

Sunset Express: An Elvis Cole Novel Study Guide

Sunset Express: An Elvis Cole Novel by Robert Crais

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Sunset Express: An Elvis Cole Novel Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue and Chapters 1-3.....	5
Chapters 4-8.....	7
Chapters 9-13.....	9
Chapters 14-18.....	11
Chapters 19-22.....	13
Chapters 23-26.....	15
Chapters 27-30.....	17
Chapters 31-34.....	19
Chapters 35-39.....	21
Characters.....	23
Objects/Places.....	27
Themes.....	29
Style.....	31
Quotes.....	33
Topics for Discussion.....	34



Plot Summary

Sunset Express is the sixth novel in Robert Crais' Elvis Cole series. In this novel, Elvis is hired to work with the legal team defending Teddy Martin, a famous restaurateur who is accused of killing his wife. As Elvis uncovers evidence that could prove Teddy's innocence, he finds himself becoming a pawn in the defense's game of deception and greed. Sunset Express is a novel about the thin line that separates corruption and ethics.

Elvis is hired by Jonathan Green, famous defense attorney, to investigate rumors that police detective Angela Rossi, who found the murder weapon in Green's current case, has planted evidence in a previous case. As Elvis sets out to begin this investigation, he learns that Lucy, his new love, is coming to town for a visit. Elvis begins his investigation with high spirits and hopes to finish before Lucy arrives so he can devote his time to her.

Elvis interviews LeCedrick Earle, the career criminal who claims Rossi planted counterfeit money on him during his arrest. However, when Elvis interviews Earle's mother, who was also present the day of the arrest, he discovers that she supports Rossi's version of events almost word for word. As Elvis concludes that Rossi is innocent, he walks out of Earle's house to find Rossi and her detective buddies waiting for him. Rossi punches him before he can assure her that he has concluded his investigation in her favor.

Elvis reports to Green the following day and is given a list of names to check out from their tip line, several of which he is able to check out before the end of the day. Elvis picks Lucy and her son, Ben, up from the airport and spends the evening with them. The next day Elvis continues working on the list of names from the tip line while Lucy handles the business she has come to handle. Elvis interviews a man who claims to have talked with a blond man at a bar about kidnapping a rich woman to get money he needs.

Elvis tracks down a man who fits the description given of the blond in the bar. This leads Elvis to a duplex where he finds a map of Teddy Martin's house and pictures of Susan Martin. Elvis calls the police and finds himself turned into a celebrity overnight. The following day Elvis is told his services are not needed, so he takes Lucy and Ben on a tour of Los Angeles. While they are out, Elvis checks his messages and discovers that Green's office wants him to do an interview on television. Elvis agrees, but the aftermath is so intrusive that he decides not to do anymore.

Sometime later, Elvis sees a press conference in which Mrs. Earle has retracted her statement and now claims that Rossi set up her son. Elvis tries to talk to Green about this, but meets with resistance. Elvis quits the Big Green Defense Machine. The following day, Elvis visits Rossi and promises to help prove her innocent. Together, Elvis and his partner, Joe Pike, begin re-investigating the leads Elvis has discovered for Green, beginning with James Lester, the tipster who led Elvis to the evidence against

the possible kidnapers. However, when Joe and Elvis arrive at Lester's house, he is dead.

Elvis goes to Mrs. Earle's house, but she is not home. Elvis waits, eventually speaking with Mrs. Earle's neighbor. Elvis learns that Green's head of security has attempted to find Mrs. Earle as well. Elvis takes all the information he has now to Rossi, her partners, and the assistant district attorney. Unfortunately, there is not enough information to prove anything yet. However, the ADA gives Elvis the name of a lawyer who once worked for Green until he was busted for drugs. Elvis, Joe, and friend go to the lawyer's house and force him to help them break into Green's office and get a copy of his contracts with Martin.

Elvis and Joe return to Mrs. Earle's house in hopes of finding out why she has changed her story. When Mrs. Earle is still not home, Elvis and Joe break inside, hoping to find a airplane ticket charge or other evidence of her whereabouts. When Elvis discovers that Mrs. Earle has recently spoken to her son, he decides to go see LeCedrick to find out if he knows where his mother might be. LeCedrick admits to working a scheme with one of Green's lawyers to convince his mother to change her story. LeCedrick also tells them where Mrs. Earle has gone, but says he told Green's security man a few hours before.

Elvis, Joe, and Rossi rush to the home of Mrs. Earle's beau, but discover that Green's security people have already gotten to her. Elvis, Joe, and Rossi follow them to a deserted shed beneath a radio tower where they believe Mrs. Earle is about to be murdered. They sneak into the shed and a gun battle erupts. At the end, one of Green's lawyers admits that Green is dirty and he ordered the deaths of Mrs. Earle and her friend, as well as Lester. Elvis takes this information to the ADA who immediately has a warrant issued for Green's arrest. Unfortunately, Green is too smart to make himself vulnerable to prosecution. Elvis takes matters in his own hands by beginning a media campaign against Green.



