

# **Santa Fe Rules Study Guide**

## **Santa Fe Rules by Stuart Woods**

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# Plot Summary

Santa Fe Rules is a novel by acclaimed writer Stuart Woods. In this novel, Wolf Willet wakes in his Santa Fe home and prepares to travel to Los Angeles, but is forced to make an emergency landing in Arizona because of mechanical problems. While waiting for repairs to his plane, Wolf reads his own obituary in the New York Times, as well as those of his second wife, Julia, and his business partner, Jack Tinney. Rather than rush home to show the police he is still alive, Wolf goes to Los Angeles to finish his movie. This leads to suspicion when the police eventually learn of his circumstances. Santa Fe Rules is a mystery that is as amusing as it is entertaining.

Wolf Willet wakes in his Santa Fe home and quickly prepares to depart for Los Angeles despite the insistence of his dog to look in the guest wing of the house. Wolf pilots his own plane toward Los Angeles, but minutes into the flight discovers a mechanical problem that forces him to land in Arizona. While awaiting the repairs to his plane, Wolf reads his own obituary and that of his second wife, Julia, and business partner, Jack, in the New York Times. Wolf sneaks back into Santa Fe and goes to his house to retrieve some supplies and then visits his friend and psychiatrist, Mark Shea. Mark hypnotizes Wolf in an attempt to help him recover memories that he has lost of the full day of the murders. Mark learns nothing to help Wolf and even implies that his memories might implicate him in the murders.

Wolf returns to Los Angeles and finishes his latest film in secret from his house. During this time, Wolf meets editor Jane Deering and begins to feel emotions for her that are deeper than anything he felt for Julia. When the film is done, Wolf returns to Santa Fe and goes immediately to the home of Ed Eagle, a criminal attorney. Ed takes Wolf to the district attorney the following morning and helps him explain his situation to them. Then Wolf goes home to find the press already waiting in his driveway.

For the next few weeks, Wolf finds himself waiting for the shoe to drop as the district attorney's office builds a case against him. Wolf brings Jane out for a visit, taking her to Christmas party that gives the wrong impression to the community. Wolf also learns during this time that Jack, his business partner, has left the bulk of his estate to Wolf, giving the district attorney a motive for murder.

Finally Wolf is arrested and arraigned for triple murder. At this time, Wolf meets Spider, a biker who has been accused of assault. Spider takes an instant liking to Wolf and vows to help him in any way he can. At this same time, Ed meets with Barbara Kennerly, Julia's sister. Barbara is serving a five year sentence in New York for the murder of her husband. Barbara's boyfriend, James Grafton, is supposed to be serving time for the same crime, but escaped some months before. It is James Grafton who died in Wolf's house and Grafton whom Mark identified as Wolf.

While Wolf is out on bond, he shares Christmas with Jane and her daughter. During this time, Wolf learns that Julia had cashed in all his stocks, bonds, and retirement funds, taking more than three million dollars of his money. Ed chases down this money and



returns it to Wolf. In the process of doing this, however, it is discovered that whoever ordered the money moved did it from Wolf's house. About this time, Wolf also gets a call from Spider, warning him that a woman has hired someone to kill him. As Wolf and Ed wait for the killer to come, they find themselves drugged with some sort of hallucinogen. Julia comes in with her friend, Monica, threatening to kill Ed, Wolf, and take Barbara away with her. It is then that they all learn that Julia killed Jack, Grafton, and her own sister, Leah.

Julia kills Monica to prove how serious she is. However, she did not count on Barbara not taking in the drug and being sober. Barbara pulls a gun out of her bag and shoots Julia. Julia is killed and the whole ordeal is over. Wolf decides to begin directing his own films and he makes Jane Deering his partner.



# Chapters 1-5

## Chapters 1-5 Summary

Wolf Willet is a movie producer who has worked with the same partner his entire career. Wolf has recently married his second wife, Julia, and spends his time between homes in Los Angeles and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In chapter 1, Wolf wakes in Santa Fe with a terrible headache and feeling something like a hangover. Wolf goes downstairs to have breakfast. The dog tries repeatedly to make Wolf go into the guest wing of the house, but he refuses. Wolf recalls that he is supposed to be in Los Angeles that day and prepares to fly his private plane. Wolf thinks about the film he is going to Los Angeles to finish and his partnership with Jackson Tinney, a man he met while in the military and with whom he has been making wildly successful movies ever since. As Wolf is thinking about Jack, he begins to experience trouble with the alternator on his plane. In chapter 2, Wolf quickly lands the plane in Arizona, near the Grand Canyon, and makes arrangements for the repairs. As Wolf talks to the mechanic he learns that he is missing an entire day, something that has happened to him once before. While waiting in a hotel for the repairs to be completed, Wolf reads an article in the New York Times about his own, his wife's, and his partner's murders. The story states that the three were found murdered in a guest room of Wolf's Santa Fe home.

In chapter 3, Wolf reads an unflattering obituary about himself, one for Jack, and an obituary about Julia that reveals not only that she spent time in jail in New York, but that Julia is not her real name. In chapter 4, Wolf sneaks out of Arizona late at night and returns to Santa Fe. Wolf breaks into his own house through the crime scene tape and looks in the room where the murders took place. Wolf then collects a few clothes and returns to get some items out of his study. As he approaches the room, Wolf sees someone else in his study. However, Wolf is unable to identify this person. Wolf finishes collecting his stuff and leaves. In chapter 5, Wolf goes to the home of his good friend and psychiatrist, Mark Shea. Mark tells Wolf how he visited his home the night of the murders. Mark was later called back by police to view the bodies and identify them. Since all the bodies were shot with a shotgun, Wolf's shotgun, in the face, he was only able to identify them by body type. Mark identified Julia based on a tattoo on her right breast, Jack by his jewelry, and Wolf by size and build. Wolf admits to Mark that he cannot remember anything about the night of the murders and asks Mark to hypnotize him. Mark does, but refuses to tell Wolf what he said under hypnosis. Instead, Mark encourages Wolf to tell him about the first occasion in which he lost time.

