finally, the plot resolves with the long-awaited happily ever after.

Before the romantic plot can resolve, however, the author must resolve the mystery of the attempts to harm Daisy. Finally, Elsie captures the perpetrators when they show up



at a fast food restaurant, ironically as Elsie, Steve and Daisy order their dinner. The irony, or fate, of the meeting deepens when the reader realizes that, had Steve not burned the hamburgers, yet again, they would not even be at the McDonald's at the same time. The mystery finally unravels, and the reader remains to see if the relationship between Steve and Daisy will survive, without the unusual circumstances that brought them together.



Characters

Daisy Adams

The protagonist of the novel, Daisy Adams, is a busy doctoral student. To support herself as she finishes her dissertation, she works at delivering papers, and writing cookbook for dog treats. After moderate success with the cookbook, she begs for a slot on a Washington DC area radio station. While preparing for her five-minute slot one day, she hears of a temporary opening as a traffic reporter and leaps at the chance to increase her income. In her free time, she volunteers as a crossing guard and counsels nursing home residents, which relates to her major in geriatric psychology.

Daisy receives training in traffic reporting from the station owner and manager. Immediately, she notices an attraction to him, which he reciprocates. He appears at her home the first night, under the guise of further training, and takes her out to eat. Their relationship quickly deepens. Daisy moves into Steve's house for a short period of time, when some men threaten her safety at home. Steve's mother assumes the two are engaged and Daisy accepts a family heirloom ring from Mrs. Crow. Afraid that their relationship is moving too fast, Daisy moves back into her townhouse after this incident.

The move into Steve's house was hastened by an attack on her at her own home, after she inadvertently aided in the capture of a know drug dealer. Steve insists on round the clock protection after the first attack, and Daisy hires an elderly friend, Elsie, who completed a security guard by mail program while staying in the nursing home. Elsie proves more capable, or perhaps lucky, than anyone guessed. She manages to ultimately catch the criminals, who turn out to be rival drug dealers out to pin more crime on the Roach, who Daisy helped to catch. In the end, Daisy completes her dissertation and learns she carries Steve's baby, all in the same week. She admits her love for him and they agree to marry.

Steve Crow

Daisy's love interest, Steve Crow, is a single man of Native American decent. He enjoys family wealth due to the discovery, generations ago, of oil on the family's reservation. He points out to Daisy, however, that he worked for his position at the radio station and demonstrates his capabilities when he trains Daisy for the traffic-reporting job. He spends money freely, however, like when he buys a new house and car because the dog he adopts to woo Daisy does not fit in his sports car and is not allowed in his condo.

Like Daisy, Steve immediately feels the attraction between the two of them. He acts on it quickly. After spending the first day with Daisy, in training, he appears at her house that night. Once he buys the home closer to Daisy's townhouse, he looks for any excuse to be near her. Moreover, he feels protective towards her and, when news breaks of her



part in the apprehension of the Roach, a drug dealer, Steve insists on protecting her, even taking to sleeping in his car outside of her house.

Steve's role in Daisy's life is to allow her to slow down and enjoy things, besides work. His wealth brings with it the promise that Daisy will not have to work as hard as she does presently. His protection brings her security and peace of mind, that she will not have to worry alone anymore. Steve mentions marriage first in the relationship and pursues the idea until Daisy relents.

Charlene

Steve's secretary, Charlene, enjoys an open relationship with her boss. They joke easily about his habits and appearance. This relationship shows that Steve Crow is a fair and competent boss.

Frank Menken

Frank Menken works for Steve's radio station, WZZZ, as the regular traffic reporter. However, in the introduction to the novel, Frank hits a garbage truck and breaks his leg. Daisy fills in at traffic reporting until Frank recovers. While Steve admits that Frank's reporting is more professional and informative, he also comes to enjoy Daisy's fresh take on the job, which, though less helpful, is more light hearted and feeling.

