

Stalking the Angel Study Guide

Stalking the Angel by Robert Crais

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Plot Summary

Elvis Cole is a private detective in Los Angeles, California and has been in the business a long time. Cole is humorous, charming, sharp witted and appreciates the innocence of childhood. He surrounds himself with cartoon paraphernalia and indulges in life and food as if he is still a kid. Cole is good at what he does and has formed strong friendships in helpful places, like the Los Angeles Police Department. Cole has been hired by a wealthy businessman named Bradley Warren to find a stolen manuscript. The manuscript is a priceless, ancient Japanese artifact that was in Bradley's care when it was stolen. Cole follows many leads and clues with hopes of finding the Hagakure but his digging causes Bradley's daughter, Mimi to get kidnapped. Bradley blames Cole for losing Mimi and fires him. Cole has a connection with children and is determined to save Mimi from a terrible fate despite being fired from the case.

Cole's search leads him to an Asian gang called the yakuza, known for drug trafficking and organized crime. It is a gang that Cole initially suspected of stealing the Hagakure. Now, he looks to them first for answers about Mimi's whereabouts. Cole finds a link between Mimi and the yakuza through one of its members, Eddie Tang. Eddie is moving up in the ranks of the yakuza but is also Mimi's secret boyfriend.

Cole learns that Mimi staged her kidnapping when he finds her hanging out at a club with Eddie. He follows her to get answers and chaos unfolds. Cole follows Mimi to the home of a former Japanese artist, Kira Asano, who takes in youth to teach them a new way of life. He once ran a movement of young people who lived the way of the ancient Japanese and the samurai. Mimi escapes to Asano's with the Hagakure to get far away from her parents. In the Warren home, Mimi is completely ignored by her father who can't think beyond money and business and her mother who spends all her time drinking, sleeping with strange men and ranting about Bradley.

Mimi manipulates Cole when he confronts her at Asano's. She leads him to believe that she needs to stay at Asano's because Bradley is molesting her at home. While Cole leaves to find Mimi help with a social worker friend, Mimi sets a plan in motion to get away for good. Eddie has already killed a fellow yakuza, Nobu Ishida, to keep him away from Mimi and the Hagakure, so he has no problem doing the same to Asano to get Mimi out. Mimi also decides she will get rid of her father for good and shoots him in person. Cole still feels as though he needs to end the chaos and find Mimi. Cole and his partner, Joe Pike, follow Mimi and Eddie to a mansion owned by the yakuza, They have to kill Eddie and everyone at the house in order to get Mimi out. She is charged with the murder of her father and ordered for psychiatric care.



Chapter One-Three

Chapter One-Three Summary

Elvis Cole is alone in his office when a beautiful, sharply-dressed woman enters. Her name is Jillian Becker and she is accompanied by her boss, Bradley Warren. They hire Cole to find and return an eighteenth-century Japanese artifact, the Recorded Words of the Hagakure Master, which was stolen from Warren's home. They have reported the theft to the police but have heard acclaim about Cole's work and hope he can produce faster results than law enforcement.

Cole's first stop for clues is Bradley Warren's home. He meets Hatcher, the guard they have stationed at their property's gate. Cole enters the magnificent home and meets Sheila Warren and their daughter, Mimi. Sheila is drunk despite the early hour and Mimi barely responds to Cole; he assumes she is high. Cole ignores both, gets a picture of the Hagakure book and leaves.

An associate and art gallery owner, Berke Feldstein, gives Cole a tip about where he can start his search for the Hagakure. Feldstein's tip leads Cole to The Sun Tree Gallery and a family man named Malcolm Denning. Denning is a good guy who sometimes takes part in illegal transactions. Cole persuades Denning to offer the name of someone who might be interested in the Hagakure. Denning names Nobu Ishida, an importer in Little Tokyo.

Chapter One-Three Analysis

Elvis Cole's nature immediately begins unfolding, starting when the clients find him standing on his head in his office and he is neither apologetic nor embarrassed. He is clever and sarcastic and isn't easily intimidated. Because of this, Cole and Warren immediately conflict. Cole even goes as far as to decline their business and gives them a card for another detective agency. Warren is wealthy and arrogant and is accustomed to people around him catering to his needs. The blank check that he has Becker write Cole is an indication of his wealth and how he operates in business. Jillian Becker automatically becomes the buffer between the contrasting personalities. She manages to get both of them under control without seeming like a subordinate to either of them.

There is a little insight into Cole's feelings about his line of work and his skill at it. Part of him feels he isn't a great detective; there is an insinuation that he has heard this assertion from others as well. Nonetheless his confidence never seems to waver and he seems to be fine with whatever shortcomings of his may exist. Cole wasn't impressed by Bradley's condescending manner, but he is very happy to accept the blank check; it's the potential for more money than he has seen in a while.

When Cole gets to the Warren home, Hatcher tries to tip off Cole that Sheila Warren is a lot to handle, which Cole finds out for himself when they meet. It is late morning and



Sheila Warren is already drunk and non-apologetically flirtatious. She seems bitter toward her husband, and it is clear that she doesn't like him much more than Cole did. She becomes bitter with Cole, too, when he doesn't return her advances. Cole also meets Mimi Warren, Bradley and Sheila's only daughter. The only clue he receives about her personality is the lack thereof. Even the book she is browsing is a book with minimal and bleak art that Cole compares to Andrew Wyeth.

"You ever notice that sometimes the bad guys are better people than the good guys?" Cole makes this statement to his cat, his only companion at home, when he reflects on his day. From appearances Bradley Warren is the good guy, when in actuality he is cold and self-absorbed. Meanwhile, people like Malcolm Denning get caught up on the wrong side of things and are thought to be the bad guys. When Cole threatens Denning, Denning's only thought is his family.

Cole already has an evaluation all the people he has met pertaining to the case. He relays the characteristics of each with a hint of humor. It is clear he would sooner choose company with the injured, mean spirited, but clearly loyal cat.



Chapter Four-Six

Chapter Four-Six Summary

After a martial arts workout at home, Cole follows his lead to Nobu Ishida's business in Little Tokyo. He is met with resistance but even after fighting one of Ishida's associates, Cole leaves with no new information.

Cole walks to a restaurant with a view of Ishida's shop, has lunch and waits for activity from Ishida. Ishida's men leave first, followed by Ishida twenty minutes later. Cole trails Ishida's car until he is intercepted by two Japanese undercover officers. They force Cole out of the car but let him go when he shows his private investigator's license. Cole asks them a few questions, but they barely utter a word in response before leaving. Back at his office, Cole calls Lou Poitras, a friend of his and a North Hollywood detective with the Los Angeles Police Department. He asks Poitras to find out who the two cops in Little Tokyo are. Poitras promises to call back with the info; Cole gets a call from Sheila Warren after hanging up. She has received a threat over the phone from the people who stole the Hagakure.

Cole arrives at the Warren house and finds Hatcher indifferent about the incident. Sheila is notably upset but is more concerned with getting Cole to comfort her than she is in insuring her safety. Cole refuses her advances and moves on to securing the house. Mimi witnesses her mother trying to seduce Cole but remains disturbingly stoic when Cole speaks to her about it. Cole searches the house for anything out of the ordinary, makes sure everything is secure and leaves.

Chapter Four-Six Analysis

Cole's nature doesn't only rub Bradley Warren the wrong way; it is the main reason he gets into a fight at Nobu Ishida's business. Cole has a humorous sarcasm even when everyone around him is serious. Cole is also unwavering and doesn't let the size of Ishida's henchmen intimidate him. However, even with these strong personality trait, there is a slight hint of possible insecurity or dissatisfaction with his work and life. "So clients weren't perfect. So being a private cop wasn't perfect. So life wasn't perfect. I could always get new cards printed up. They would say: Elvis Cole, Perfect Detective." Even in Cole's thoughts he uses humor to dispel the things about which he is unhappy.

It is also interesting to note the cartoon character references that continue to thread through the chapters. This particular chapter refers to Rocky and Bullwinkle; Cole and his cat's television viewing choice. It seems the things Cole reveres in his life are associated with cartoons or childhood. Cole is also interested in movies, so much so that he references and quotes them in his dialogue and thoughts. Ishida's abettors turn the movie allusion around on Cole and tell him that he should look more like a movie detective if he wants suspects to cooperate.