## Chapters 1-5 Analysis

Wolf is introduced in these early chapters as a highly successful, wealthy movie producer. These early pages suggest that Wolf leads a life most readers would envy, full



of beautiful women and expensive cars. As the plot develops, the reader realizes that Wolf is a guy like most everyone else, someone who has been reluctant to commit, a man who has been single for a long time, and a man who is intensely loyal to his business partner. Therefore, when Wolf learns that his partner is dead, the reader is surprised at the lack of grief the reader sees in him. Wolf seems somewhat distanced from the situation, perhaps because it is something abstract, surreal. The reader must realize that reading of his own death in the same paper must make it seem like fiction to Wolf. Not only this, but the shock is also coupled with the fact that Wolf's wife, Julia, appears to not be the person he has believed her to be for more than a year. All this would add up to cause a man to suffer some shock and not show the emotions one might expect.

When Wolf goes to visit his friend Mark Shea, the reader sees some grief in Wolf. There are tears and Mark does what he can to comfort Wolf. However, when Mark hypnotizes Wolf, it seems that he has learned something about the night of murders that could implicate Wolf in the crimes. The reader wonders if this is why Mark refuses to reveal what he has learned. Also interesting in these chapters is the fact that Wolf has experienced some missing time and that this is not the first time this has happened to him, leading the reader to wonder if Wolf suffers from some sort of emotional disorder or mental problem. Second, the reader must wonder who the second man in the bed with Julia was that everyone believes to be Wolf. Finally, the reader must wonder if Mark could make such a mistake identifying Wolf, could he have done the same with either Jack or Julia.



# Chapters 6-12

## Chapters 6-12 Summary

In chapter 6, Wolf tells Mark about his first wife, Maggie, and how her pregnancy forced him into marriage and a commitment he was not sure he was ready for. On the day that Maggie went into labor with their child, there was a car accident that resulted in Maggie's death. Wolf, who had been driving the car, was found sitting in a restaurant eating a hamburger. To this day, Wolf cannot remember the day and a half before the accident or the accident itself. Mark asks Wolf what he plans to do now and he admits that he intends to return to Los Angeles. However, when Wolf is finished doing what he needs to do, he intends to return to Santa Fe and face the music. At this point, Mark recommends a lawyer and Wolf asks him to call the man for him.

In chapter 7, Wolf flies to Los Angeles where he meets with his business manager, the music director for his films, and Jane Deering, a film editor. Wolf explains his situation to these people and tells them that he wants to finish his latest film before he returns to Santa Fe and lets the world know he is still alive. Wolf is pushed for time, so he encourages everyone to finish their part of the film as quickly as possible. In chapter 8, Wolf and Jane work closely together on the editing, while Wolf's business manager attempts to keep his assets liquid, ahead of the probate courts. In chapter 9, the film is finished after ten days of hard work. Wolf assigns a few small changes to Jane and then instructs his business manager to hand the film over to the movie company immediately. Wolf then arranges to meet the lawyer, Ed Eagle, in Santa Fe that night.

In chapter 10, Wolf meets with Ed Eagle in his home. Wolf explains his circumstances to Ed and Ed gives Wolf an idea of what they might face in the immediate future. In chapter 11, Wolf has breakfast with Ed and they discuss his and Julia's habit of inviting a woman, Monica Collins, into their bed. Later Wolf and Ed go to see the district attorney, who is very shocked to find Wolf still alive. The district attorney asks many questions about the night of the murders and why Wolf has not come forward sooner. Wolf explains that he was concerned about the future of his business. The district attorney does not appear satisfied with these answers, but he allows Wolf to leave. In chapter 12, Wolf returns home to find a reporter waiting for him. Wolf gives the woman a quick interview in exchange for her not bothering him at his home again. Immediately after the reporter leaves, a couple of detectives come to take Wolf to the morgue to identify the bodies. Wolf is quick to identify his wife from her tattoo and Jack from his familiar body. However, Wolf is unable to identify the third body.

## Chapters 6-12 Analysis

Wolf admits to Mark that there was a prior time in which he lost some time, a moment in his life that would have been filled with horrible grief and regret. This leads the reader to wonder if Wolf's lack of recall of the day that his wife and business partner were killed is



due to a similar overwhelming grief and/or guilt. This could imply to the reader that Wolf is responsible for the murders. It could also explain Wolf's decision to return to Los Angeles to finish his movie. It is later revealed that Wolf has done this for the money, but the reader might still wonder at his lack of grief and his ability to walk away from such a huge tragedy as though it never happened.

Wolf returns to Santa Fe and immediately engages a lawyer. The lawyer, Ed Eagle, tells Wolf how the game is played and what to expect. Wolf then goes to see the district attorney and is questioned at length, but he is not arrested because the district attorney wants to have a strong case against him first. This shows the reader that Ed is a good lawyer and is likely to get Wolf off whether or not he is guilty. Wolf then goes to see the bodies and is able to identify Jack without a doubt because he has seen him naked on many occasions. Wolf identifies Julia by her tattoo, but the reader will notice that there is no other evidence about the body that helps Wolf identify her. Wolf is unable to identify the third person, leaving the reader continuing to wonder who that might be and what significance that person's identity will have to the developing plot.





# Chapters 13-19

## Chapters 13-19 Summary

In chapter 13, Wolf calls his business manager and has him retrieve Jack's will from the office safe. When the business manager reads the will, Wolf discovers that Jack had the will redone by another lawyer and left all his assets to Wolf. Wolf then speaks with Jane and convinces her to fly to Santa Fe to spend a few days with him. In chapter 14, Jane arrives and shows Wolf the changes she made to the movie. The changes are radical, but Wolf likes them. Wolf calls the lawyer who drew up Jack's will and asks him to act as executor until the legal troubles are resolved. Later, Wolf takes Jane to dinner and she tells him about her eight year old daughter and how it affects her ability to date. In chapter 15, Ed Eagle goes to visit Mark Shea in regards to Wolf's case. Mark tells Ed about Wolf's prior blackout and his treatments under Mark's care. Ed feels that Mark would make a good witness for Wolf should they have to go to trial. In chapter 16, Wolf takes Jane on a flying tour of some popular movie locations over Arizona and New Mexico despite the fact he is not supposed to leave Santa Fe.