Kevin Adams

Daisy's teenager brother, Kevin, lives with her for much of the novel, while their parents are out of town. In the typical teenage boy fashion, Kevin eats more than anyone else in the novel, except perhaps Bob the dog. He interprets many of the wild and dangerous events in Daisy's life as cool. He rushes to tell his friends each time something happens, such as the chase of the highway following their day at the amusement park.

Kevin's presence keeps the relationship between Steve and Daisy from becoming too serious. Daisy carefully prevents anything serious or sexual from happening while Kevin may be within ear shot. Also, Kevin's presence for some of the more dangerous occurrences makes Daisy see the seriousness of the situation more easily.

Barry LeRoy, the Roach

On her second day of traffic reporting, a station manager sends Daisy to cover the apprehension of a drug dealer, presently at a standoff with the police. While trying to find a place to park her traffic car, Daisy accidentally runs into the Roach, literally. She knocks him down long enough for the police to make the apprehension



Elsie Hawkins

Elsie Hawkins and her Cadillac make another appearance in a novel by this author. Once again, she is a feisty, older woman who refuses to let society tell her to slow down. This time, she appears as Daisy's body guard. Elsie took a security course by mail, while recuperating in the nursing home following hip replacement surgery. It was there that Elsie met Daisy Adams. When questioned about her past love life, Elsie tells of Gus, the man who left her the Cadillac when he passed away. Elsie apprehended a drug dealer in the Cadillac in the novel *Back to the Bedroom*, by the same author.

Elsie's character carries a great deal of irony. Though most of the other characters write her off as old and slightly crazy, and therefore less capable, she protects Daisy better than any of the police. Much of her success results from plain luck, such as spotting the Cadillac in the drive-thru, but Elsie boldly takes advantage of such situations. Like her classic car, she emerges from harrowing experiences unscathed as they do not make women like Elsie Hawkins anymore.

Aunt Zena

When Steve first jokes about his Aunt Zena's matchmaking attempts, Daisy believes he is making her up. However, when Steve takes her to the charity dinner, Daisy meets the real Aunt Zena, an active older woman who enjoys hosting such functions. In fact, she greets Steve's girlfriend excitedly. However, it is Aunt Zena who shares the truth of Daisy's whereabouts on the news following the charity dinner. Therefore, Daisy's safety hiding at Steve's is compromised. That same night, the house suffers from a firebomb attempt. Aunt Zena also tells Mrs. Crow about Steve's new woman. Mrs. Crow arrives unannounced, assuming that Daisy and Steve are engaged. She produces an heirloom diamond ring, which Daisy accepts with much trepidation.

Abdul Rhaman

While at the charity dinner with Steve, Daisy spots the international businessman, Abdul Rhaman. She rushes to get her voice recorder, so she can interview him and send the recording to the station. As she returns from the car, however, she trips over a dog and pushes over another man. The man loses possession of a gun, which he planned to use to shoot Mr. Rhaman. Bodyguards quickly evacuate Rhaman and apprehend the man. Thus, Daisy accidentally foils another criminal in the act.

Officer Schmidt

After the firebombing of Steve's house, the police department assigns around-the-clock protection of their own to Daisy. The first, Officer Schmidt, begins his day of guarding by accompanying Daisy on her morning jog. After an exhausting run, he then follows the family to the amusement park for the day. He expresses relief when Steve and Daisy



opt to skip a roller coaster first thing in the morning. When they ride one just before returning home, Officer Schmidt throws up. Moreover, on the way home, he fails to catch the car that attempts to run Steve off the highway.

Maria Crow

Steve's mother, Maria, arrives at his house after learning about his relationship with Daisy from Aunt Zena. Mrs. Crow assumes the couple has already become engaged. She produces a large diamond ring for Daisy to wear. Mrs. Crow not only enjoys spending her husband's oil money, but also comes from a long line of family money. She laments that she did not give Steve a typical childhood, with mundane things such as a dog.



Objects/Places

Washington DC

All of the novel takes place in and around Washington DC. The bustle of the nation's capital relies on the traffic reports from Steve's radio station, WZZZ. Furthermore, the successful people of the city frequent charity dinners, such as the one put on by Aunt Zena that Steve takes Daisy to. Though politics play no role in the plot, the unusual life of the city and the powerful people in it make appearances. Yet, criminals that live in any large city, such as drug dealers, appear in the nation's capital as well.