Prologue and Chapters 1-3

Prologue and Chapters 1-3 Summary

Sunset Express is the sixth novel featuring Elvis Cole, a private detective who lives in Los Angeles. In a previous novel Elvis met Lucy Chenier, a lawyer from Louisiana, with whom he has become romantically involved over the intervening three months.

In the prologue, a young girl and her father are out for their routine Saturday morning run when they spot a body lying below the parking lot for a scenic overlook. The father flags down a local security officer who calls the police. When the detectives arrive, Angela Rossi volunteers to climb down to the body. Rossi takes pictures of the body as it lies wrapped in garbage bags. Rossi then opens the bag, takes a picture of the victim's face and searches for a murder weapon. Finding nothing, Rossi climbs back up to the parking lot and shows the pictures to her partner and the other detectives. One of them recognizes the victim as Susan Martin, the wife of a wealthy restaurateur. Rossi and her partner are instructed to go to the home of the victim to inform her husband while the others secure the scene and wait for the chief of detectives. At the home, Susan Martin's husband, Teddy Martin, gives the cops a hysterical story about a kidnapping and a large ransom. When Rossi steps away to call the other detectives with this information she finds the murder weapon.

In chapter 1, Elvis Cole meets in his office with Jonathan Green, a celebrity defense attorney, and several of his lesser attorneys, as well as a video crew following Green around. Green is representing Martin and he wants to hire Elvis to investigate Angela Rossi. Green has information that Rossi was accused of planting evidence in a case involving counterfeit money. Green wants Elvis to investigate this case and determine if Rossi did anything unethical. Elvis agrees.

In chapter 2, Elvis goes over the information Green and his staff left him before calling a reporter friend to ask for information on Rossi. Then Elvis goes to interview an ex-partner of Rossi's from when she was a beat cop. The man tells Elvis that Rossi was overbearing, that she purposely left him out of a bust that advanced her career, and that she lives in a house that is too expensive for her pay grade. However, Elvis can also see by this man's interaction with his current employees that he has a problem with women.

In chapter 3, Elvis goes to the address listed in Rossi's file and finds that it is in a prosperous neighborhood. Elvis asks a few questions of a neighbor and learns that Rossi lives alone with her two children and has only lived at this address for a short time. From there, Elvis decides to call it a day and returns to his house. Over dinner, Elvis talks long distance to his girlfriend, Lucy Chenier, a lawyer he met three months ago while working on a case in her home state of Louisiana. Lucy tells Elvis she is coming to Los Angeles on business and asks to stay with him. Elvis is so excited by this prospective visit that he has trouble sleeping that night.



Prologue and Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The prologue introduces the crime that will spawn Elvis's involvement with Jonathan Green, a famous defense attorney, in the following chapters. What is important for the reader to note is Angela Rossi's overwhelming involvement in the initial stages of the investigation. Of particular interest is the fact that she was alone with the body while it was still sitting below the overlook and the fact that she is the one that found the murder weapon. In the first chapter of the novel, the lawyer for Teddy Martin, the man Rossi helped build a case against, wants Elvis to investigate Rossi, to find out if she planted evidence in a previous case. Right away the reader realizes that Green wants to argue in court that Rossi had the opportunity to plant the murder weapon on the property of Teddy Martin. This places Rossi's character into question, leaving the reader just as curious as Elvis about whether or not Rossi is a good cop. This also introduces the theme of ethics, because it is Rossi's basic ethics that are being questioned.

Elvis begins his investigation immediately and learns that Rossi's bigoted ex-partner dislikes her. However, it is also clear to Elvis that this man doesn't think highly of women in general and therefore essentially dismisses most of his accusations, except for the claim that Rossi lives in a home high above her means. Elvis checks this out and finds it to be true, the reader begins to wonder if the ex-partner might not be right about other aspects of Rossi's personality as well. Finally, Elvis introduces the reader to Lucy, his girlfriend of three months with whom he has been carrying on a long-distance romance since meeting her during another case. Lucy is clearly important to Elvis, as evidenced by his excitement at the idea of seeing her again. This suggests a committed relationship and leaves the reader interested to see where it will go from here.



Chapters 4-8

Chapters 4-8 Summary

In chapter 4, Elvis hears back from his newspaper friend and learns that Rossi is a highly ambitious cop who made a mistake a few years back. Rossi forgot to Mirandize a suspect before he confessed. The confession was thrown out and the guy walked. However, Rossi has never been proven guilty of any other means of corruption. Later that morning, Elvis goes out to Terminal Island to talk to LeCedrick Earle, the career criminal who accused Rossi of planting counterfeit money on him after he tried to bribe her during a traffic stop. Earle tells Elvis his story again, but there are so many holes in it that Elvis finds it non-credible.