In chapter 17, Wolf takes Jane to a party at the home of a Duke and Duchess residing in Santa Fe. Ed is not happy when he sees Wolf, warning him that he should speak to everyone at the party and make it clear Jane is a business acquaintance and not a lover. When Wolf returns to the party, Monica Collins, Julia's friend, attacks him for his callousness. In chapter 18, Ed Eagle goes to the Women's Correctional Facility in Poughkeepsie to visit Hannah Schlemmer, Julia's sister. Hannah has recently had her name legally changed to Barbara Kennerly. Barbara tells Ed about Julia, how she was always trying to come up with schemes to get money. Barbara tells Ed she thinks Julia might have changed when she married Wolf. Ed finds himself drawn to Barbara, despite her conviction for the robbery and murder of her husband. In chapter 19, Ed calls Barbara's prosecutor and learns that she was fully cooperative in the prosecution of her lover, James Grafton, the man who murdered her husband and dragged her along for the ride. Ed is satisfied that Barbara was simply a naïve woman who was taken advantage of by her lover. Ed is also convinced that James Grafton is the third body found in Wolf's house and has this information confirmed by the district attorney.

## Chapters 13-19 Analysis

Wolf discovers that Jack has had his will changed to give Wolf all his assets. The reader knows that this will not look good to the district attorney and it seems that Wolf realizes the same thing because he has the other lawyer take over as executor. Wolf does not realize, however, that having Jane stay with him so soon after the death of his wife might not look good. Wolf takes her to a party and immediately finds himself having to explain her presence. At this point, Wolf insists that Jane is only a business associate, but the reader can see that there is a growing affection between the two and perhaps Wolf has finally found himself in a place where he is ready to settle down with a wife



and children. Jane can provide all this, but the reader is not sure if they should cheer this new relationship or wonder if it is proof of Wolf's guilt.

Ed goes to visit Hannah Schlemmer, who has changed her name to Barbara Kennerly, to learn what he can about Julia's past. Barbara is able to confirm that Julia was something of a con artist who was always looking for ways to get more money. Barbara, like Wolf, thought that Julia had settled down and was happy in married life. Ed is happy with this information, but it is clear to the reader that his biggest consideration is his physical attraction to Barbara. Ed checks out Barbara and learns that she was essentially taken advantage of, an innocent woman who made a mistake. The reader is unclear if this is the truth at this point, but since Barbara is in prison it seems it does not really matter what her story is or her connection to Julia.



# Chapters 20-28

## Chapters 20-28 Summary

In chapter 20, Wolf takes the cremated remains of his second wife and his business partner and throws them into the wind from a mountain top near his home. Later Ed questions Wolf about Grafton, but Wolf does not recognize the name. In chapter 21, Ed and Wolf are drinking together and become drunk. Ed tells Wolf how he was born in a Jewish family, but how everyone in school assumed he was Indian, so he allowed them to continue thinking it was true. In chapter 22, Barbara Kennerly shows up at Ed's office and tells him that she was released from prison unconditionally. Barbara asks Ed to help her find a job and he promises to do what he can. Ed asks Barbara about Grafton, but she has no idea what he has been up to since he was convicted, except for the rumor that he escaped prison. In chapter 23, Wolf finds himself lonely in the days before Christmas and decides to ask Jane to come to Santa Fe with her daughter. When Jane promises to come, Wolf goes Christmas shopping in a big way. While shopping, Wolf goes to have lunch at a local restaurant and finds Barbara there. Wolf is shaken by how much she looks like Julia.

In chapter 24, Ed invites Barbara over for dinner and they find themselves in bed together. Ed sees a tattoo on Barbara's right breast, but cannot identify the flower. In chapter 25, Wolf picks Jane and Sara up at the airport and takes them to his house. They decorate the tree together before Sara goes up to bed. Wolf gives Jane some career advice and then she advises him to begin directing his own films. As they talk, the police arrive and arrest Wolf for triple murder. In chapter 26, Wolf is taken to the police station where he calls Jane and instructs her to call Ed. Wolf is questioned by the same officers who arrested him, but he refuses to fall for their ploys and confess. In chapter 27, Wolf is placed in a cell with a biker named Spider. Wolf is worried, but Spider turns out to be a nice guy who takes an instant liking to Wolf. In fact, Spider claims to know who the witness is who says that he saw Wolf kill his wife and the others in his guest bedroom. Spider promises to speak to the man about his testimony. In chapter 28, Wolf goes to breakfast with Spider, but finds he cannot eat the food. A short time later, Wolf is taken to the courthouse for his arraignment. Ed arrives late, having been out of town the night before.

## Chapters 20-28 Analysis

Wolf's relationship with Jane appears to be growing as he invites her and her daughter to his house for Christmas. The fact that she comes tells the reader that Jane feels the same way about Wolf. At the same time, it is clear that Ed is falling for Barbara. The reader is just as surprised as Ed and Wolf when Barbara shows up in Santa Fe, clearly wondering what her motive might be, but she continues to appear innocent to the reader and to Ed. However, the tattoo on her breast that is so like Julia's leaves the reader

wondering how many women out there have that same tattoo and what that says about the woman who was killed in Wolf's house.

Wolf is arrested for the triple murder and interviewed by the police. The police try to get him to confess to the crime, but Wolf is clearly too smart to fall for those tactics. However, it is revealed to Wolf that the police have a witness who claims he saw Wolf in the house on the night of murders. Spider, Wolf's new cellmate, claims that this is a lie and that he can do something about it. This places Spider in the role of Wolf's new best friend, leaving the reader wondering where this relationship might lead and how it might benefit Wolf in the future.



# Chapters 29-33

## Chapters 29-33 Summary

In chapter 29, the district attorney presents his case, which is based mostly on the witness who claims to have seen Wolf in the guest bedroom the night of the murders, and a waitress who claims to have seen Wolf dine with James Grafton. When Wolf sees a picture of Grafton for the first time during the arraignment, he tells Ed something. Ed puts Wolf on the stand and he tells the courtroom that he knew Grafton as Dan O'Hara, a friend of Julia's who had written a movie script. Wolf admits to meeting with the man and setting up an appointment for him with a studio that later bought his script. After all the evidence is presented, the judge releases Wolf on one hundred thousand dollars bail. In chapter 30, Ed takes Wolf to breakfast and explains how he plans to proceed with the case. Ed urges Wolf to have friends write letters about his character and warns him that he will be attacking Julia's character in his defense. Then Ed takes Wolf home to where Jane is waiting.