Cole's exchange with the police officers, even with the cook at the restaurant, reinforces that he doesn't back down easily. It is becoming clear why Jillian Becker and Bradley Warren found Cole so highly recommended by even the police. Cole is connected enough with the force to get information and even a little immunity but is distant enough from the LAPD that he isn't restricted by their rules. Although Cole doesn't seem like the book-smart type, it is also becoming clear through references like his Freud joke, that he is quite intelligent and well-read.

Although Mimi has said the least of all of the characters so far, she is becoming a focus. Without saying it, Cole is most disturbed by Sheila and Bradley Warren because they are influencing a child. Mimi's response when she sees her mother's behavior toward Cole is "She's very good in bed. Everyone says so." Mimi is only sixteen and shows no signs of the childhood innocence she should possess at this age. Her room is indicative of her emotions—it has no personal touches. "There were no posters on the walls or record albums on the floor or clothes spilling out of a hamper or diet soda cans or anything at all that would mark the room as sixteen-year old girl's." Mimi's room is an interesting contrast to Cole's office. Although Cole is the adult, his office is full of items of personal fulfillment. He has cartoon characters decorating his desk and walls—even his private investigator's license shares space with an animation.



Chapter Seven-Nine

Chapter Seven-Nine Summary

Cole finds out that the cops who stopped him were from the Asian Task Force of the LAPD. Jillian Becker calls Cole in for a meeting at Bradley Warren's office with Warren and the Tashiro family who own the Hagakure. They are all disappointed that the manuscript hasn't been found, and the eldest of the Tashiro men tries to make Cole understand its significance. After the Tashiros leave Cole tries to convince Warren to take the threat to his family seriously. Warren refuses to change any of his appearances including a big Man of the Year banquet in his honor the following day. He informs Cole that Hatcher from Titan Securities has been let go and places the job of protecting Sheila and Mimi in Cole's hands.

Cole leaves Bradley Warren's office building and heads to Barton's Pistol Range. After greeting the owner Cole finds his partner, Joe Pike, in the back of the range practicing. Cole fills Pike in on the details of their job with the Warrens and arranges for Pike to take the job of protecting Sheila and Mimi. Based on the threat, Cole plans to continue his search through the Ishida lead.

After leaving Pike at the Bradley residence, Cole heads immediately back to Nobu Ishida's business. He waits for hours and sees no movement at Ishida's place. He does see the two Asian cops who stopped him the first time he tried to follow Ishida. After about six hours pass, Cole takes a look inside. He finds Nobu Ishida and his henchman with the missing finger brutally murdered in the back office of the shop. Cole calls his friend Poitras who tells him to stay put and not to touch anything at the scene.

Chapter Seven-Nine Analysis

Although Cole has been hired by Warren there is a clear difference in their priorities for the job. Now that a threat has been made, Cole wants to protect human life. As dysfunctional as Cole knows the Warren family to be he wants to protect Sheila and Mimi. Warren on the other hand, can't stop thinking from a business point of view. He fires the security company without a replacement and hasn't even considered one until Cole questions their safety.

The Tashiros take a liking to Cole due to his efforts to retrieve Hagakure; however, there is a hint Cole may be overlooking the significance of the piece to this group of people. The Tashiro elder tries to make him understand why the manuscript must be returned at any cost. "The Hagakure is Japan. It is the heart and the spirit of the people. It defines how we act and what we believe and what is right and what is wrong and how we live and how we die. It is who we are."

Joe Pike is described for the first time. Previously he is only mentioned as Cole's partner, who isn't a licensed private investigator but a former Los Angeles police officer.



As with all of Cole's associates, the interaction between the two men is odd and seems to lack emotion but becomes humorous for the reader. Joe Pike is large in stature and no-nonsense. "Every shot had been within two inches of center. He was delighted. You could tell because the corner of his mouth twitched. Joe Pike does not smile. Joe Pike never smiles." Nonetheless, Pike and Cole have an unspoken connection as friends.

Even with his smart mouth and lack of discretion Cole manages to move around some places without being noticed. He sits outside Ishida's place for hours unnoticed by any of Ishida's men or by the police task force who is also watching the place. It still seems that Cole is a step behind on solving the case; he gets there too late to see anyone commit Ishida's murder. Despite his nonchalance, Cole is human and is clearly disturbed by the brutality used to murder Nobu Ishida. "I tried everything I could think of but I couldn't get rid of the taste or the smell. I never could. Like every encounter with death, it had become a part of me." This quote also gives reader insight beyond the novel about Cole. Here is another indication that he may not be completely happy with his choice to be a private detective. Death is an aspect of the job that doesn't sit well with Cole.



Chapter Ten-Twelve

Chapter Ten-Twelve Summary

The Asian Task force watching Ishida's place is angry that the murder happened and other cops were called without them knowing anything. They are ready to take out their anger on Cole. Cole is asked a million questions, and he learns that the task force was watching Ishida to get to a drug kingpin named Yuki Torobuni. Their operation imports brown heroine from China and Thailand. Even with his drug connections Cole believes the murder is related to the theft of the Hagakure.

Cole heads to the Warren home after a phone call from Jillian Becker. She informs him that Bradley Warren's Man of the Month banquet was coming up and the family had received another threat. This time the caller vows to hurt Mimi if they don't cancel the banquet. The warning doesn't faze Warren who is unwavering about attending the banquet and not calling the police for fear that their presence will disrupt the night.

Cole gets in touch with Jack Ellis, the head of Bradley Warren's security team at his hotel. Jack is also in disbelief that Warren would rather risk his daughter's safety than to cancel the banquet. Cole, Pike, Jillian Becker and the Warren family travel to the banquet. Cole, Pike and Ellis try to keep security tight, but Sheila and Bradley are so accustomed to ignoring Mimi that they don't notice when she disappears from their side. Cole and Ellis find a message in the restroom where Mimi was last seen: "WE WARNED YOU."

Chapter Ten-Twelve Analysis

Cole is haunted by the sight of Ishida's body, cut up and tortured. Many of the other police officers are also shaken by what they see. The task force laughs at Cole's naïveté about the Japanese mob; the yakuza and the crimes that take place in the Asian community. One of the officers suggests that Cole read the translation of the Hagakure to get some understanding of what he has gotten into. It is the first time the reader gets the impression that Cole should actually listen to someone else's advice. The officer also puts a name to one of the men Cole noticed with Ishida, Eddie Tang.

It is the first time Bradley Warren is in the same place as his wife and daughter. It is clearly for appearances sake because his mind is completely focused on business. Again Cole is angry that one of Mimi's parents have put their own interests before her. In this case, Mimi's safety may be at risk, but Bradley doesn't acknowledge her existence enough to take the necessary precautions. Mimi is another item for him, but less important than items like his business, his image and now the Hagakure. Mimi's lack of personality and presence is a direct result of her parent's ignorance. She tries to get her parents to see her and approve of her. She tries to show off her dress to Bradley Warren and his only response is that she didn't fix her hair.



Cole learns that all of Warren's employees don't hold him in as high a regard as Jillian Becker does. Jack Ellis is frustrated that Warren would take such a risk with his own daughter's life-all to make the proper business impression. It is even more frustrating for Cole who takes all of the necessary precautions to protect Mimi and loses her because her mother doesn't care enough to notice her daughter leave her side. "Everybody smiled and kissed Sheila's cheek and shook Bradley's hand. There was back slapping and more photographs and everyone ignored Mimi."

The reader is given more insight into Cole as he tries to protect Mimi. He feels more strongly about the task than he did when asked to protect Sheila or to recover the Hagakure. It seems he feels a duty to protect the innocent. Again the haunting nature of death resurfaces for Cole; "In Vietnam I had learned that the worst parts of life and death are not where you look for them...the worst parts hover softly in the shadows and happen when you are not looking. The worst of life stays hidden until death."



Chapter Thirteen-Fifteen

Chapter Thirteen-Fifteen Summary

The police and FBI arrive at the scene to investigate Mimi's disappearance. Bradley Warren blames Cole and Ellis for the kidnapping and fires them both. He rushes the agent who is interviewing him, hoping to still make the Man of the Month award presentation.

Cole returns to his office after picking up food at a Vietnamese restaurant he frequents and is later joined by Pike. They decide to find Mimi despite Warren firing them, and they want to pick up the search with the yakuza gang.

Cole and Pike stake out Nobu Ishida's house late at night. They wait until his wife leaves the next morning and break in. They find translations for the Hagakure but not the manuscript itself. They eventually find a concrete clue in Ishida's credit card records—frequent and sometimes large charges at a restaurant called Mr. Moto's. Cole and Pike head straight there.