In chapter 5, Elvis goes to visit LeCedrick Earle's mother. Mrs. Earle lives in a small house in Olympic Park. When Elvis arrives, Mrs. Earle has a visitor she calls Mr. Lawrence. Mrs. Earle makes him leave, which makes the gentleman upset. Elvis asks Mrs. Earle about the night her son was arrested by Rossi in that very living room and she tells a story that sounds a lot like Rossi's. In fact, Mrs. Earle claims Rossi never left the living room, contradicting LeCedrick's claim that she came into his bedroom and produced the counterfeit money there.

In chapter 6, Elvis walks out of Mrs. Earle's house and directly into a sucker punch from Rossi. Rossi is upset because Elvis went to her house. Elvis explains to Rossi and her two detective pals that he was hired to investigate her by Green, but that he believes she is a good cop. A patrol car comes, but by then everything is smoothed over and the detectives send it away. Rossi warns Elvis to stay away from her house in the future.

In chapter 7, Elvis returns to the office to find Joe Pike waiting for him. Elvis tells Joe about the investigation, telling him that he believes Rossi is a clean cop, but he cannot understand how she could afford the condo where she lives. Pike, who had a relationship with Rossi in the past, explains that the condo is the result of some real estate Rossi inherited from her mother. When Pike leaves, Elvis calls Elliot Truly, an associate of Green's, and tells him he has concluded the investigation. Truly tells Elvis to come to a meeting at the office the following morning.

In chapter 8, Elvis goes to Green's offices on Sunset Strip and tells Green at a meeting that he believes Rossi is clean. After his report, Truly gives Elvis a list of names to check out from the tip line they have set up looking for the kidnapers Martin claims killed his wife.

Chapters 4-8 Analysis

Elvis checks out Rossi, first by learning about her public record through a friend at the paper, and then by visiting the man who accused her of planting evidence. The newspaper man tells Elvis the story of a very ambitious woman, a cop who wants to be



the first female chief of detectives. This woman has to be perfect, but she made one mistake several years ago that caused her meteoric rise to slow. Rossi got back on track with the arrest of LeCedrick Earle, but then Earle has accused her of planting evidence. It is this case that Elvis is to check out for Teddy Martin's defense to find out if she did and if it is possible she has done it again. Rossi is a determined woman who loves being a cop. Her attack on Elvis shows that she is not above reproach, but that she is determined to protect herself and her future at all costs. Rossi is a strong personality and she will not sit by quietly while someone uses her for their own gain, suggesting to the reader a time when this trait will be of great importance as the plot continues to develop.

LeCedrick Earle is a career criminal who saw an opportunity to have his sentence reduced by claiming a set up on behalf of the police. It is clear when Elvis interviews him that LeCedrick made up the story against Rossi and this notion is reinforced when Elvis meets with his mother, who was present the night of the arrest. What is important in these chapters is not so much the accusations against Rossi, but the introduction of two characters who have the power to help or hurt Rossi in the future. This foreshadows a time when these characters could come back and cause a great deal of trouble for Rossi.



Chapters 9-13

Chapters 9-13 Summary

In chapter 9, Elvis stops at a phone booth and begins calling the people on his list, hoping to knock some of them out before Lucy arrives so that he can spend quality time with her. However, no one seems to be home. Elvis meets with a man who believes he saw the murder when he was taken up in a spaceship by aliens. Elvis interviews several more obvious quacks before hanging it up for the day. Elvis goes to the airport to meet Lucy and her son Ben's plane. Elvis takes his guests to his house, shows them around and feeds them dinner. After Ben falls asleep, Lucy sneaks up to Elvis's bedroom.

In chapter 10, Jodi Taylor, an actress and friend of Lucy and Elvis', comes to take Ben to her set with her for the day. Elvis then takes Lucy to the rental car place before they both go off to work.

In chapter 11, Elvis meets with another name on the list who turns out to be the sister of a dominatrix who is only interested in the reward money. Elvis goes then to the home of James Lester. Lester is an abusive construction worker who claims to have had a conversation in a bar with a blond man wearing a Shell uniform with the name Steve on the shirt. This blond man claimed to be planning a kidnapping in order to extort money from some wealthy business man. Although Elvis dislikes Lester, he decides to check out his story.