Dog Treats

Daisy Adams writes a book about dog treats to support herself through college. After the book enjoys moderate success, she begs Steve Crow for a spot on his radio station. He grants her a five-minute slot, during which she shares advice for maintaining a healthy diet for one's pets. The radio show generates some celebrity for Daisy, which Steve comes to resent as her boyfriend. However, he appeals to her interest in dogs by adopting Bob so she can cook for him and, therefore, spend more time with Steve.

Traffic Car

When Frank wrecks the main traffic car, Daisy begins her temporary career as traffic reporter in the station's backup traffic car. Steve accompanies her for two hours the first day and attempts to show her how to broadcast from the car. Feeling that she fails to grasp the technical nature of the job, Steve also shows up at her house that night, under the guise of showing her more about the job and the various pieces of equipment that she finds in the traffic car. In truth, he already feels attracted to her and hopes to gain her interest in return.

Radio

In spite of its unfortunate call letters, Steve Crow's radio station, WZZZ, enjoys success in the Washington DC area. They are especially known for their traffic coverage, which continues through the business day. Even though he admits he gained entrance into the radio field because of family wealth, Steve worked his way up at WZZZ to become the head of the station. Daisy Adams turns to the radio station as just one more source of income to support herself through college. However, after just a few days of traffic reporting, she finds she enjoys covering the traffic and even the occasional news story.



Bob

On their first date, Steve lies about owning a dog in an attempt to spend time with Daisy. The next day, he adopts Bob from the pound, because Daisy intends to cook dinner for Steve's dog as research for her next pet food cookbook. Bob turns out to have a very hearty appetite. He especially enjoys people food, and his appetite rivals only that of Kevin, Daisy's teenage brother. In a bit of humorous irony, Steve learns in the last chapter that Bob is pregnant. Given his shaggy coat, no one realized that Bob is female.

Daisy's car

For the first few chapters of the novel, Daisy drives a wreck of a car. It frequently breaks down, causing traffic jams at inopportune time. During one such backup, Steve becomes involved in the traffic snarl that ensues. When he sees that Daisy's broken down car caused the problem, he vows to do something about it. While Daisy does her traffic reporting from the news car, Steve has her car stolen and hides it in his garage. Even when Daisy admits to feelings of victimization, Steve keeps his secret. Only after Daisy agrees to marry him, in the last chapter, does he admit the truth. Then, Daisy confesses that, some weeks ago, she stole the car back and sold it for money for school.

Steve's house

In a funny chain of events, Steve buys a new house on the spur of the moment. First, he adopts Bob, to have an excuse to see Daisy. Then he learns that his condo does not allow pets. He sees this as an opportunity to acquire a place closer to Daisy in a family friendly neighborhood. After moving into his suburban house, Steve begins to enjoy domestic duties he previously scorned such as grilling and gardening. For a time, he convinces Daisy to move into his house, because they feel her townhouse is not safe. However, after Aunt Zena gives up Daisy's new location, Steve's house suffers from a firebombing. Though he is quick to have the damage repaired, Daisy moves back to her townhouse. Nonetheless, Steve invites her over repeatedly for food and fun. He promises to pursue Daisy until she consents to marry him.

Elsie's Cadillac

Like Elsie herself, the Cadillac, though old, proves very useful. When the criminals steal it and attempt to run Steve's SUV off the highway, they do significant damage to the large SUV, but the Cadillac drives away unscathed. During this altercation, Elsie notices that it looks like her car, but does not realize that it is until they return to Steve's house. Then again, when Elsie spots the car in the drive-thru and pursues it into a subdivision. The resulting pileup totals three police cars and again damages the SUV. The Cadillac survives without a dent. The Cadillac symbolizes the value in things and people, even when they seem to be past their prime.