Chapter Thirteen-Fifteen Analysis

Warren's arrogance is simply reinforced here—he still believes himself to be in a position of power and firing Ellis and Cole makes him feel stronger in his position. Pike who has spoken very little and has shown no signs of opinion or emotion, offers Warren a few choice curse words before they leave.

Jillian Becker's role as peacemaker is diminishing, especially since for the first time, Warren's abuse is directed at her. He usually respects her enough to pause and let her handle things diplomatically. This time he is so angered that the banquet and his image may take a hit, that he blames everyone but himself.

For a while Cole wallows in his error that led to Mimi's disappearance. He stops for food as his usual comfort and at the restaurant gets lost in his thoughts. "I wondered if she could see it on my forehead: Elvis Cole, Failed Protector." Back in his office he wonders again if he is in the right business. His reservations pass when he makes up his mind to save Mimi and his partner Pike agrees that she needs their protection. It doesn't appear that anyone else is going to protect her if the two men don't. It is notable that when Cole needs comfort he remembers a child's song of bravery and seeks refuge in his office surrounded by all his cartoon characters—it is where he is the most comforted.

Like all of the other "bad" guys, the reader gets a look at Ishida's home life which directly contrasts with that of his business life. We saw the same for Malcolm Denning and Bradley Warren. Ishida barely has anything in his home that would connect his two lifestyles. Like any other family, Nobu Ishida's family is in mourning over Nobu's recent death. Part of Cole still hopes to find that one clue that will unravel the case completely

and earn him rank and recognition. The clue they find, however, is just a link to Ishida's life and may lead to another dead end.



Chapter Sixteen-Eighteen

Chapter Sixteen-Eighteen Summary

Cole and Pike freshen up in a public restroom after the long stakeout and enter Mr. Moto's around noon. They sit at the bar and order food, and Cole wastes no time dropping Nobu Ishida's name to the bartender in order to see her reaction. Pike recognizes a drug dealer he knows from his time on the force. The dealer is sitting with two Asian men whom Pike and Cole are convinced are up to no good. The two detectives immediately start stirring things up in the restaurant. Their actions lead them to Yuki Torobuni, Eddie Tang, and surprising information that Mimi also frequented Mr. Moto's.

Yuku Torobuni and Eddie Tang take Cole and Pike into the kitchen of the restaurant. He doesn't understand why Cole is there but quickly gets angry when Cole starts talking about the Hagakure. He threatens Cole and Pike and warns them never to come back. When Cole gets home he calls Jillian Becker and arranges for them to have dinner that night.

Cole and Becker have dinner, but she doesn't have much information on why Mimi would hang out in a place like Mr. Moto's. The Warren's always relayed that Mimi never left the house. Cole fishes for the possibility that Bradley Warren is somehow tied to the yakuza, therefore linking Mimi and possibly making her an easy target. Becker has never heard of any of the yakuza men and doesn't see how the connection could have been made through Bradley. Cole convinces her to get him into the Warren house to take a look at Mimi's room.

Chapter Sixteen-Eighteen Analysis

The reader is meant to feel the pressure from the danger in which Cole and Pike have submerged themselves. The increased feeling of danger emphasizes Cole and Pike's nonchalance even with their lives at risk. The lead that that at first seemed to have little potential leads them to more than they expected. Eddie Tang's link to the yakuza is confirmed and for the first time there is a hint that Mimi's life and problems may not be as simple as it seemed.

Like all the other people who Cole has met, Torobuni is shocked by Cole's brashness when dealing with the feared yakuza gang. They all assume Cole must not know better which seems to be his saving grace. Cole tries to find out more about Mimi's whereabouts, but the only reaction he gets is laughter from Eddie Tang. Pike, as always, remains silent and observant.

Jillian Becker is brought back into the novel even though Cole's tie with Warren has been severed. There is a hint that she has more of a heart than she has let on so far.



The chapter opens with Cole watching the news for the first time in the novel. It turns out that he wanted to see what was being reported about Mimi Warren. Jillian Becker tries to remain guarded with Cole but can't help warming up to him. She clearly appreciates that he actually cares about Mimi enough to try to find her despite the fact he isn't getting paid for it. She seems to share the concern for Mimi even though she maintains support of her employer Bradley Warren.



Chapter Nineteen-Twenty-One

Chapter Nineteen-Twenty-One Summary

Cole looks around Mimi's room and the only clues they find that she had any connection to the outside world is a Japanese poetry book from someone named Edo and letters from someone named Traci Louise Fishman. There is no sign of the friends with whom she was said to have frequented Mr. Moto's.

Cole goes to the Glenlake School for Girls to find Mimi's friend Traci Louise Fishman. Cole is dressed impeccably and convinces the admissions office that he is there for a tour. When he is left to look around the campus on his own he tracks Traci down. She isn't physically attractive or popular so the other students watch to see why Cole is with her. Traci shows Cole a picture that Mimi gave her. In the picture Mimi is posing with a large group of people, including Eddie Tang. Traci identifies Eddie as Mimi's new boyfriend.

The group of girls eying Cole and Traci climb into a Porsche to continue watching from the comfort of the car. Traci admits she didn't understand the things Mimi talked about once she started hanging with her new group of friends. "She said they were real. She said they loved her. She said they were the first people she'd ever met who truly had purpose." Traci also tells Cole about an incident when Mimi burned herself with a cigarette continually for no particular reason. Traci was afraid of what Mimi had become but still loved her friend and wanted her back. Before Cole leaves he kisses Traci to make the girls in the Porsche jealous. Traci is surprised and elated.

Chapter Nineteen-Twenty-One Analysis

The entire Warren home now seems as empty and barren as Cole remembered Mimi's room. Both Cole and Becker are in disbelief that Mimi's room belongs to a sixteen-year-old girl. Mimi seemed to have one good friend that she could confide in but there was no other indication that she lived the vibrant life that a young teenager should.

Now that Jillian Becker is out of the shadow of Warren, her personality has started emerging. She is clearly torn between her morals and her career. "When you're in school, they don't tell you how it costs. They don't tell you what you've got to give up to get where you want to be."

Cole as a charming character is introduced here as he works his way to information about Mimi. His approach is completely opposite than what the reader has seen so far. He is graceful and sensitive which demonstrates that Cole can work intelligently despite how thoughtless and reckless he usually appears to be.



Traci Louise Fishman is what Cole expects her to be seeing that Mimi is her closest friend. Traci lacks self confidence and social grace and is clearly a loner. It is also because of Traci that Cole is surprised by the version of Mimi he sees in the picture.

Because the story is told from Cole's perspective, the reader is as surprised as he is about Mimi's secret life. In addition, Traci doesn't even know everything that Mimi has been up to or know anything about the people Mimi has been around. Traci is hurt by Mimi's behavior because it has made her an outcast with her only friend. "This one time she got so mad at me she didn't talk to me for a month. You have to be careful. I told her I was real, I told her I had purpose. Mimi could sneak out, make herself up and change her clothes, and be with these people, then undo it all and go back home and be a different Mimi and her parent's never knew."

Cole supports the idea of innocence and youth-it's the reason he kisses Traci to make the other girls jealous. He knows she doesn't have many shining moments. His belief in Mimi's innocence now has him baffled because it doesn't match with the character of someone like Eddie Tang.



Chapter Twenty-Two-Twenty Four

Chapter Twenty-Two-Twenty Four Summary

Cole continues to compose a theory that would put Eddie Tang and Mimi together. He calls Lou Poitras to tell him what he has found out about Mimi. Next Cole finds Eddie Tang through the phone directory and camps out near his house. No one is home, and when Eddie returns, Cole waits. He later tails Eddie and watches him make a few stops and a few shady business exchanges. After a few hours Cole follows Eddie to the Sunset Strip and a club called the Pago Pago. There's a group of young men and women waiting for him, including Mimi Warren.

Eddie leaves the front of the club with Mimi and her two friends and takes her to a private house in the hills of Hollywood. It appears Mimi is staying at the house, so Cole finds a pay phone and calls information to find out who owns the home. Cole learns that the home is owned by the artist Kira Asano. Cole saw one of his books in Mimi's room previously. He learns from a connection, Eddie Ditko at the Herald Examiner, that Asano came to America hoping to build a new Japan. He formed a group with hundreds of young followers that came to be known as the Gray Army. With that info, Cole heads back home.