In chapter 31, Wolf calls Mark to invite him to Christmas dinner, but instead Mark asks Wolf to come to his place late in the evening. Later, Wolf takes Jane and Sara to look at Christmas lights. In chapter 32, Wolf spends Christmas morning with Jane and Sara. After dinner, Mark calls and asks Wolf to bring a gun when he comes to see him, something that surprises Wolf because of Mark's stand against guns. When Wolf arrives at Mark's, he finds him bleeding on the floor of his office. Wolf immediately calls the police. Wolf tries to get Mark to tell him who did it, but Mark dies before he can. In chapter 33, Wolf calls Ed and he immediately comes to the scene. Ed talks to the police and ensures that the sheriff makes it clear Wolf is not a suspect in the murder. Then Ed allows Wolf to tell the sheriff all he knows, which includes pointing out some footprints he noticed when he arrived. These prints indicate that whoever killed Mark spent the night in his home. Ed finds him making a connection between the evidence and Barbara.

## Chapters 29-33 Analysis

In these chapters the reader learns what the bulk of the prosecution's case is based on. The witness who supposedly saw Wolf in the guest bedroom the night of the murders is the same prisoner that Spider has already told Wolf about. What is interesting is the waitress who saw Wolf with James Grafton even though he swears he has never met Grafton. When Wolf sees a picture of the man, he surprises everyone by admitting that he knows him as Dan O'Hara. This admission creates a link between Grafton and Julia, which might explain why they were killed together. Perhaps the two were having an affair. However, the idea of an affair only provides a motive for Wolf to kill the pair rather than proving his innocence.



When Mark calls and asks Wolf to come see him, it is clear to Wolf and the reader that Mark is concerned for his own personal safety based on the fact that he asks for a gun, despite a dislike of the weapons. When Wolf arrives and finds him dead, it begins a new tangent for the plot development that causes the reader to wonder if perhaps there might be a separate killer out there after all. Wolf clearly did not kill Mark, but if the murder of Mark is connected to the murders in Wolf's house, then that suggests someone else killed those people as well, exonerating Wolf.



# Chapters 34-39

## Chapters 34-39 Summary

In chapter 34, Wolf goes home and tells Jane about Mark's death. Wolf explains that he is now concerned that anyone connected to him might be in danger, therefore he wants Jane and Sara to go home soon. After they leave, Wolf sits in the study with a gun. In chapter 35, Ed visits Barbara the day after Mark's murder. Ed asks Barbara more questions about Julia and then asks her to testify at Wolf's trial. Barbara reluctantly agrees. In chapter 36, Wolf spends a week at home. On New Year's Eve, Wolf gets a call from his business manager informing him that Julia has liquidated many of his bonds, stocks, and retirement accounts and stolen over three million dollars from him. Wolf calls Ed and is instructed to have his business manager call the police immediately. Ed tells Wolf that they can use this information in his defense, but that the prosecution might also use it as a motive.

In chapter 37, Ed picks up Barbara to take her to a New Year's Eve party. Once they arrive, Ed makes an excuse and sneaks out of the party. Ed searches Barbara's house, but the only things he finds are a gun and a picture of two girls that has been torn in half. This search helps alleviate Ed's fear that Barbara might be behind the murder of Mark Shea. In chapter 38, Wolf becomes depressed on New Year's Eve and begins thinking about suicide. Jane calls at midnight and drags Wolf out of his depression by telling him she loves him. In chapter 39, Wolf goes shopping the day after New Year's Day and receives a call from Ed warning him that the police are looking to arrest him again. Ed quickly delivers Wolf to the police station in order to have him turn himself in. Wolf is brought in front of a judge immediately and again released, but this time his bail is one million dollars. Ed then tells Wolf that he has a few leads on Grafton and Julia that he would like to follow up, but he needs more money. Wolf immediately arranges for his office to wire the money.

## Chapters 34-39 Analysis

Wolf sends Jane and Sara back to California to protect them, but loneliness added to more revelations about Julia's character quickly causes him to fall into a depression. Wolf's feelings for Jane are growing by the minute, touching on the theme of love and trust, and it is clear to the reader that they are mutual when Jane confesses that she is in love with him. The reader wonders, however, if it is not a bit soon for Wolf to be in love again. However, the reader also realizes that Wolf was never in love with Julia, something that becomes more obvious the more he learns about her true character. At the same time, also illuminating the theme of love and trust, Ed finds himself wondering if Barbara might not be Mark's murderer based on the tire treads and footprints found at the scene of the crime. A search of her apartment, which turns up a gun and a picture that will prove important later in the novel, shows him that Barbara has been honest to



him up to this point. Ed is inclined to trust Barbara, but the reader wonders if this might not be a mistake.

Wolf is arrested again because his first arrest was illegal based on the fact the police did not show him the warrant for his arrest. This time the bail is raised, but Wolf is still allowed to go free thanks to the value of his home. Ed is focused on Wolf's case, asking for money to follow some leads that both Wolf and the reader hope will garner some new information about the crime.





# Chapters 40-46

## Chapters 40-46 Summary

In chapter 40, Ed hires Cupie, a private detective in Los Angeles, to interview a known acquaintance of Grafton's. This interview leads Cupie to a paper maker who might have made a fake identity for Grafton and a female. In chapter 41, Ed sends Russell Norris, an ex-IRS agent, to the Cayman Islands to get information about the account Julia sent Wolf's three million dollars to. Russell uses his past influence to force the bank manager to reveal information about the account, including the fact that a request has just arrived to move the money to a bank in Mexico. In chapter 42, Cupie visits the paper maker and learns that Grafton had the man make him an identity, complete with birth certificate with the name Dan O'Hara, and an identity for his female companion in the name of Frances B. Kennerly. Cupie takes photocopies of the identities and sends them to Ed.

In chapter 43, Ed looks at the photocopies of the woman's identity and realizes that they were made for Julia. However, he wonders why she would chose to use Barbara's new name. Ed also talks to Russell and receives a copy of the faxed order to transfer the money. Ed takes this fax to Wolf and Wolf immediately realizes that the order was sent from his house while he was out to lunch. Ed and Wolf discuss who might have had access to the fax machine and begin to wonder if perhaps Monica Collins might be responsible. Ed also wonders if Barbara, who was not at work the previous day, might have sent the fax from Wolf's house. In chapter 44, Ed gets Barbara drunk and asks her questions, but it is clear to him that she knows nothing about the account in the Cayman Islands.