In chapter 12, Elvis checks out the bar before hitting every Shell station in the area, asking for a man named Steve. Elvis finds a station where a Steve Pritzik worked eight weeks ago, just before the death of Susan Martin. This gives Elvis an address nearby. When Elvis goes to check out the address, he finds mail in the box for Elton Richards. Elvis breaks into the duplex and looks around, discovering that most of the utilities have been shut off, suggesting no one has been in the duplex for a couple of months. Under the couch cushions, Elvis finds an envelope that contains pictures of Susan Martin and a map of the Martin house.

In chapter 13, Elvis takes pictures of the pictures and map before calling Elliot Truly at Green's office. Within a short amount of time, the police arrive along with the assistant deputy district attorney in charge of the Martin case. The assistant deputy DA interviews Elvis, clearly unhappy with this new evidence, while Green shows up and makes a big show of protecting Elvis' rights. When Elvis is released and tries to leave, he finds himself the center of a media storm. Green makes a statement to the press, giving full credit of the find to Elvis.

Chapters 9-13 Analysis

Elvis is clearly being put on a menial task in interviewing the people who have called the tip line, but this task has led Elvis to discovering evidence that could prove Teddy



Martin's story of a kidnapping true. Teddy Martin has always claimed that his wife was kidnapped and that her body was found in the same location the kidnappers had him dump the money. The evidence Elvis finds, pictures and a map of the Martin home, seem to suggest that these two men, Steve Pritzik and Elton Richards are the kidnappers and therefore Susan Martin's killers. It could be the break in the case everyone has been waiting for and it should move the focus of the defense away from Rossi. It also has made a media hero out of Elvis, who has been credited with finding the evidence and saving an innocent man from going to prison. It seems like it could only be a win-win situation.

At the same time, Lucy and her son, Ben have arrived in Los Angeles. Elvis is clearly happy to see them and Lucy seems happy to see him. In fact, even Ben seems pleased. It appears the only one not happy is Elvis's moody cat. Everything is so blissful in these chapters, the reader is waiting for the other shoe to drop. It seems the writer has created such a happy atmosphere that it has added tension to the plot.



Chapters 14-18

Chapters 14-18 Summary

In chapter 14, Elvis returns home where Lucy and Ben tease him for becoming a celebrity. Elvis takes Lucy and Ben to Spago for dinner. As they are finishing their dinner, Pike comes in and takes Ben off to a movie premiere with a famous director who is also a friend of Elvis' and Pike. This gives Elvis and Lucy some alone time.

In chapter 15, Elvis calls Truly the following morning and asks what he should do next, hoping to be instructed to look for Pritzik and Richards. Truly tells him they already have a team searching for Pritzik and Richards and advises him to take the day off. Elvis takes Lucy and Ben sightseeing at Universal Studios before moving on to CityWalk. While waiting for a table at Wolfgang Puck's, Elvis is recognized from his picture in the paper and people begin asking for his autograph, believing him to be a celebrity.

In chapter 16, Elvis calls the office to get his messages and finds multiple messages from Truly. Green wants Elvis to do an interview on the five o'clock news. Elvis does the interview live on the news set, carefully skirting any questions that suggest the LAPD did not do their job properly.

In chapter 17, Elvis spends the next few days playing tourist with Lucy and Ben, avoiding the media crush at his office. Finally Elvis calls Truly and asks why his calls have been ignored. Truly invites Elvis and Lucy to Green's party that night. Elvis sends Lucy to buy a dress for the party and then goes to the office. A woman, who sounds like Mrs. Lester, calls and tells Elvis to check out a man named Stuart Langolier. Elvis asks an investigator friend to check out the name. Elvis then joins Truly and Green at the Men's Central Jail to visit Teddy Martin. Elvis talks to Green about following up on Pritzik and Richards, but Green suggests Elvis is above that now and that he should be patient and enjoy his newfound celebrity. Outside the jail, Green talks to the media, again crediting Elvis with the new evidence and stating that he plans to ask for bail for his client in light of this new evidence.

In chapter 18, Elvis checks his messages and returns a call to the investigator in Santa Barbara checking out Stuart Langolier. Turns out Langolier is a felon who was once represented by Elliot Truly. When Lucy comes home, Elvis tells her to call her secretary, then he leaves to check the fax machine at his office. When he arrives, Elvis finds Dan Tomsic, Rossi's partner, waiting for him. Tomsic accuses Elvis of choosing the wrong side by appearing with Green at the press conference outside the city jail. Elvis swears he is an honest detective and Tomsic warns him he better be. When Tomsic is gone, Elvis checks the fax the investigator in Santa Barbara has sent him and realizes by the arrest photo that Stuart Langolier is actually James Lester, the tipster who put him on Pritzik and Richards.