The next morning Cole returns to Kira Asano's house and refuses to leave until they allow him in the gate to see Mimi or Asano. Two Asian men are sent out to get Cole to leave and Cole knocks one of them out before the other returns to the house to let them know Cole isn't moving. Cole gets impatient waiting and finds another way in. He asks around until he finds Mimi who is clearly shocked to see him there. The two bodyguards and another man find Cole at the same time and this time they are armed with a gun.

Chapter Twenty-Two-Twenty Four Analysis

Cole wants to believe in Mimi and comes up with a scenario that preserves her innocence; she was duped by Eddie Tang for the Hagakure. Cole intuitively knows this theory may not be true but doesn't let it register. Instead he thinks about how he would be better off not having heard anything about Mimi or Eddie or any of the characters he has met with the case. He thinks of Lou Poitras' daughters when talking about the mess that Mimi is in; Cole has compassion and it's what is driving him to solve Mimi's kidnapping. Unfortunately, Cole learns quickly that Mimi clearly wasn't kidnapped and appears to be enjoying life away from the Warren family.

Seeing Mimi leaves Cole more confused than when he learned of her association with Tang. "Mimi Warren wasn't tied up and no one was holding a gun on her. She was wearing tight white pants and a green sequined halter top and spiked-heeled silver sandals." He notices what she is wearing, as he does with everyone, but this time the social implication of her outfit directly contrasted the image of Mimi as a kidnap victim.



Now that Asano is also in the equation Cole has to try to come up with a scenario that keeps Mimi as the victim with Tang and Asano using her to get the Hagakure. The idea still seems out of reach because he is now completely unsure of who Mimi is. "I thought about all of the different Mimis. The Mimi that I'd met and the Mimi that Bradley and Sheila knew and Traci Louse Fishman's Mimi and the Mimi who thought the kids in the gray uniforms had 'purpose'...maybe there would even be a different Mimi tomorrow. Maybe I needed to know which Mimi was the real Mimi before I'd know what to do."

Cole is back to his usual ways and as always pushes his way to progress until his life is threatened. It is clear he is determined to talk to Mimi and get to the bottom of the stunt she pulled. His motivation is no longer the money; now he has to appease his own sense of judgment and curiosity. Cole is now unsure about his choice to stand in Mimi's corner even with her dysfunctional family life. This is partially why he has to continually convince himself that there is an explanation where she is in fact the innocent, lost girl he pegged her as.



Chapter Twenty Five-Twenty Seven

Chapter Twenty Five-Twenty Seven Summary

The third man with the two bodyguards is Kira Asano. The man that Cole fought with at the gate, Bobby, is the one now holding a gun. Asano calls the other man Frank and after checking to make sure Mimi is fine, usher Cole into a private room. They talk for a while and Asano insists that Mimi is there on her own free will and that he has no idea about the fake kidnapping. Cole knows that Asano won't want the cops shaking up what is left of his establishment so he agrees to let Cole talk to Mimi. Cole suggests coming up with a solution that will make Mimi happy and keep the cops away from everyone. Asano never admits having the Hagakure.

Cole takes Mimi outside to talk. He does most of the talking but she does seem to be in love with Eddie Tang and believes his promises of love and marriage. She tells Cole what he already knows—that she hates her parents and insinuates that her father sexually molests her. Cole tells her that he will find a way to get help for her without depending on Eddie Tang.

Cole calls a friend, Carol Hillegas, who runs a youth halfway house in Hollywood. Cole makes an appointment to see Carol and then calls Jillian Becker and asks her to join him. The three of them talk about Mimi and try to figure out her best option since she is being abused at home. Carol wants to meet with Mimi on her own and then bring her parents into counseling with them. Cole asks Jillian to set up a meeting with Bradley and Sheila Warren at their home. He intends to get them both on board somehow.

Chapter Twenty Five-Twenty Seven Analysis

Although Cole pretends to be simple and unobservant the truth proves to be quite different. He only spends a few minutes with Asano and can read his past and his present circumstance. Asano was once a dominant leader respected in views and stature by those he led. He is only a fraction of that man now, and although Cole doesn't back down with him, Cole pities him a little. It appears that the Gray Army that he formed has ended up running itself, and Asano's home is more of a refuge than a headquarters. Nonetheless he does seem to care about the youth he has taken in and he carries a strength that Cole clearly respects.

Cole makes it clear to Mimi that he has the ability to force her back home or into the hands of the police if he decides. He uses this statement to make her understand that his concern for her is greater than forcing her to do what her father or the cops expect him to do. He tries to appeal to her childhood side by quoting Jiminy Cricket from Pinocchio, but she doesn't know the reference, which symbolizes the loss of innocence. Mimi is convinced that even with his good intentions, Cole doesn't know anything and



that she is too messed up for anyone to know how to help her. Cole still makes up his mind to find a way to help her and leaves her at Asano's house.

Cole can't shake his conversation with Mimi even after he leaves, just as he couldn't shake the images of Nobu Ishida's mutilated body. He has obviously taken Mimi's pain to heart and immediately takes action in hopes of saving her. Cole meets with another associate who like the others has a coy, sarcastic but close interaction with Cole. Like Poitras, Pike and the other acquaintances Cole has called on, Carol Hillegas respects Cole and understands him.

Because of Cole, Jillian is caught between her career and her morality. She trusted Bradley Warren's character, coming to terms with his shrewd business manner, but is unable to accept him as a child molester. She isn't sure how to feel about what she has learned but agrees to help Cole even at the risk of her job.



Chapter Twenty Eight-Thirty

Chapter Twenty Eight-Thirty Summary

Jillian sets up the meeting with the Warrens that afternoon at 3pm. Both Sheila and Bradley are blatantly annoyed by the request to meet with Cole. Bradley thinks Cole is trying to scam money out of him somehow. Jillian leaves the three to talk, despite Bradley's firm orders for her to stay. Cole confronts Bradley directly about molesting Mimi and Sheila is notably shocked. She lashes out physically at Bradley, slapping and punching him until Cole pulls her away. Bradley can't let go of his business demeanor and tells Cole that without proof Bradley would sue him for tarnishing his reputation. Cole points his gun at Bradley's head to make him understand how serious he is. He makes Bradley promise to help his daughter and put himself second. Cole gives the Warrens Carol Hillegas' information and exchanges conversation outside with Jillian before leaving.

Everything seems to be moving smoothly; Cole reaches Carol and gives the green light for her to contact the Warrens. He then calls Mimi at Asano's house and tells her that he will pick her up in the morning to go to counseling at Carol's. He assures Asano's associate, Frank that he will keep Asano's name clear when the police get involved. Cole spends the rest of the evening at home with his cat until he goes to sleep.

Cole wakes up the next morning to a call from Jillian Becker asking why Mimi and Bradley are meeting alone. Mimi called her father that morning and insisted they meet at a construction site. Cole becomes nervous, especially when no one answers the phone at Kira Asano's house. Cole instructs Jillian to call Poitras, Griggs or Baishe at the LAPD and have them send a car to Mimi's location; Cole heads there too. He gets there just in time to see Mimi shoot her father while standing right in front of him. She jumps in her car and speeds off and Cole is left trying to save Bradley's life. His efforts are to no avail; Bradley dies moments later.

Once again Cole is questioned by the barrage of police that show up on the scene. Once again, they are angry that Cole didn't call them earlier. Jillian Becker and the Vice President of Bradley's company come down to the site to view Bradley's body.

Cole leaves the scene with Poitras, Ito and Griggs and heads to Asano's in hope of arresting Mimi. When they arrive at the house the gate is open and halfway up the driveway, Asano's associate, Frank is lying dead. They also find Kira Asano, dead in his office and estimate that he fought and killed his assailant; who is dead nearby. Cole and the police officers continue searching the house and find two girls hiding and fearful; one is Kerri, Mimi's friend, but there is no sign of Mimi anywhere.



Chapter Twenty Eight-Thirty Analysis

"You learned a very hard thing today. Time passes, you'll steady down. You'll see if you can live with it or if you'll have to make some changes." Cole tells a clearly shaken Jillian Becker. She asks, "Do you have to do that much? Make changes?" He replies, "Sometimes. Sometimes you can change what's there, sometimes what's there changes you." These two characters are clearly shaken by the possibility of Bradley molesting his own daughter. Cole's experiences has taken him through this type of ordeal before and he offers Jillian advice but he is also stating that he has been changed by all of it.