In chapter 45, Ed receives a list of the witnesses the prosecution plans to call and is surprised to see Monica Collins' name listed. Ed questions Wolf about what Monica might have to say, but Wolf has no clue. Ed then asks Wolf to have Jane testify on his behalf, but Wolf is reluctant to involve her. Later, Ed talks to Barbara on the phone and asks her if Julia knew the name she had chosen for herself and she says she did. Barbara also tells Ed that she did not know that Julia and Grafton had ever met, but is not surprised to learn that they had. In chapter 46, Wolf gets a call from his business manager and learns that his money has been returned to Julia's checking accounts, thanks to Russell. However, Wolf cannot touch it until probate has been completed. Wolf calls Ed to let him know. Moments later, Wolf gets a call from Spider, asking to meet.

## Chapters 40-46 Analysis

Ed learns through his private detective that Julia and Grafton had false identities created, suggesting they planned to run away together, or at least that Julia planned to run. The fact that Julia chose Barbara's new name is an interesting twist that makes Barbara either look really guilty, or very innocent. When the IRS agent sends Ed the proof that someone wanted to move the money stolen from Wolf to Mexico and sent the



order from Wolf's house, it seems to prove that the killer is still alive and living in Santa Fe. This again makes it appear that Barbara is guilty of the crimes, but Barbara was in prison when the triple murder occurred and when Ed questions her about the fax to the Cayman Islands, she clearly does not know what he is talking about. However, she does recognize the code word that was used. It is something Julia said often. This suggests that the killer is someone who knew Julia intimately, implicating Monica Collins or Barbara.



# Chapters 47-52 and Epilogue

## Chapters 47-52 and Epilogue Summary

In chapter 47, Wolf goes to a local bar to meet with Spider and is told that someone is attempting to hire a person to kill him. A friend of Spider's was approached by a woman with a tattoo on her right breast and offered money to kill Wolf. The man refused, but sent the woman to another man who might accept. Spider offers protection, but Wolf turns him down. In chapter 48, Wolf calls Ed and tells him what Spider said. Upon hearing this news, Ed questions Barbara about the tattoo on her breast. Barbara tells him that she, Miriam, and Leah, another sister, all got tattoos when Miriam, aka Julia, graduated high school. Ed asks if Leah knew Grafton, learning she did, and if she might be in Santa Fe, which he believes she is. In chapter 49, Ed arrives at Wolf's and they settle in the study with their guns. They decide to call Spider and have him learn more about the man hired to kill Wolf. In chapter 50, Ed and Wolf are watching the news when they see Spider being arrested outside a bar. They immediately go to the jail and ask Spider what he learned. Spider gives them a description of the woman, which basically describes Julia or Barbara, and tells them that the woman threatened to kill Wolf herself if the man she hired could not do it.

In chapter 51, Ed and Wolf return to Wolf's house and find Barbara waiting for them. Barbara attempts to tell them why she is there, but the men are more interested in getting everyone drinks. As Barbara explains that she got a message that Leah wanted to meet her at Wolf's, Julia walks into the room with Monica Collins. In chapter 52, Wolf and Ed discover that Julia has drugged them by placing a drug Mark would use to hypnotize his patients in their drinks. Julia then explains that she had intended on killing Grafton and Leah in order to escape to Mexico with all the money herself, but ran into Jack at the airport and had to bring him along so that he could not testify to seeing her with Grafton. Julia then invited Mark over and everyone got high on the drug Mark uses in his practice. After Mark went home, Julia shot Leah, Jack, and Grafton, forcing Wolf to watch so that he would believe he had done it. However, the drug caused him to lose his memory.

Now, Julia tells them, she will kill Ed and Wolf, making it appear like a murder suicide, and take Barbara away with her. Julia has already shot Monica for putting out the contract on Wolf's life and complicating the situation. Barbara has a gun hidden in her purse and she pulls it out, killing Julia. Wolf, who has fallen unconscious on the floor, wakes to find the whole ordeal over. In the epilogue, a few months have passed and Wolf is back in Los Angeles, attending a meeting with the movie studio to discuss the possibility of his directing Jack's final film. Wolf tells Jane afterward that the studio accepted his offer on the condition that he makes her his partner.



## Chapters 47-52 and Epilogue Analysis

Wolf learns that someone who looks a lot like Julia has put out a contract on his life. Wolf tells Ed, who quickly turns to Barbara for more information. Ed has recalled the photo he saw in Barbara's house and realizes it is torn because someone has been removed from it. Barbara admits there is another sister, Leah. Ed is convinced that it is Leah who killed everyone and is trying to steal the money. However, Ed soon learns that Leah was a victim, just like everyone else, and that Julia was behind the whole thing.

Julia confesses to the triple murder, a murder she committed to have Wolf locked up so that she could escape with all his money without the hindrance of Grafton or Leah to complicate things. Julia now plans to kill Ed and Wolf because they have gotten too close to the truth, but before she can, Barbara kills her. Now the reader can see how everything happened and how it was all made to look like Wolf and Barbara were the criminals, when they really were innocent. Now Wolf can go on with his life and it is clear in the epilogue that Jane will be a big part of that life.



# Characters

## Wolf Willet

Wolf Willet is a movie producer from Los Angeles who also owns a house in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Wolf has spent his entire career making movies with his friend and partner, Jack Tinney. Jack writes and directs the movies and Wolf edits them. This has been a highly successful partnership for Wolf. However, Wolf has always found himself forced to take care of Jack, causing him to be the one who does most of the work but gets little of the glory.

Wolf is married at one point, but his wife dies in a car accident while they are on the way to the hospital to deliver their first child. Wolf blacks out during this time and does not remember the accident or the day and a half leading up to it. A similar thing happens when Wolf learns that his second wife and partner have been found murdered in his Santa Fe house with another man assumed to be him. Wolf loses an entire day of memory. Instead of returning to Santa Fe to turn himself in, Wolf finishes the last movie he and Jack were working on in order to protect his business.

When Wolf finally turns himself in to the police, it is with the help of the best attorney in Santa Fe. Wolf waits several weeks before he is finally arrested for his crime. In the meantime, Wolf learns a great deal about his wife and begins to fall in love with the film editor who helps him finish his movie. During the investigation Wolf meets some interesting people and soon discovers that nothing is exactly what he thought it was. At the same time, Wolf learns to be true to himself and to embrace life.