Amusement Park

Soon after meeting Daisy, Steve realizes that she enjoys little fun in her life. He vows to give her a day of fun. Even after the firebombing, he holds to this promise and takes her to a local amusement park. The time away allows Daisy time to reflect on what her life has become. Though she previously claimed to enjoy life, she now sees that she lost some enjoyment in her work with the elderly. She worries that the joy will not return. Her deep, reflective conversations at the amusement park and the death defying altercation afterwards on the highway signal the climax of the plot.

Mrs. Crow's Engagement Ring

In what she hopes is an unassuming manner, Mrs. Crow offers Daisy a family heirloom as an engagement ring. In truth, though, she assumed the couple to be engaged, when they were not. Daisy accepts the ring, which comes to symbolize her connection to Steve. At first it feels heavy and binding, but she comes to like it as something comforting. Even when she asks for a break from their relationship so that she might concentrate on her dissertation, she asks to keep the ring. Steve sees this as a positive sign.

Fire Bombing

Daisy's safety at Steve's house becomes compromised when Aunt Zena shares her living arrangements with the reporters at the charity dinner. That same evening, Steve's house is firebombed. This tells Daisy that she is no safer at Steve's than her own house. It also shows Steve that he cannot protect her all the time. It gives urgency to their relationship, as one never knows what the future holds.

Daisy's Dissertation

Even before the plot begins, Daisy works on her dissertation for her doctorate in geriatric psychology. In the beginning, she follows a diligent schedule of work and study. However, after becoming involved with Steve Crow, her dissertation falls by the wayside. She worries that her desire to finish weakens as she allows herself to become more easily distracted. When the mystery of the drug dealers is solved, however, she decides to see her doctoral studies through. She insists on a two month break from her relationship with Steve. During this time, she finishes the dissertation. She blames the nausea that follows as nerves, as she waits to hear the results of her paper. However, she learns that the malaise is actually caused by pregnancy.



Outdoor Grill

One of the first domestic hobbies Steve tries to master after moving into his new house is that of outdoor grilling. However, on each attempt, his hamburgers quickly turn to ash. On at least three occasions in the novel, he attempts to grill, with no success each time. After one such attempt, he takes everyone out for hamburgers at McDonald's. While waiting in line, Elsie spots her stolen Cadillac and pursues it, ending the chase in a multiple car pileup in a nearby subdivision.

Spaghetti Sauce

One food that Steve claims some success with is spaghetti sauce. On the night his mother drops in, he prepares a large batch. He promises Daisy that he will woo her with his sauce. He makes repeated sexual innuendos concerning the sauce. It takes Daisy some time before she catches on to the jokes. Steve promises her that, once she tries the sauce, she will not be able to live without it.



Themes

Fate

Fate appears as one of this author's most popular themes. The protagonist gets into and out of sticky situations through random occurrences and other various accidents. For instance, Daisy only meets Steve Crow because Frank Menken breaks his leg and cannot continue his traffic-reporting job for a short time. It is also a freak accident that causes Daisy to aid in apprehending the Roach. These two incidents set in motion the two main plots of the novel.

Likewise, fate brings about resolution to the novel. Elsie only spots her car at McDonald's because Steve burned dinner on the grill and they go out to eat as a backup plan. Much of Elsie's success, in fact, occurs through fate or luck. She finds herself in the right place at the right time. This gives Elsie a great deal of confidence in herself; she fails to notice that the success occurs through no real talent on her part. Those around her see the truth, however, and fail to express confidence in her abilities as a body guard.

Daisy needs the help of fate in her life, because she takes no time for herself. Kevin, her little brother, points out that she cannot say no to a cause. Such overcommitment leaves no room for a love life. Only when she finds herself training for the traffic-reporting job with the attractive Steve Crow does Daisy consider her personal life. The attempts on her life also deepen her relationship with Steve, as he strives to protect her from the criminals that are after her.

Pursuit of Happiness

Soon after meeting Daisy Adams, Steve realizes that joy and fun are missing in her life. He begins to feel not only protective feelings towards her, but feelings of responsibility for her happiness as well. He sees that not only her lack of money, but her lack of time causes her to miss great opportunities for fun. Daisy claims to enjoy the sunsets, but Steve realizes she only sees them as she delivers newspapers first thing in the morning.