The entire ordeal offers a new look at Sheila and Bradley Warren as well. They both enter the chapter the same as earlier in the book—Sheila; cold, drunk and callous, Bradley; cocky, arrogant and all about his business. Once Cole charges Bradley with hurting Mimi, Sheila shows her first signs of love toward her daughter. She immediately explodes in her daughter's defense. The fog of her selfishness and drinking quickly lifts. It takes a little longer for Bradley to shake his exterior; he is disturbed by what Cole has accused him of but at first refuses to show it. Cole threatens his life and Bradley is immediately humble. The chapter closes with hope for Mimi's progress. This thought seems to be Cole and Jillian's only comfort at this point as well.

For the first time Cole seems visibly doubtful about his choices. His choice to trust Mimi as the innocent victim has now led to the cold murder of her father and many others. The police are clearly angry with Cole and this time he seems to be a little angry with himself.

This addition to the plot also probably changes the reader's opinion. Cole's thoughts encourage the reader to formulate characteristics and concepts comparable to his. Now that he isn't sure who Mimi really is and what she is capable of, the plot also has a new sense of unpredictability.



Chapter Thirty One-Thirty Three

Chapter Thirty One-Thirty Three Summary

Mimi's friend Kerri and the girl she was found hiding with tell them that four Japanese men barged into the house, started tearing it apart, shooting anyone in their way. They were looking for the Hagakure and took Mimi, but Eddie Tang was not with them. Neither the cops nor Cole can put all the pieces together, but it is clear that Mimi is at the center of the chaos, whether intentionally or not. Cole gets a ride back to his car and heads home.

Cole calls Pike and tells him what happened. Pike comes over and cooks to get Cole to eat and they make up their mind they can't leave the case open ended. They both agree to find Mimi and bring her in. Cole and Pike begin their search back at Mr. Moto's. It doesn't take them long to get Yuki Torobuni's home address from the manager. Unfortunately, he isn't at home and the only person there is a housekeeper who doesn't speak English. Their next move is to find Eddie Tang. There is a police car still watching Tang's apartment so they move cautiously. Pike waits in the car while Cole walks in as if he lives there. He meets two kids near the elevator who tell him that the cops have been upstairs looking for someone-they don't know who. Cole slips into the garage and when he finds Eddie Tang's car missing, he waits in the laundry room for the cops to leave so he can check Tang's apartment. Eddie Tang had taken a trip but didn't take anything pertinent so Pike and Cole assume he will be back. They camp outside Tang's apartment for four days before he shows up.

Cole and Pike continue to wait after Eddie Tang returns to his apartment. A short while later, a limousine chauffeured by one of Torobuni's men arrives at the apartment to pick up Tang. The limo drives to the airport and picks up three Japanese men and heads to a lake-side mansion far in the mountains. Cole and Pike believe the three men to be more yakuza, most likely visiting Torobuni about the Hagakure. The group in the limo are greeted warmly by Torobuni and taken into the house. Eddie Tang sends for Mimi to be brought to him in the carriage house. Cole watches from the woods and is tempted to go after Mimi at that moment but Pike stops him.

Chapter Thirty One-Thirty Three Analysis

"Well you had her for a little while...Got family problems? Hire Elvis Cole, The Family Detective. Guaranteed to make things worse or your money back!" Cole doesn't need the cops or anyone else to tell him that he has messed things up this time; he berates himself. This chapter reminds the reader that Pike and Cole are actually good friends even though he hasn't been seen much so far. Pike knows that food is Cole's comfort and starts there. Once Cole has eaten, he spills the story about Mimi from the point when he and Pike last saw one another. Pike knows immediately that Cole blames himself for Bradley's death. "Ever since Nam, you've worked to hang on to the childhood



part of yourself. Only here's a kid who never had a childhood and you wanted to get some for her before it was too late." Pike offers the reader the perfect description for what has been driving Cole the entire novel. Preserving childhood innocence is Cole's driving force, and it will once again lead him to face the yakuza. Joe Pike has no intention of letting him face them alone.

Cole is still caught up in his mistake while Pike thoughtfully studies a translation of the Hagakure to understand what has driven all of the mayhem surrounding its theft. A part of Cole wants to hold on to the dream of himself as the perfect detective solving the perfect case. In the end, everyone ends up happy and stable like in the dream he had where Bradley didn't hate Cole and Mimi didn't hate Bradley. He really wishes he was able to save Mimi and has resolved that she is beyond saving so he is only left with the dream. "Sometime very late that night I fell into a sort of half-sleep and dreamed I was having dinner with Mimi Warren. I had the same dream every time I dozed off...always the same, and I could never hear what we said. Maybe the saying wasn't important. That we were together, maybe that was what mattered."

Pike is now the reasonable and it is clear now how his silent nature compliments Cole's personality. Now that Cole is driven by confusion and hurt, Pike is thinking calmly and diligently for both of them. An example is when Cole thought he was alone watching the Torobuni house from the woods. Had he been alone he would have stormed the carriage house once he saw Mimi enter to meet Tang. Pike, however, is the voice of reason telling him to at least wait until nightfall.

The meeting place shows the financial stature of the yakuza and the meeting itself reinforces the importance of the Hagakure.



Chapter Thirty Four-Thirty Six

Chapter Thirty Four-Thirty Six Summary

Cole and Pike go back to the nearby town and wait for nightfall. They rent a small boat and take the twenty-minute ride back to Torobuni's house. There are men bustling around the property; smoking, laughing and drinking. Cole and Pike check the carriage house first but Mimi is not there. They make their way through the main house and split up to search the second and third floors. Cole finds Mimi alone and naked in a locked room on the third floor. Below them on the second floor, Pike is discovered and has started firing his gun. They shoot their way down to the first floor, killing Torobuni and a lot of his men in the process. They are almost out of the door when Eddie Tang enters with another man who puts a gun to Pike's head.

Eddie protectively takes Mimi from Cole's side, assuring her that they will run away together as they planned. Cole notes Tang's reaction when he asks if he is the one who encouraged Mimi to kill her father. He quickly realizes that Mimi has acted alone in most of this. She chose to kill her father and felt no remorse about Asano's death either. Cole also realizes that Eddie Tang really does love Mimi, and she is currently in the company of the yakuza by choice. Cole tries to convince Eddie that Mimi needs help and to let him take her where she will get some.

When Eddie refuses to cooperate, Cole takes control of the situation by knocking out the man behind Pike with the gun. Eddie informs them that they can take the Hagakure but assures them that he will fight for Mimi. So Cole and Pike put down their guns and they fight. Eddie ends up dead and the police arrive on the scene shortly after. Mimi is angry and hurt over the death of Eddie Tang and Cole tries without success to comfort her.

The local police arrive and arrest Cole, Pike and Mimi. At the station the police take statements from Cole and Pike; Mimi never speaks or acknowledges anyone. Once their credentials are verified Cole and Pike are allowed to leave. They hold Mimi for the Los Angeles police to arraign her for Bradley Warren's murder.

Chapter Thirty Four-Thirty Six Analysis

Pike finally speaks up about Cole's level of irrationality because he is concerned that it will lead to more problems for them. "You're riding the edge on this one...be careful." The scene is purposely set with a charming young girl in the background, feeding the ducks and playing with her father. It is an image of which Cole longs to be a part.

The image of the young girl and father and the image of the child's room at Torobuni's house directly contrasts Cole's reality and the image of Cole and Pike pulling Mimi from the Torobuni house. In order to save and protect Mimi, Cole has to risk his life and hers.



It takes only moments with Eddie and Mimi in the same room for Cole to realize that he formed the wrong opinion about both of them. Eddie was in fact an active member of a group that murdered, stole and dealt in illegal activities, but Mimi was the mind behind all that unfolded surrounding the Hagakure. Mimi stole the Hagakure, and when Nobu Ishida threatened to kill Mimi to get it, Eddie and the yakuza killed him to protect her. Mimi killed her father and encouraged Asano to be killed because she felt that they were controlling her life. Eddie obviously doesn't condone all her actions and knows that she needs help; in the end he sacrifices his life for Mimi. Cole is surprised by his devotion and it negates his theory that Eddie was the one using Mimi to get to the Hagakure. It is a powerful moment when Eddie easily offers to give up the Hagakure for Mimi.

In the end Mimi even hints that she lied about her father molesting her. She is angry with Cole and sees him like she sees all of the other "father" figures in her life—as an obstacle.

When they get back to Pike's car, Cole admits his mistakes. "It wasn't the way I thought it was. Eddie loved her...She wanted to stay with him. She hadn't been kidnapped. She wasn't going to be killed...I assumed a lot of things that were wrong. I needed her to be a victim, so that's the way I saw her." Pike brings up Bradley and Cole feels guilty about his misjudgment there as well. "She made up so damn much. Maybe she made that part up, too. Maybe he never touched her. I needed a reason for it all, and she gave me that. Maybe I helped her kill him."