## Julia Willet or Miriam or Frances B. Kennerly

Julia Willet is Wolf's second wife. Julia and Wolf have only been married for a year. Julia is much younger than Wolf, but she has awoken in him emotions and sexual desires he believed he was no longer capable of. Wolf is saddened when Julia is found murdered in their Santa Fe house, but his emotions are not those of a grieving man who has lost the woman he loves. This is partly because Julia's obituary reveals to Wolf that Julia is not his wife's real name, but that she was once known as Miriam and that she has an arrest record in New York.

As the weeks pass, Wolf begins to learn more about Julia. It turns out that Julia, who insisted on taking over Wolf's bills, has liquidated most of his assets and planned to steal them, then leave the country using the name Frances B. Kennerly. In fact, the money disappears from Julia's bank account weeks after her death and is transferred to a bank in the Cayman Islands. This shows Wolf that Julia was not the woman he thought she was and she is in fact a con artist who is willing to kill to get what she wants.



## Jack Tinney

Jackson Tinney is Wolf's movie industry partner. Jack and Wolf meet in the military where they make a training movie together. Jack writes and directs the movies that he and Wolf make, leaving Wolf to do everything else. When Jack is done making a movie, he disappears for weeks at a time, falling into an alcohol fueled stupor. Wolf has always been the one to care for Jack and his assets, taking care of the responsibilities that Jack is not interested in dealing with. Jack has four ex-wives and he has always named these women in the wills that he has had Wolf draw up for him. However, unknown to Wolf, Jack has changed his will, leaving everything to Wolf. This makes for a difficult situation when Wolf is accused of Jack's murder.

## Ed Eagle

Ed Eagle is Wolf's attorney. Ed has been an attorney in Santa Fe for many years and is well known among members of the law enforcement community. This gives Wolf an advantage when he returns to Santa Fe to face charges of triple murder. Ed Eagle is thought to be an Indian due to his name and his dark complexion. Wolf learns later, however, that Ed is a Jew from New York. This is important because Ed falls in love with a woman who will only marry a Jewish man.

Ed Eagle works diligently to help clear Wolf's name, including hiring several people to prove that Julia Willet was scheming to steal the bulk of Wolf's fortune. At the same time, Ed interviews Julia's sister and soon finds him falling in love with the misunderstood, naïve woman. At times Ed finds himself doubting this new woman, wondering if she could be behind the triple murder of which Wolf is accused, but eventually he learns that his trust is justified and the young woman is innocent of wrong doing.

## Hannah Schlemmer or Barbara Kennerly

Barbara Kennerly is the name Hannah Schlemmer takes while serving five years in prison for the robbery and murder of her husband. Barbara gets out of prison shortly after Ed comes to interview her in connection with the murder of her sister, Miriam. Barbara goes to Santa Fe because it is the only place she thinks she might have a friend who would welcome her presence. However, Barbara does not realize that by going to Santa Fe she will be putting herself in the middle of the murder investigation, causing even Ed to believe she might be responsible for her sister's death. Fortunately, Barbara is eventually able to prove that she is simply a naïve woman who allowed love to lead her astray.



## Spider

Spider is a biker who has a tendency to be violent. Wolf meets Spider when he is arrested for the murders of his wife, his partner, and a known conman. Spider is Wolf's cellmate. Spider tells Wolf that he believes he knows who might be testifying against him at his arraignment and that he can scare the man off. Later, after they are both released from jail, Spider tells Wolf that someone has hired a man to kill him. Through Spider, Wolf and Ed are able to learn who the killer is and a description of the woman who hired him. They believe the woman might be Barbara, but it later turns out to be someone else.

## Mark Shea

Mark Shea is a holistic psychiatrist who is very popular with the wealthy people in Santa Fe. Wolf and his wife, Julia, are both his patients. When Wolf learns that the police believe he is dead, he turns to Mark in an attempt to recapture his memories of the time in question. Mark hypnotizes Wolf, but refuses to tell him what was revealed. Later, Mark calls Wolf and asks to meet with him, but before Wolf can arrive, Mark is murdered by a mysterious person. It is later established that Mark knew some important information about the night the murders took place and was murdered to keep him quiet.

## Jane Deering and Sara

Jane Deering is the editor that Wolf is forced to hire to help him finish his film, L.A. Days. Wolf finds himself falling in love with Jane during this time even though his wife has only been dead a few days. While Wolf is stranded in Santa Fe, awaiting trial for murder, Jane comes to visit him on two occasions. They grow closer and eventually become lovers. At the same time, Wolf finds himself drawn to Jane's eight year old daughter, as he is now ready to settle down into parenthood where he had once been frightened of the prospect.

## James Grafton or Dan O'Hara

James Grafton is the man with whom Hannah Schlemmer fell in love and agreed to rob her husband's diamond business with. Hannah did not know that James Grafton was planning to also kill her husband and was attempting to talk him into turning himself in when they were apprehended by the police. Both were sentenced to prison, but James Grafton managed to escape. James Grafton met up with Julia Willet and the two of them began making plans to steal from Wolf and disappear. Daniel O'Hara is the name James Grafton used in Los Angeles when he sold a movie script and the name he planned to use when he disappeared with Julia Willet.



## Monica Collins

Monica Collins is a friend of Julia Willet's who on two occasions shared a bed with both Julia and Wolf. After the murders, Monica is distraught over the loss of her friend to such a degree that she physically attacks Wolf at a party. Later it is discovered that Monica has been allowed by Julia to stay in her home and that she is the woman who hired a man to kill Wolf. Monica also has a tattoo similar to the one Julia, Barbara and Leah have, leading to the confusion about who might have hired the killer to kill Wolf.





# Objects/Places

## Purdey Shotgun

Wolf, his wife Julia and his business partner Jack, are believed to have been killed by one of a pair of expensive shotguns made by the famous gun makers in London, England, Purdey.

## Picture

Ed Eagle finds a picture in Barbara's apartment of two girls that has been ripped in half, perhaps eliminating one person. Later, this picture leads Ed to realize that there are three sisters, not just two.

## Jewelry

Barbara funds her new life out of jail with the sale of jewelry her husband gave to her during the course of their marriage.

## Sunflower Tattoo

Julia has a small sunflower tattoo on the upper portion of her right breast, a tattoo that enables Mark Shea to identify her body after the murders. It is later revealed that all three sisters had this same tattoo, as well as Julia's friend, Monica.