In response to Daisy's hectic life, Steve plans a trip to an amusement park, as a day off for everyone. Daisy greatly enjoys the time out, but spends most of the day watching people. She wonders aloud to Steve if they all have more purpose in their lives than she does. At this, she turns very pensive. Steve realizes that Daisy is sharing very personal feelings with him. He listens carefully, but turns the conversation to more playful topics when he fears she is becoming too vulnerable.

In the end, Daisy strikes a balance in her life. For a time, she takes a break from her relationship with Steve. She finishes her dissertation. When she returns to Steve, she admits she wants to pursue a career in geriatric counseling, which she studied for.



However, she allows herself to be open for change. She also consents to give up some of her other time constraints, in preparation for her budding family.

True Love

As one would expect in a novel of this genre, the main characters struggle with their feelings of love from the beginning. Though they work in the same radio station for some time before the novel begins, love blossoms between them once Daisy volunteers for the traffic reporting job. Both Daisy and Steve feel an instant attraction to one another. In a stereotypical fashion, Steve feels a need to protect and care for Daisy. Though the idea is new to Daisy, she admits that the care is comforting.

However, the author uses an unusual approach in the romantic plot development for the rest of the novel, as she often does in romances. Typically, the male in a romance runs from marriage. In this novel, though, Steve admits his love for Daisy and vows to pursue it to marriage, though Daisy needs much more convincing. Steve seems to be making his point when the criminals after Daisy try to break into her house. He moves her into his own home for safety's sake. When Steve's house suffers from a firebombing, however, Daisy claims that she is no safer there than at her own house.

The romantic plot climaxes when Elsie aids in apprehending the criminals. The romance between Daisy and Steve resolves only when it becomes clear that their feelings for one another still exist after other struggles in Daisy's life settle down. It appears that the romance may not have a happy ending, when Daisy insists on a break in their relationship. However, they do return to their romance at the end of the novel, with yet another twist when Daisy announces her pregnancy.



Style

Point of View

The book is told from an omniscient third person point of view. Mostly, the plot follows the thoughts and actions of Daisy Adams, as she struggles to support herself through her doctoral studies. The reader learns of her thoughts and feelings towards Steve Crow, especially when she quickly feels herself becoming attracted to him. Occasionally, the author follows the thoughts and actions of Steve himself, though some of his feelings remain hidden. For instance, the reader knows that Steve hates Daisy's old car, but does not learn until the end that Steve is the one who stole it.

The work is a classic example of romance. The reader assumes that the couple will live happily ever after, though it looks, for a while, like they may not end up together. The author puts another spin on the usual romance story as well, in that Steve seems to fall in love first. It is Steve that pursues Daisy, trying to convince her to marry him when she is not interested in marriage.

Setting

All of the story takes place in and around Washington DC, in modern time. Steve and Daisy live in a suburb near the city. The radio station Steve owns covers traffic and news for the nation's capital, and is especially known for its around-the-clock traffic reporting. During her temporary job as traffic reporter, Daisy drives laps around the city, looking for backups to report on the air.

Occasionally, Steve and Daisy venture further out of the city, such as to an amusement park or the charity dinner. During such times, exciting and frightening events occur, such as the car that attempts to run them off the highway or the failed assassination attempt at the dinner. Unusual events seem to occur wherever Daisy Adams is.

Specifically, much of the action occurs at Steve's new house. After Steve buys a dog to lure Daisy to spend time with him, he must also buy a house, because his condominium does not allow pets. He chooses to purchase a large, suburban house nearer to Daisy's own townhouse. For a time, he convinces Daisy to move in there for her own safety. Even after she deems her own townhouse safe to return, she finds herself at Steve's time and time again, with lures of food or entertainment for herself, Kevin or Elsie.

Language and Meaning

This author uses simple, conversational language. The reader has no problems understanding the characters. No use of dialect appears in the novel. Elsie Hawkins, however, uses some terms that show her age. A few terms of a technical nature appear in relationship to Daisy's job at the radio station, but they are always explained.