Pike also talks to Cole about his exchange with Eddie. From appearance throughout the novel, people always judged him as cold and no nonsense but Pike continues to prove his depth and insight. While Cole is wallowing in self-pity, Pike takes the time to notice the Milky Way that he can't see from L.A. He had an understanding of Eddie's mind and way of life and knew that Eddie wanted to save Mimi or die. Pike read the translation of the Hagakure and respected it enough to understand it. Eddie knew Pike understood which is why he gave Pike the gun because he knew one of them would have to die to end the fight. "Eddie Tang was yakuza, but he killed Ishida for the girl. He committed himself to getting her to Japan, but we stopped him. He loved her, yet he was going to lose her. He had failed the yakuza and had failed the girl and he had failed himself. He had nothing left.' I remembered the way Eddie Tang had looked at Joe Pike. Pike and not me. 'The way of the warrior is death.'"



Chapter Thirty-Seven

Chapter Thirty-Seven Summary

Cole learns the police are holding Mimi in the prison medical facility so he calls Carol Hillegas to check on her case. Cole gets many calls from the D.A. and the various county police involved in the situation at Torobuni's, but no one charges Cole and Pike with anything. Cole gets a visit from Terry Ito who comes by to thank Cole for killing Torobuni. Cole stays at home that night and the following day thinking about all of the events with Mimi Warren.

His next visitor is Jillian Becker, dressed casually for the first time since they met. They talk about Mimi a little and she tells him she is leaving Los Angeles in a few weeks. She hopes to spend time with Cole for the remainder of her stay who has no objections. Jillian makes him laugh for the first time in days.

Chapter Thirty-Seven Analysis

Cole spends his time reviewing all that has happened; he still isn't over everything. He realizes all the points in the case where he should have made alternate choices. "I thought about Traci Louise Fishman and I thought about what Mimi had said. I make up stuff all the time. Maybe it couldn't be over until I knew what was real and what wasn't. Some hero. I had brought Mimi back, but I hadn't saved her." Cole didn't live up to his own image of a hero, and there is an indication that this isn't the first time.

Jillian Becker offers him an alternate point of view; that of everyone who cares about Cole. She knows that his heart had been in the right place by trying to save Mimi and that is what counts. "If the one who makes the pain stop is the one who loves them, then that's you." Cole was that person for both Mimi and Jillian.



Characters

Elvis Cole

Elvis Cole is the character around whom the plot of the book is built. Cole is a private detective in Los Angeles with a no-nonsense, sarcastic, witty and charming attitude all in one. Cole has just taken on a case to find a missing ancient Japanese artifact, a book called the Hagakure. The case takes him into the depths of the Asian crime scene in Los Angeles at which Cole shows no fear. In the process of looking for the Hagakure, his client, Bradley Warren also employs him to protect his family at an awards dinner. On that night the family's carelessness causes their daughter, Mimi, to be kidnapped right in front of them. Because of his experience in Vietnam, Cole is an advocate of protecting the young and innocent and takes on the job of finding Mimi even after her father fires him. Unfortunately, Mimi has submerged herself in a crazy lifestyle that includes falling in love with a member of an infamous Asian organized crime group called the yakuza. She steals the Hagakure from her father and fakes her kidnapping as her ticket away from her parents and the life she has known. Cole refuses to accept that she is already a lost soul and keeps searching for her even though she doesn't want to be found. Eventually he brings her home and sees to it that she gets professional help.

Elvis Cole rubs all the people he investigates the wrong way. He refuses to be intimidated by anyone and has a sharp, sarcastic humor. Nonetheless he has made a lot of loyal friends in his business which helps him get the job done. There is a part of him that wishes for a family of his own, and the preservation of childhood innocence is a strong driving force for him. It is the reason he jumps in head first in the Warren case once Mimi is kidnapped. Under his nonchalant, sarcastic exterior he has a heart that keeps people connected to him.

Mimi Warren

Mimi Warren is Bradley and Sheila Warren's daughter. Bradley is a wealthy businessman who hires Elvis Cole to find a priceless Japanese artifact he was holding at his home. To everyone in the Warren's circle, Mimi appears to a quiet, unattractive, introverted sixteen-year-old girl. Elvis Cole's investigation into the theft of the Hagakure uncovers a side of Mimi Warren about which her parents know nothing.

Frustrated that she is overshadowed by her parents' individual lives, Mimi seeks family ties elsewhere. She finds people she can relate to in a group known as the Gray Army. It is a youth group led by Kira Asano, an artist and former revolutionary. He left Japan with hopes of starting a "new Japan" in America. He wanted the statutes once found at the heart of Japanese culture to be the basis for his new movement. Mimi was attracted by this new family and through them becomes romantically involved with Eddie Tang, a member of a known Asian organized crime gang. It is these influences and her own disturbed mind that leads Mimi to steal the Hagakure herself, fake her own kidnapping



and murder her father, all with hopes of starting a new life with Eddie. In the end she is arraigned for the murder of her father and brought to a medical facility for psychiatric evaluation.

Jillian Becker

Jillian Becker is Bradley Warren's employee. Her job title is never stated but she seems to be his right hand, always present in his business and personal dealings. Bradley is not always met well by most people, so Jillian serves as a buffer to make sure things always go smoothly. This was the case when Bradley arrived at Elvis Cole's office to hire him to find the Hagakure. Jillian is the only reason Cole accepts the case at first.

Jillian reserves a very sharp business-like manner with Cole, but it is clear that is a little intrigued by him. Nonetheless she doesn't get comfortable with him until he is fired and starts to uncover disturbing things about Warren. Cole suspects Warren has molested his daughter, so Jillian helps Cole get to the bottom of the case and find Mimi when she goes missing. Meeting Cole puts Jillian in an awkward position because her morals won't let her work for someone who would commit such acts, but she has clearly worked hard to be successful in her career. In the end, Bradley Warren is murdered and Jillian chooses to move to the East Coast. Jillian and Cole become close through the Warren ordeal, both of them wish that there could have been more between them.

Joe Pike

Joe Pike is an ex-police officer and Elvis Cole's partner at their private investigator agency. Cole and Pike have been friends for a while and served in Vietnam together. Pike is quiet and his appearance is intimidating. Even though he says few words throughout the novel, he is Cole's voice of reason and enlightens Cole when he is turning a blind eye to certain things. Cole never pauses long enough to understand the culture driving all these people to go through so much to get the Hagakure. Pike, on the other hand, takes the time to understand the people he has to confront to use it to his advantage.

Eddie Tang

Eddie Tang is a member of the yakuza crime gang. He is introduced when Cole goes to Nobu Ishida's shop digging around for leads to the missing Hagakure. Eddie is one of the goons who appear to be there to protect Ishida. When Ishida threatens to kill Mimi in order to get his hands on the Hagakure, Eddie kills him to protect her. Because of Eddie's ties with the yakuza, Cole thinks Eddie is using Mimi to get the Hagakure. Reality is the exact opposite and Eddie loves Mimi so much he is willing to give up the book and in the end gives his life for her.



Nobu Ishida

Nobu Ishida runs an import business in the Little Tokyo area. He is Cole's first solid lead to the Hagakure. Cole tries to follow him to see where the trail leads and is stopped by the Asian Task Force of the Los Angeles Police Department. They are watching Ishida with hopes he will lead them to one of the heads of the yakuza gang, Yuki Torobuni,

who has a big drug trade going on. The second time Cole goes to Ishida's place to stake out, he finds Ishida brutally murdered. Cole and Pike search his home after his death and find leads that go straight to Yuki Torobuni.

Kira Asano

Kira Asano is a Japanese minimalist artist who moved from Japan to America with hopes of instilling the Japanese samurai spirit in American youth. He wanted to bring the true Japan to America and started a group known as the Gray Army. The group has long begun to fade by the time Mimi Warren joins, but there are still a few young people living on his compound under his wing. Mimi lashes out at anyone who acts like a father figure to her so she doesn't protest when the yakuza take the Hagakure and murder Asano. Asano dies fighting, killing his assailant in the process.