Chapters 14-18 Analysis

Even as things at home continue to get better with Elvis and Lucy, Elvis' professional connections begin to grow confusing. Elvis assumes after finding evidence pointing to Pritzic and Richards as the killers of Susan Martin, Green will want Pritzic and Richards found immediately. Truly tells Elvis that Green has other investigators on the case, but Elvis sees little evidence of this. Elvis is beginning to feel as though Green is using him, something that was suggested early in the novel. The reader might recall wondering why Green, a lawyer with access to all the investigators he should need in his office, would contract out to a private detective in the private sector. This question still lingers.

Elvis is made into a celebrity for finding the new evidence and finds himself avoiding his office to avoid the press. At the same time, Green appears to be promoting this image of Elvis as the super private detective. Elvis is tricked into appearing at a press conference in which he is once again made to appear the hero. Elvis does not wonder about this, but he does push forward with the investigation when a tip comes into his office that he should check out a guy named Stuart Langolier. It turns out Langolier is James Lester, the tipster who led to the kidnapping evidence, and his lawyer was once Elliot Truly, one of Green's associates. This smells like tampering with evidence, touching on the theme of ethics.



Chapters 19-22

Chapters 19-22 Summary

In chapter 19, Lucy and Elvis go to Green's party. As soon as they arrive, Elvis seeks out Green to ask him about the Stuart Langolier connection to Truly. Green claims that Truly had no way of knowing that Langolier was Lester and once he found out, he reported it to the district attorney's office. When Elvis demands to know what information they have learned about Pritzik and Richards. Green tells him the two have been found dead. Finally Green accuses Elvis of not doing a good job in his investigation of Rossi and that his other investigators found that Rossi most likely did plant evidence in the Earle case and more than likely did so in the Martin case. Elvis becomes irate and quits his job, dragging Lucy home.

In chapter 20, Elvis talks with Ben while doing Tae Kwon Do on the back deck. Ben tells Elvis that his father is not happy that he and Lucy are staying with Elvis. This news makes Elvis wonder if Lucy's ex had anything to do with the phone call she got from her secretary the day before. Over breakfast, Elvis takes a call from Pike and learns that Rossi has been suspended from duty pending an investigation into the accusation that she planted the murder weapon at the Martin house. Pike and Elvis immediately go to Rossi's house where they promise her they will do all they can to clear her name.

In chapter 21, Elvis and Pike stop for lunch and to discuss the case. Elvis believes that Mrs. Earle, who they saw on television telling a story opposite to what she told Elvis, has been coerced. Elvis wants to talk to her again. Lester, however, is just as interesting due to his connection to Truly. Pike and Elvis decide to go talk to Lester first. At the Lester home, Elvis and Pike talk with Jonna Lester, James Lester's wife, who is clearly high on drugs. Jonna tells them her husband is dead and directs them to the bathroom where they find his dead body, nearly decapitated by the shower door.

In chapter 22, Elvis takes a close look at the body before taking Jonna back to the living room where he can question her. Jonna swears she was not home the night before and she returned that morning to find her husband already dead. Jonna volunteers the information that she thought James was cheating on her for a time a few months before. Jonna would follow him whenever he went out, but he never saw anyone but his friend Clarence. However, Jonna does remember one time when James met a man in a supermarket parking lot, but she does not know the man. Elvis shows Jonna pictures of both Truly and Green from the newspaper, but she does not recognize either one.

Chapters 19-22 Analysis

Green continues to give Elvis the run around. Elvis begins to think that he has been used as a patsy and the following day when Rossi is openly accused of planting evidence in the Martin case, he knows he has been. Elvis jumps ship, holding on to his



personal ethics and backing Rossi, whom he knows to be a good cop, instead of Green, whom he is beginning to think might have planted the evidence suggesting Pritzik and Roberts kidnapped and murdered Susan Martin. This proves to the reader that Elvis is a good person, a moral person.

The more Elvis looks at James Lester, the more he begins to appear like a patsy, just like Elvis himself. It looks as though someone in Green's office put Lester up to calling the tip line and telling a story about the blond named Steve who wanted to kidnap a woman for an easy pay day. Elvis, knowing that Pritzik and Roberts are dead, is beginning to wonder if Elliot Truly put his old client up to setting these men up in order to have Elvis produce fake evidence in the murder case. Elvis tries to prove this, but Lester is dead when he arrives at his house. It appears to be an accident, but the role Lester played in the discovery of the new evidence makes both the reader and Elvis wonder if there are just too many coincidences in this death.



Chapters 23-26

Chapters 23-26 Summary

In chapter 23, Elvis has Jonna call the police to report her husband dead, then has her hide the drugs before they arrive. Elvis then goes home to a moody Lucy. They are making a silent dinner together when Rossi and Pike come by. Rossi wants to apologize for being difficult that morning and asks Elvis to please do all he can to help her. After they leave, Elvis has dinner with Lucy and Ben before they go to bed. Lucy does not come to Elvis that night.