## Santa Fe Jail

After being arrested for murder, Wolf spends the night in the Santa Fe jail where he meets Spider, a biker accused of assault.

## L.A. Days

L.A. Days is the name of the film Wolf and Jack are working on at the time of Jack's death. Wolf insists on finishing this film before revealing to the authorities that he is still alive, in order to protect his business and employees.

## Stock, bonds, and retirement accounts

Julia, Wolf's wife, has dissolved all his stock, bond, and retirement accounts in order to take possession of the bulk of his wealth.



## **New York Times**

Wolf Willet learns of the murders in his Santa Fe home and the reports of his own death by reading about them in the New York Times.

## **Beechcraft Bonanza B-36TC**

Wolf owns a private airplane that he pilots himself. This airplane is a Beechcraft Bonanza B-36TC and is the airplane Wolf is flying when he is forced to make an emergency landing in Arizona.

## **Willet Santa Fe Home in Wilderness Gate**

Wolf Willet owns two homes, one in Santa Fe and one in Los Angeles. It is in a guest bedroom of the Santa Fe home where three bodies are found.

## **Poughkeepsie Correctional Facility for Women**

Hannah Schlemmer, or Barbara Kennerly, serves a five to eight year prison term at the Poughkeepsie Correctional Facility for Women for her part in the robbery and murder of her husband, a diamond merchant. It is here that Ed Eagle first meets Barbara.

## **Cayman Islands**

Wolf's wife, Julia, has a bank account in the Cayman Islands where she has transferred the bulk of his wealth weeks after everyone believes she is dead.



# Themes

## Deceit

When Wolf Willet married Julia, he believed that he was marrying an innocent, young woman whose worst trait might have been her inability to tell a lie. Upon her death, Wolf is not devastated, since he has only known her a short time, but he is saddened by the absence of such beauty in his life. Wolf's memories of Julia are all pleasant ones, memories that leave him wishing he had been a better husband to his young wife. However, as the investigation into Julia's murder begins, Wolf finds himself wondering just how well he knew his young wife.

Wolf soon learns that his wife, who had insisted on being in charge of the family finances, liquidated all his stocks, bonds, and retirement accounts, stealing from him nearly three million dollars. Wolf also learns that someone transferred these monies into a Cayman Island account weeks after Julia's death. Not only this, but the circumstances of Julia's death, her body in bed with two men, leaves Wolf wondering how faithful his wife was to him.

At the same time, Wolf's lawyer finds himself falling in love with the sister of Wolf's wife. This woman appears to be a naive young woman who was innocently caught up in a scheme that resulted in her husband's death and her own imprisonment for five years. Ed feels sympathy for this young woman that leads him to take her under his wing, putting his reputation on the line for her. However, as the investigation into Julia's death continues to develop, Ed finds himself wondering if Barbara, the naïve sister, might not have had something to do with her own sister's murder and Wolf's missing money. These situations make deceit a theme of the novel.

## Love and Trust

Wolf was once in love with a young woman with whom he had a comfortable relationship that was not complicated by marriage and commitment. However, an unwanted pregnancy changed this relationship irreparably and forced Wolf to choose between fatherhood and commitment or perpetual bachelorhood. Wolf chose commitment, but never fully accepted the idea of parenthood. When his wife is killed in a car accident on the way to deliver their child, Wolf experiences a loss of time, unable to recall the accident or the hours leading up to it. This appears to be an emotional reaction, a reaction to Wolf's love for his woman and her loss.

Later, Wolf marries Julia, a young woman who awakens in him a passion he thought forever missing from his life since the death of his first wife. Wolf is not deeply in love with his new wife, but finds her exciting, able to fulfill a hole that has been a part of his life for a long time. Upon her death, Wolf learns Julia was never who he thought she was, but a scheming con artist who only wanted his wealth. This, however, does not



stop Wolf from quickly falling in love again with a young movie editor with a forceful, honest personality that appeals to Wolf's own obstinate soul.

Ed Eagle is not a man who sees himself settling down, getting married, and having a houseful of kids. However, when he meets Barbara Kennerly, he finds himself falling head over heels in love. They begin a relationship that seems innocent enough at first, but Ed soon finds himself forced to wonder if Barbara is responsible for the death of her sister, Julia, and two other people. Ed searches Barbara's apartment, trying to prove to himself that he can trust his new lady love, but finds nothing to either implicate or exonerate his love. Ed must learn to trust, something that is new to him, but in the end reaps large rewards. It is for these reasons love and trust are a theme of this novel.

## Greed

Julia has always been a conniving, greedy woman, even when she was known as Miriam. Julia has schemed her way into stealing money from dozens of people, even spending a few brief terms in jail for her actions. However, Julia is able to escape this dark past when she changes her name and moves to California. Julia appears to have turned over a new leaf when she marries movie producer, Wolf Willet.

Julia has not changed, however. After her apparent death, Wolf learns that she has been spending time with the same man who convinced her sister to rob and kill her own husband, sending her to jail for five years. Not only this, but Julia has liquidated many of Wolf's assets and stolen more than three million dollars from him. In the end, Wolf learns that Julia's only motive in marrying him was greed, making greed a theme of the novel.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. Most of the novel is seen through the thoughts and actions of Wolf Willet, the main character. However, the writer also shows some of the plots developments through the eyes of other characters, including Ed Eagle, Wolf's attorney, and Barbara Kennerly, Wolf's sister-in-law. The switch between point of view characters always takes place within a new chapter; it is always made clear to the reader who the new point of view character is going to be, either by naming that character in the first sentence, or by referring to some place or event Wolf could not possibly know about.

The point of view of this novel is the omniscient third person view point that is often utilized in these types of mystery novels. This point of view moves from character to character, revealing not only action important to the overall plot development, but also the thoughts and emotions of the characters. This allows the reader to see what is going on in all angles of the plot as well as the intentions of the main characters that propel the plot along. This point of view in this novel is handled well, with little to no confusion for the reader when a new narrator is utilized.

## Setting

The novel is set mainly in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The main character, Wolf Willet, has a home in an exclusive neighborhood in Santa Fe and it is within this home that the triple murder that is the focus of the plot takes place. The setting is a large city, but the author describes it in such a way that it almost feels like a rural area to the reader, a small place where almost everyone in town knows everyone else. It is this sense of community that adds to the plot of the novel and Wolf's expectations of being arrested and tried for the murders of his wife and partner.