Carol Hillegas

Carol Hillegas is a social worker and friend of Elvis Cole. Cole and Jillian Becker meet with Carol to try to find a solution to Mimi's problems at home. At the time they think that Bradley Warren is molesting Mimi and want to make sure he stops and she gets the counseling she needs. Like most of Cole's friends she is a straight-talker and ready to help Cole without hesitation. Mimi escapes Cole before he can get her to Carol but when Mimi is arrested for the murder of Bradley Warren, Cole asks Carol to check on Mimi. Carol expresses that although Mimi may not see it that way, Cole is the only one who loves her because he always has her best interest in mind.

Yuki Torobuni

Yuki Torobuni is the head of yakuza and is wanted by the police for importing drugs from China and Thailand, among other places, into America. His character is introduced when Cole stumbles onto him at Mr. Moto's a restaurant he owns. Here Cole makes the close connection between Torobuni and Eddie Tang, and Torobuni warns Cole to stay away. Torobuni is killed in the shooting at his mountain home when Cole and Pike go in to remove Mimi.

Sheila Warren

Sheila Warren is Bradley Warren's wife. She is bitter about what her marriage has become since Bradley is only concerned with business. Every time she is featured in the novel she is drinking regardless of the time of day. She is usually on the Warren property but doesn't know anything about her own daughter. Sheila has emerged herself in bitterness toward her husband and self pity. She tries to seduce Elvis Cole the first time she meets him, and the narrator makes it clear through the insinuation of other characters that he isn't the first or last. She is accustomed to getting what she wants and is angry with Cole when he ignores her advances.



Objects/Places

Hagakure

The Hagakure is an ancient Japanese manuscript. In the eighteenth century a man named Jocho Yamamoto "outlined every aspect of proper behavior for the samurai in manuscript form, it came to be known as the Hagakure." The theft of the Hagakure is the center of the novel plot.

Nobu Ishida's Shop

Nobu Ishida's Shop is a cover shop for the yakuza's illegal drug imports. There isn't much more than crates visible in the front of the shop. Ishida surrounded himself with yakuza thugs to protect his space.

Warren Home

Warren Home is a large, immaculate mansion that according to Cole, never feels like anyone actually lives there. The home displays Bradley Warren's affluence.

Mimi's Room

Mimi's Room is cold and devoid of any visible personal items. Mimi's room doesn't reflect any of her interests or hobbies and doesn't look as if she even uses it. Cole compares it to a minimalist painting.

Cole's Office

Elvis Cole's Office is almost a direct opposite of Mimi's room and the Warren home. His office is clearly used and lived-in. It is a comfortable space for Cole, fitted with cartoon character figurines, posters and trinkets everywhere.

Bradley Warren's Office

Bradley Warren's Office is located in a large facility called the Century Plaza Towers. Cole jokes that the "rent alone had to exceed the Swedish gross national product." (53) Warren's office is large and modern and fits his personality well— cold and business-like.



Mr. Moto's

Mr. Moto's is a dance club and restaurant in downtown Los Angeles. Cole and Pike find clues in Nobu Ishida's home that lead them to Mr. Moto's. It is a modern, young restaurant run by Yuki Torobuni.

Barton's Pistol Range

Barton's Pistol Range is where Cole always finds Pike when he needs him. It is where the reader is introduced to Joe Pike. Pike seems to run the place, although he doesn't seem to be an employee there.

Sun Tree Gallery

Sun Tree Gallery is an art gallery and Cole's first lead on the search for the Hagakure. It is run by a man named Malcolm Denning who also dabbles in some illegal activity through the business.

Eddie Tang's Apartment

Eddie Tang's apartment is gaudy and tacky and is apparently what Cole expected it to look like. Tang's apartment is the center of a lot of activity in the search for the Hagakure and Mimi. The cops leave a detail there to watch Eddie Tang once Ishida is murdered.

Cole's Apartment

Cole's Apartment is as comfortable as his office. There are less cartoon items there, but he spends most of his time there watching cartoons with his cat (who also enjoys them.) Cole's apartment is rugged and high in the mountain with a great view and enough space for him to be comfortable. He doesn't have any visitors beside Pike until the case is over.

New Nippon Hotel

The New Nippon Hotel is Bradley Warren's hotel. It is a luxurious upscale hotel where the event honoring Bradley Warren is held the night Mimi is allegedly kidnapped. Cole describes it as "a helleva hotel...a thirty-two story cylindrical column of metallic blue glass and snow-white concrete midway between Little Tokyo, Chinatown and downtown L.A." (89)



Themes

Childhood Innocence

Elvis Cole associates childhood with innocence and good. This idea drives his personality, his view of people and more specifically how he approaches the case with the Warrens and the missing Hagakure. It takes unraveling this case for Cole to realize that childhood innocence can be tainted.

As Elvis Cole is introduced in the novel he is happily surrounded by Walt Disney figurines and images that help decorate his office. In fact, his private detective license shares its space with a Pinocchio animation. Cole doesn't care that the presence of the cartoon items turn off potential "serious" clients like Bradley Warren. In fact Cole muses at Bradley's reaction as he takes in Cole's surroundings.

Later after Cole's meeting with Malcolm Denning at the Sun Tree Gallery, Cole goes home thinking about the fact that Denning is a family man. He is disturbed that Denning is actually a good father who found himself in a bad place, associating with bad people. It is the image of Denning with his children that prompts Cole's dialogue with his cat; "you ever notice, that sometimes the bad guys are better people than the good guys?" (26) Cole continues to make note of the families of those he has to follow and approach regarding the case.

The Warren family is at the center of his observation and they disturb him the most. He continues to search for the Hagakure, but once Cole meets Sheila and Mimi, his focus is redirected. Cole continues to submerge himself in everything that reminds him of his childhood; cartoons (even his cat has come to love watching them with him), posters, figurines and novelty items. He even dreams about a family of his own during his private time. "I...thought about what it would be like to marry and have children. I would have two or three daughters and we would watch Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers together..." (41) Cole can't understand why the child in the scenario, Mimi, doesn't indulge in anything that involves being a typical kid. He believes she is disturbed and her parents are to blame; therefore, Cole makes up his mind to be the one to save her from being lost to adulthood too early. Cole's search for Mimi and his search for her true identity is the story behind the title, *Stalking the Angel*.

Search for a Villain

Identifying villains in the novel becomes a relative search. The author offers conflicting good and bad qualities, background stories and circumstances for all the villains that it becomes the reader's job to decide who the villains are or if there are any. Cole's dilemma with defining the "bad gu" is introduced early in the story. "You ever notice that sometimes the bad guys are better people than the good guys?" (26)



Although it isn't immediately outlined, Bradley Warren is the first potential villain in the plot. At first he is only guilty of being obnoxious and condescending toward Cole. Then it becomes clear that he cares more about his business than his family when he chooses his awards dinner over insuring his daughter's safety. He continues his reign as a scoundrel when Mimi accuses him of sexual abuse. Later as the plot unfolds, though, doubt is inserted regarding Mimi's accusations and the reader is left to wonder if he deserved his fate. In the end Cole doesn't believe he did.

Eddie Tang is introduced as a common thug in the yakuza gang. Cole becomes increasingly worried about Mimi's well being once he finds out she is involved with Eddie. Eddie Tang has his hands deep in the yakuza gang and was responsible for the brutal murder of one of his own members, Nobu Ishida. Again, the plot twists at the end and Cole learns how much Mimi had to do with Eddie's choices. Love for Mimi drove him to kill Ishida, and Eddie wasn't responsible for persuading Mimi to steal the Hagakure and kill her father. According to Joe Pike's description, Eddie Tang almost dies honorably.

The final villain is the "angel" in the novel's title—Mimi Warren. Mimi is a villain because she is catalyst for a series of events that leaves many people murdered and Elvis Cole emotionally scarred. Mimi is "angel" in the sense that her mental state has been altered through her dysfunctional family life. Nonetheless she seems to be aware of the damage she causes around her and has no remorse. In the end Cole has to concede that she is the true villain, and he has to live with the fact that even with all his effort, he couldn't save her from that title.

Culture and the Hagakure

Mimi Warren becomes the character that the story eventually surrounds, but the plot doesn't exist without the element of Japanese culture. The characters treat this culture either with immediate dismissal or complete reverence. It is these attitudes that shape the events that unfold with Elvis Cole's case. The once clear-cut statutes of the Hagakure provide a distinctly contrasting backdrop for the corruption and cynicism in America and specifically Los Angeles. The characters become too focused on the Hagakure and what they can each gain from it. The loss of the Japanese "code" is why no one wins in the end.