In chapter 24, Lucy and Ben plan a day in Beverly Hills. Elvis promises to surprise them with a nice dinner that night. Elvis talks to the coroner's office and learns that Lester appears to be the victim of an accident, but there is some evidence that he might have been choked to unconsciousness and thrown into the shower door. Elvis then calls Mrs. Earle, but receives no answer. Elvis goes to her house and parks a few doors down before searching the area for evidence that Mrs. Earle has been home recently. A neighbor comes over and begins watering Mrs. Earle's plants. Elvis asks about Mrs. Earle and learns she left several days ago. Elvis also learns that Stan Kerris, the head of Green's security, was there that morning and attempted to break into the house. As Elvis walks back to his car, he sees Kerris drive by. Elvis takes several pictures of the car before it disappears around a corner.

In chapter 25, Elvis has the pictures quickly developed and takes them to Jonna Lester who identifies Kerris as the man she saw meeting with Lester in the supermarket parking lot.

In chapter 26, Elvis meets with Rossi, Tomsic, another detective and the assistant deputy DA. Elvis lays out his evidence and explains that he believes Green is behind the murder of Lester and that he planted the evidence against Pritzik and Roberts. Elvis also suggests that Green coerced Mrs. Earle into changing her story to support the defense's claim that Rossi planted the murder weapon at Martin's house. Everyone listens, but the assistant deputy DA, Anna Sherman, says there are too many holes in the case. Anna Sherman tells Elvis that she needs an airtight case in order to even think of arresting a celebrity lawyer like Green. However, as Elvis leaves, he finds Sherman waiting for him in his car. Sherman tells Elvis there is a lawyer who was busted for drugs who once worked for Green. Sherman has left the name and number in Elvis's glove box, but will deny giving it to him if he goes public with the information.

Chapters 23-26 Analysis

Lucy has suddenly become distant and difficult with Elvis. Ben tells Elvis that his father does not like them staying with Elvis, making Elvis think that maybe Lucy's moodiness

has something to do with her ex. Elvis really has no clue what is going on, but he hopes to make it right before Lucy leaves, touching on the theme of love.

Elvis learns from the coroner that Lester could have been murdered. Added to the fact that Kerris, Green's head of security, has been seen looking for Mrs. Earle leaves Elvis convinced that Green is killing off all the people who have information that can prove he has tampered with evidence. Elvis gathers all his evidence to prove that Green is dirty, touching on the theme of ethics, but he has not got enough concrete evidence to prove anything. Sherman, the assistant deputy DA, wants to build a case, however, and she gives Elvis information on the sly about someone who might help. This foreshadows Elvis finding something more concrete that might provide a motive for Green's actions, the one thing Elvis's case lacks.



Chapters 27-30

Chapters 27-30 Summary

In chapter 27, Elvis plans a romantic evening for Lucy, but they decide to stay in instead after a heart to heart talk in which Lucy admits that her controlling ex-husband has been attempting to control her once again now that he has moved back to Baton Rouge. Lucy also admits to a growing dissatisfaction with her life, which leads Elvis to encourage her to think about moving to Los Angeles.

In chapter 28, Elvis meets Joe Pike and another friend, Ray Depente, at the home of Lucas Worley, the lawyer Sherman told him about. They come up with a scheme to get the information they want out of Worley. They go together into Worley's apartment after he leaves and find his drug stash. Elvis then waits for Worley to return. When Worley returns, Elvis convinces him that Pike and Depente are henchmen for a rival drug dealer who are there to kill Worley unless he agrees to help Elvis. Worley agrees.

In chapter 29, Worley tells Elvis that he still has access to Green's offices. Elvis, Pike, Depente, and Worley wait until late in the day when most of the employees of Green's offices are gone. They go to the building and gain entry with Worley's security card. Pike throws a smoke bomb into the contracts department and sets off a fire alarm, clearing out the few people who remain. They go into the offices and Worley downloads all the contracts in the Martin case onto a disk. They leave without anyone ever knowing they were there.

In chapter 30, Pike and Elvis go to Elvis's house where they look at the contracts on Elvis' computer. Lucy looks over the retainer agreements and is surprised to find that one amendment gives Green all of Martin's assets, including several items in escrow that Green will get if Teddy is found not guilty or the case is dropped. A second amendment gives Teddy back a house in Rio de Janeiro and an account with several million dollars. These documents appear to give Green motive for either building a case that will acquit Teddy, or to create a situation in which Teddy will get bail and be free to go somewhere without an extradition treaty with the United States.

Chapters 27-30 Analysis

Things improve between Elvis and Lucy when Lucy admits that her controlling ex is beginning to cause her trouble again. This opens a subplot that is not dealt with at this time, but foreshadows a time in which Lucy might make the decision to move to Los Angeles to be closer to Elvis, and escape her controlling ex.