The setting works well within this novel because it is one that the writer is familiar with, therefore it is described with some affection and experience. The setting adds to the plot with its sense of a small community, making it difficult for Wolf Willet to continue to live his life in a normal fashion while aware that at any moment he could be arrested for the murders of his wife and partner. The setting also works better than a setting like Los Angeles or New York because, as the title of the novel suggests, the rules are different in a smaller community like Santa Fe. Wolf's lawyer often refers to these rules to explain how certain events can take place in the investigation into the triple murder that propels the plot when in a different setting these events might not happen the way they do for Wolf in this novel. Therefore, the setting of this novel works well with the plot.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple and straightforward. There are few foreign phrases in the novel and those that do exist are quickly explained in the text following the phrase. The language contains many words that are used in the movie industry, words that a reader might not be familiar with, but these are explained easily and quickly in the text. There are also some legal words presented in the text, but many of these words are phrases that most readers will be familiar with and do not require any explanation.

The language of this novel works well with the plot because the language presented is the type of language a reader might expect to be utilized for such a novel. Wolf Willet, the main character of the novel, is a movie producer, therefore it is expected that words from movie industry will be used throughout the novel. It is also expected that a novel dealing with the legal ramifications of a triple murder might include some legal terms, and these terms are in fact presented in this novel. Therefore the language of this novel is suitable to the plot of the novel.

## Structure

The novel is divided into fifty-two chapters and an epilogue. Most of the chapters are fairly short, some only a page or two long, while others are as long as fifteen to twenty pages. The novel does not include a prologue or parts to divide the action, but is presented in a simple format that is easy for the reader to understand. The novel is written both in exposition and dialogue. The plot is told in a linear fashion, making it simple for the reader to follow the uncomplicated plot.

The novel contains a main plot and several subplots that compliment the overall story. The main story line follows the investigation into the triple murder that has taken place at Wolf Willet's Santa Fe mansion. The subplots include Wolf's growing infatuation with the movie editor, Jane Deering, as well as the developing romance between Ed Eagle and Barbara Kennerly. Both the main story line and all the subplots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel, leaving the reader pleased with the overall plot of the novel.



## Quotes

"Wolf always felt grateful that he had chosen Santa Fe as a second home instead of Aspen or one of the other movie-colony favorites." Chapter 1, pg. 5.

"He had lost a day out of his life. And it wasn't the first time." Chapter 2, pg. 13.

"The fear came back. The dread that he had fought for so many years crept out of its banishment and seized him again. He did not try to fight it." Chapter 6, pg. 35.

"Wolf sat and stared at the two containers on the kitchen table—all that remained of the two people he had loved most. Or had he?" Chapter 20, pg. 114.

"Finally he took an urn—he didn't know if it was Julia's or Jack's—unscrewed the top, and when another gust came, tossed the ashes into the air. He repeated the task with the other urn and watched the remains lift and spread, disappear into the trees." Chapter 20, pg. 115.

"True, her hair was dark, where Julia's had been sandy blond, but everything else—her gestures, movements, and above all her smile—were Julia's." Chapter 23, pg. 133.

"Eagle bent over to kiss her and was stopped by an oddly familiar sight. Tattooed onto the inside of her right breast was the shape of a flower—he didn't know which one; he was lousy at flowers." Chapter 24, pg. 142.

"Wolf came awake with something heavy on his chest. He opened his eyes and saw his cellmate staring at him; Spider's huge hand was shaking him." Chapter 28, pg. 162.

"Who would have wished the deaths of, first, his wife and his partner, then his friend and doctor? He wrestled with this for a long time, then gave up." Chapter 34, pg. 200.

"About halfway through New Year's Eve, Wolf started to hate Julia. He hadn't hated her until now, not even when he'd learned about her past life; he'd had a certain amount of sympathy for her wanting a fresh start, even if she had lied to him." Chapter 38, pg. 220.

"The trouble with getting somebody drunk, he thought, was that you had to get snookered yourself." Chapter 45, pg. 257.

"At last, he thought as he drove from Tesuque toward Santa Fe, this is beginning to make a weird kind of sense." Chapter 48, pg. 277.



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Wolf Willet? Why does Wolf ignore his dog's desire to go into the guest wing of the house? Why does the dog want to go that way? Why does Wolf not remember that his wife, his business partner, and several friends had come to the house the night before? Why does Wolf rush off to Los Angeles that morning? When does Wolf learn that he has missed a day of time? How did this happen? What does Wolf believe it means?

Whose obituary does Wolf read in the New York Times? Why does this upset him? What does Wolf learn in the obituary that he did not know before? Why does Wolf not go straight to the local police when he returns to Santa Fe? Where does Wolf go instead? Why? What does this meeting garner for Wolf? Where does Wolf go next? For what reason? Is this plausible?

Who is Mark Shea? Why does he hypnotize Wolf? Why does he refuse to tell Wolf what he has learned while he was under hypnosis? How does this make Wolf feel as though he is guilty of these murders? Why does Wolf not turn himself in right away? Who kills Mark Shea? Why? What was Mark going to tell Wolf that someone did not want him to know?

Who is Julia? Who is Miriam? What do these women want from Wolf? What did they scheme to take from him? What name do these women take when they attempt to run away? Whose name did they steal? Why? What does this say about this woman? How does Wolf learn the truth about Julia and Miriam?

Who is Barbara Kennerly? Why did she change her name? What was her name originally? Where has Barbara been for the last five years? Why does she come to Ed Eagle when she arrives in Santa Fe? Why does Barbara say she has come to Santa Fe? What does Ed believe the real reason is? What makes Ed think this? What does Barbara say or do that changes his mind? Why?

Who is Jane Deering? Why does Wolf bring her in to work on his movie? How does Jane help? How does their relationship change and evolve while they are working together? What is unwise about this relationship? Why does Wolf bring Jane to Santa Fe? Why does he spend Christmas with her and her daughter? Why does Wolf eventually make her his partner? Is this a relationship built on trust? How does the reader know this?

Who is James Grafton? How is he involved with Barbara Kennerly? How is he involved with Julia? How does Wolf know him? Why do the police believe that Wolf hid his relationship with Grafton? What is Wolf's explanation to this accusation? How did Grafton die? Why did it take the police several weeks to identify his body? Why is Wolf accused of killing him? Who really killed him?