One of Bradley Warren's first questions to Elvis Cole is "Do you know anything about the Japanese culture?" Cole responds cynically "I read Shogun." (3) Bradley continues, "The Japanese culture was once predicated on a very specific code of behavior and personal conduct developed by the samurai during Japan's feudal period." Again, Cole's response is sarcastic and unimpressed, "Samurai. Better buckle the old seat belt for this one." Cole continues his indifference for the Japanese culture even when he gets deep into the case and is blind sighted because of it.

Bradley Warren has a personal interest in the culture, shown by his request for the loan of the Hagakure in the first place. Bradley respects the culture because it serves him



from a business perspective. This is his downfall; he puts business before respect for his family. Mimi resents him for it and kills him.

Mimi is thought of as the victim to some but she has some of Bradley's cold calculated behavior. Mimi uses the Hagakure as a tool more than any of the other characters. She steals the Hagakure from her father to hurt him and test his love for her. She then uses the book as a means to a life free from her father with Eddie Tang. Mimi claims to have joined with her friends and Kira Asano because their lives have meaning, but Mimi shows no signs of living by their standards. Mimi resents all rules and stands by while Asano, who lived for the Hagakure and its statues, is killed.

Joe Pike offers the reader an outside perspective on the significance of Hagakure to Japanese culture. The Hagakure is based on ideals that cannot mix with those of the "new" Japanese and the American way of life. Kira Asano wanted to bring the principles of old Japan to America but he had to form a community separate from the rest of America to do it. Even then he wasn't successful for long before corruption found its way in through his disciples and he dies in the end. "This isn't just a book, Elvis. It's a way of life." (255)



Style

Point of View

The story is told from the first person point of view. The entire novel is written with the intent of the reader remaining close to the main character, Elvis Cole. Not much is told about Cole's life before or even during the span of the story, so it is important that we get to know him through the current occurrences. Cole's story is told through quotes in conversation and interaction with others as well as private thoughts in Cole's mind.

Cole is very humorous and sarcastic and the reader receives the full effect of his sly charm through his direct quotes. Cole's point of view is also unique and useful because he is a private detective and observes every detail around him; therefore, the reader is able to paint a picture of all of Cole's surroundings and the characters he encounters.

Setting

The novel is set in California; mostly in Los Angeles. The main character, Elvis Cole, lives specifically on Woodrow Wilson Drive, above Hollywood. He spends most of his time in the novel in various parts of Little Tokyo and Hollywood. In Little Tokyo there are a lot of low-key shops and restaurants. Cole is familiar with the area but before this case hasn't frequented it much beyond buying food. The men of the yakuza cross between both Little Tokyo and Hollywood, but the two settings are in direct contrast with one another.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written completely in English even though many of the characters are of Japanese background. The language and quotes aren't written in Japanese dialect either. The author uses the simplicity in language even for the Japanese characters to emphasize that the true plot of the story doesn't surround the Japanese gang members or the artists. Mimi is the centerpiece of the plot and she barely speaks. Involving other languages would have been distracting.

The main character, Elvis Cole includes a subtle humor and sarcasm in his conversation that is easily accessible and interpreted due to the author's use of the first person. The reader experiences the story along with Cole and enjoys his insertion of humor that is only between him and the reader.

Structure

The novel is made up of thirty-seven chapters identified by numbers rather than names. Each chapter lengths vary from 4-10 pages. The novel is 260 pages.



Quotes

"You ever notice that sometimes the bad guys are better people than the good guys?" (26)

"So clients weren't perfect. So being a private cop wasn't perfect. So life wasn't perfect. I could always get new cards printed up. They would say: Elvis Cole, Perfect Detective." (28)

"'She's very good in bed. Everyone says so.'
There were no posters on the walls or record albums on the floor or clothes spilling out of a hamper or diet soda cans or anything at all that would mark the room as sixteen-year old girl's." (48)

"The Hagakure is Japan. It is the heart and the spirit of the people. It defines how we act and what we believe and what is right and what is wrong and how we live and how we die. It is who we are." (56)

"Every shot had been within two inches of center. He was delighted. You could tell because the corner of his mouth twitched. Joe Pike does not smile. Joe Pike never smiles." (62)

"I tried everything I could think of but I couldn't get rid of the taste or the smell. I never could. Like every encounter with death, it had become a part of me." (71)

"WE WARNED YOU." (95)

"Everybody smiled and kissed Sheila's cheek and shook Bradley's hand. There was back slapping and more photographs and everyone ignored Mimi." (92)

"In Vietnam I had learned that the worst parts of life and death are not where you look for them...the worst parts hover softly in the shadows and happen when you are not looking. The worst of life stays hidden until death." (95)

"I wondered if she could see it on my forehead: Elvis Cole, Failed Protector." (102)

"When you're in school, they don't tell you how it costs. They don't tell you what you've got to give up to get where you want to be." (140)

"She said they were real. She said they loved her. She said they were the first people she'd ever met who truly had purpose." (151)

"'This one time she got so mad at me she didn't talk to me for a month. You have to be careful.' 'I told her I was real, I told her I had purpose' (153) 'Mimi could sneak out,



make herself up and change her clothes, and be with these people, then undo it all and go back home and be a different Mimi and her parent's never knew." (152)

"Mimi Warren wasn't tied up and no one was holding a gun on her. She was wearing tight white pants and a green sequined halter top and spiked-heeled silver sandals." (161)

"I thought about all of the different Mimis. The Mimi that I'd met and the Mimi that Bradley and Sheila knew and Traci Louse Fishman's Mimi and the Mimi who thought the kids in the gray uniforms had 'purpose'...maybe there would even be a different Mimi tomorrow. Maybe I needed to know which Mimi was the real Mimi before I'd know what to do." (166)

"You learned a very hard thing today. Time passes, you'll steady down. You'll see if you can live with it or if you'll have to make some changes.' Cole tells a clearly shaken Jillian Becker. She asks, 'Do you have to do that much? Make changes?' He replies, 'Sometimes. Sometimes you can change what's there, sometimes what's there changes you.'" (202)

"Well you had her for a little while...Got family problems? Hire Elvis Cole, The Family Detective. Guaranteed to make things worse or your money back!" (219)

"Ever since Nam, you've worked to hang on to the childhood part of yourself. Only here's a kid who never had a childhood and you wanted to get some for her before it was too late." (221)

"Sometime very late that night I fell into a sort of half-sleep and dreamed I was having dinner with Mimi Warren. I had the same dream every time I dozed off...always the same, and I could never hear what we said. Maybe the saying wasn't important. That we were together, maybe that was what mattered." (228)

"You're riding the edge on this one...be careful." (236)

"It wasn't the way I thought it was. Eddie loved her...She wanted to stay with him. She hadn't been kidnapped. She wasn't going to be killed...I assumed a lot of things that were wrong. I needed her to be a victim, so that's the way I saw her." (254)

"She made up so damn much. Maybe she made that part up, too. Maybe he never touched her. I needed a reason for it all, and she gave me that. Maybe I helped her kill him.

Eddie Tang was yakuza, but he killed Ishida for the girl. He committed himself to getting her to Japan, but we stopped him. He loved her, yet he was going to lose her. He had failed the yakuza and had failed the girl and he had failed himself. He had nothing left.' I remembered the way Eddie Tang had looked at Joe Pike. Pike and not me. 'The way of the warrior is death.'" (255)

"I thought about Traci Louise Fishman and I thought about what Mimi had said. I make up stuff all the time. Maybe it couldn't be over until I knew what was real and what wasn't. Some hero. I had brought Mimi back, but I hadn't saved her." (258)

"If the one who makes the pain stop is the one who loves them, then that's you." (259)



Topics for Discussion

Not much detail is given about Cole's past. What clues does the author offer to assess Cole's character?

Mimi Warren hates all the father figures in her life. Does she see Cole in the same light as her father and Kira Asano?

It is implied that Cole's private detective work and the family life he only dreams about can never work together. Support this idea.

Note all of Cole's references to cartoons and cartoon characters. What role do they play in the plot and what parallel does Cole make between cartoons and life?

Support the existence of a deeper personality within Joe Pike's stoic exterior. Use examples from the novel.

Cole lacks the perspective to see Mimi Warren's true flaws. Did this oversight really hurt the case or was it the only reason it was solved?

What is the significance of Sheila Warren's character? Is she another victim of Bradley Warren?

The Hagakure is last seen on a pile of Field & Stream magazines in the police precinct. Is the Hagakure truly a priceless item or is the value in the wisdom outlined in its pages?

Compare and contrast Bradley Warren and Elvis Cole. Are there any similarities?

What does food represent for Elvis Cole?