Elvis and Pike work together to convince a disgraced ex-lawyer from Green's office to help them find a motive for Green's actions. Through the contracts in the Martin case, including the retainer agreement, Elvis and Pike are able to establish the fact that if Green is able to find a way for Teddy to go free—either with an acquittal or by jumping



bail—Green stands to get Teddy's entire estate, including several very successful restaurants. This is a huge incentive for Green to get Teddy freed, suggesting to the reader that it is the perfect motive to encourage Green to plant fake evidence and ruin the reputation of a good cop, which is exactly what he has set out to do in this case.



Chapters 31-34

Chapters 31-34 Summary

In chapter 31, Elvis takes Lucy and Ben to the airport before returning to Mrs. Earle's house. When Elvis learns from the same neighbor that Kerris was back that morning and that he got access to the house, Elvis calls Pike and they break into Mrs. Earle's home as well. Elvis goes through Mrs. Earle's bills in the hopes of finding evidence of a plane ticket or a bus ticket, but finds nothing. However, a check on Mrs. Earle's phone bill proves that Mrs. Earle spoke to her son in prison shortly before she changed her story. Elvis finds this interesting because both Mrs. Earle and her son admitted that they had not talked since LeCedrick's arrest six years ago. Elvis calls Rossi with this evidence and she insists Elvis and Pike take her to Terminal Island to see LeCedrick.

In chapter 32, Elvis and Rossi interview LeCedrick. When Elvis presents his case to LeCedrick, convincing him his mother could be in danger, LeCedrick breaks down and admits that Elliot Truly convinced him to lie to his mother, to tell her he was being treated badly in jail, in order to get her to change her story about Rossi. LeCedrick then tells them where his mother is, but admits to also having told her whereabouts to Kerris that morning.

In chapter 33, Rossi, Elvis, and Pike rush to the home of Mr. Walter Lawrence, where Mrs. Earle has been staying. However, as they approach the area, they see Kerris' car pass them with Mrs. Earle and Mr. Lawrence in the back. Pike turns the car around while Rossi calls her partner, Tomsic, to inform him of what is happening. Kerris takes his victims to a deserted area under two radio towers and beside a maintenance shed. When Kerris and his men take Mrs. Earle and Mr. Lawrence out of the car, Mr. Lawrence is shot when he tries to keep the men from injuring Mrs. Earle.

In chapter 34, Rossi, Pike, and Elvis survey the situation from a hill above the shed. They go down to the shed and grab Mrs. Earle, taking her out of harm's way. Elvis, Pike, and Rossi take a stand inside the shed and a gun battle ensues. Quickly all of Kerris' men are killed and Elliot Truly, who was in the shed, is shot. Elvis speaks to Truly who admits that Green was behind the fake evidence, the murder of Lester, and the attempted murder of Mrs. Earle. Truly then dies of his injuries. Kerris keeps them pinned down in the shed. However, Mr. Lawrence is not dead and manages to get a gun. Mr. Lawrence misses with two shots, but this gives Pike and Elvis the opportunity to shot Kerris.

Chapters 31-34 Analysis

The case takes on a life of its own when Elvis finally figures out why Mrs. Earle would change her story. LeCedrick confirms this by admitting that she changed her story because she believed her son was being mistreated in prison and changing her story



would enable Green and Truly to get him out. However, LeCedrick knows where his mother has been hiding and he gave the information to Kerris that morning. Elvis knows that Kerris wants to kill Mrs. Earle to prevent her from ever telling the truth about Truly and Green's part in her changing her story, so he rushes to protect her. A gun battle ensues, but Elvis and Pike are victorious thanks to the help of Mr. Lawrence, Mrs. Earle's elderly companion. In fact, Truly made a death bed confession that should help put the final nail in Green's coffin, at least that is what the reader and Elvis hope to see.



Chapters 35-39

Chapters 35-39 Summary

In chapter 35, Tomsic arrives and takes over the scene. Mr. Lawrence and Mrs. Earle are medivaced to the hospital. Elvis then picks up Mrs. Earle at the hospital and takes her with him, Rossi, and Pike to Anna Sherman's office. Elvis tells Sherman all he knows and the others add their stories to the evidence. Sherman continues to hesitate until Elvis hands over the retainer agreement for Martin's case to show motive. Sherman acts urgently then because Martin was granted bail that morning.

In chapter 36, the Feds attempt to stop Teddy Martin from fleeing to Rio de Janeiro, but by the time they get word, Teddy's plane is already in the air. There is nothing anyone can do about it now because there is not extradition treaty with Brazil. However, Sherman decides to go forward and arrest Green. Elvis and Rossi go with her in order to witness the event. Green is as confident as ever, insisting that they are all making a mistake and he will be free in minutes.