Often, the author paints vivid and humorous settings for the reader, such as the spaghetti dinner when Mrs. Crow drops in just in time to see Bob the dog eating at the table like a human. Other descriptions leave much up to the imagination of the reader, such as Steve's observation about Daisy's dress for the charity dinner. He describes it in general and thinks it pretty, but leaves the reader to imagine the specifics. This serves to prevent outdated fashion or habits in the novel and makes the story more timeless.

Structure

This novel is told in ten chapters, following a short introduction. The last chapters get progressively longer throughout the novel. The plot follows a predictable contour of rising action, climax, with the chase scene on the highway, and falling action. The author includes a twist, however. The plot appears to resolve without a happy ending for Steve and Daisy. However, in end of the final chapter, they agree to get married.



Quotes

"Cute? Let me tell you...puppies are cute, panties that say Tuesday are cut, and drinks that come with little paper umbrellas are cut. You are not cute. You are wickedly handsome." p. 3

She could tick off on one hand the things that truly made her nervous: the dentist, signing her name to her income tax statement, looking in her rearview mirror and seeing a police cruiser—and Steve Crow. p. 12

She had a soft spot in her heart for dogs and old people. Steve thought that was nice. He wondered how she felt about minorities. Probably, she loved minorities. He was a shoo-in, he decided. He'd buy a dog, introduce her to his grandparents, then show her his bedroom. p. 16

Actually, they were terrible, but he wasn't completely stupid. He didn't destroy a fledgling reporter's confidence with harsh criticism, and he didn't insult a woman with cornflower eyes. p. 32

He had mixed feelings about Daisy's celebrity status. As a businessman he knew he should be loving it. As a newsman he felt a little offended. And as her future lover, he didn't live it at all. p. 39

"Elsie pulled a .45 magnum long-barrel out of her pocketbook and leveled it at Steve's zipper. "I'd shoot him into the privates. Some people aim for the heart, some people like to gut-shot a man, but I always aim the privates. Word gets around when you shoot off a man's privates." p. 77

And Steve Crow could slow her down big-time. He'd have her going around in hormone heaven, dreaming fairy tales about how poor psychologists grow up to marry handsome oil tycoons. p. 110

Steve tried to look sympathetic, but he was having a hard time keeping the grin off his face. He hated that car. p. 120

Daisy got behind the wheel and backed over the briefs. She looked at the flattened navy material and smiled. "Roadkill," she said, driving over it one more time as she left the parking lot. p. 124

And no man had ever assumed such a macho role on her behalf. She was surprised to find herself enjoying it now. p. 148

Firebomb or not, this was Daisy's fun day, and he intended to be downstairs making French toast when Daisy came back from jogging. p. 163



""I'm in the final stage of my dissertation. This time next year I'll have my doctorate...and I don't car anymore. I haven't really cared for months, maybe years, but I've been afraid to admit it. Somewhere along the line I lost touch with myself."" p. 176

The first time they'd made love it was a groping match on the family room floor, the second time he'd hauled her onto the kitchen table. He wanted to do better for her. He wanted soft light, lots of time, and he wanted to wake up next to her in the morning. p. 188

The SUV was smashed front and rear. Doors were buckled, steam hissed from the radiator, and the hood looked like an accordion. Koselle's car had caught the front of the Cadillac, and the entire right front quarter panel of the cop car had been ripped off. The two blue and whites were totaled. Miraculously, no one had been seriously hurt. The Cadillac didn't have a dent. p. 232



Topics for Discussion

How does fate play a role in Daisy's Adams's life?

Which character changes the most through the novel? Explain.

How does the setting effect the plot?

Why does the author include Elsie Hawkins?

What role does food play in the novel?

What role do cars play in the novel?

Why did Steve give Daisy the traffic reporting job?

Was Bob the dog a character or an object? Explain.

What role did Steve's wealth have in his relationship with Daisy?

How does this novel portray news persons?