In chapter 37, Teddy Martin's flight from justice is on the news all day, but there is nothing anyone can do but videotape him walking away from the cameras.

In chapter 38, Elvis visits Mrs. Earle at the hospital where she is sitting with Mr. Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence is expected to fully recover from his injuries. Green makes headlines when he claims to be innocent and blames Truly for any unethical actions that took place from his office. As time passes, it becomes clearer and clearer that neither Teddy Martin nor Jonathan Green will face prosecution. Elvis becomes disillusioned and begins thinking of quitting everything and moving to Baton Rouge. Lucy calls. Just as Elvis is about to tell her his plans, she tells him she has been offered a job in Los Angeles. Lucy has not made a decision, however.

In chapter 39, Elvis goes to the press with everything he knows about Jonathan Green and then visits Green in his office. Elvis threatens to keep the story in the press indefinitely, ruining Green's reputation. Then Elvis punches Green.

Chapters 35-39 Analysis

Elvis goes to Anna Sherman with all his evidence, evidence that should clear Rossi and go a long way toward convicting Green. However, Martin has already been released on bail based on the evidence Elvis found in Richards' duplex. Not only this, but Pike, Rossi, and Elvis do not have the type of reputation that would stand up well in court should they base their case entirely on Truly's deathbed confession. From the very beginning it looks as though Elvis has failed. However, Elvis's sense of morality is so strong that he refuses to allow Green to hide behind Truly and to use the legal system to his benefit, a theme of the novel. Therefore, Elvis sets out to ruin Green in the press,

hitting him in a place that Green cannot control. This is irony because the press is exactly how Green set out to control Elvis.

Elvis has made up with Lucy and their relationship is better than ever. Lucy, who has admitted to not finding happiness in her current life, tells Elvis she has been offered a job in Los Angeles. Elvis wants her to take it, but Lucy leaves her decision for a later time, suggesting she will show up in another Elvis Cole novel.



Characters

Elvis Cole

Elvis Cole is a private investigator in Los Angeles. Elvis is asked to help the defense in a murder case against Teddy Martin in the murder of his wife, Susan. Elvis is to investigate claims that the police officer who found the murder weapon might have planted the evidence in this case and a previous case. Elvis interviews man who accused the cop of planting counterfeit money on him, but finds that he is not credible. In fact, Elvis interviews the man's mother and finds her more credible as she tells a story that fits more with the officer's version of events than her own son's. Elvis is an honest investigator and he reports back to his client with the opinion that the cop in question is innocent. Instead of making this public, however, Elvis' client goes forward with the opposite opinion, basing their entire defense on the idea that the cop planted the murder weapon and framed an innocent man in order to advance her career.

Elvis is not the type of man to allow an innocent woman to lose everything based on lies. Elvis and his partner, Joe Pike, working hard to prove the lawyer is telling the truth, leading them to a shootout with accomplices of the lawyer. Eventually Elvis and his partner are able to convince the district attorney's office of the lawyer's corrupt nature, but the lawyer is too smart to allow any evidence to taint him personally. The lawyer manages to make it appear as though all illegal activity took place at the order of his dead associate. Elvis is not willing to let this go, however, and he fights a public campaign against this lawyer to make him pay for what he has done.

Lucy and Ben Chenier

Lucy Chenier is a lawyer from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Lucy and Elvis met on a case in which a Hollywood starlet needed Elvis' help. Lucy and Elvis began seeing each other during this case and have continued to see each other since. Now Lucy is in Los Angeles on business. Lucy is staying with Elvis in his home. However, during her visit Lucy learns that her ex-husband is making trouble for her back in Louisiana, attempting to ingratiate himself among her co-workers and asking personal questions about her life and association with Elvis. This causes tension for Lucy and places a wedge between her and Elvis. The long distance relationship is already stressful enough, so both Lucy and Elvis come to the realization that one of them will have to move. Elvis considers making the move when he learns that Lucy has been offered a job in Los Angeles.

Ben Chenier is Lucy's son. Ben adores Elvis and is thrilled when his mother is able to take him along on a business trip to Los Angeles. Elvis and Ben spend a great deal of time together getting to know one another by way of Ben's visits to his mother and Elvis' many celebrity friends. Ben is the connection that keeps Lucy and her ex-husband together, adding more tension to an already stressful relationship.



Joe Pike

Joe Pike was once a cop with the Los Angeles police force, but he left under questionable circumstances. Joe is a quiet man who rarely says more than needs to be said. Joe is tough, mean, and can intimidate even the most confident criminal. Joe and Elvis are good friends. Joe is Elvis' partner in his private detective business, though Elvis deals with most of the day to day activities of the business. Joe once dated Angela Rossi and he is good friends with her, therefore he is unhappy to learn that his and Elvis' business has been created with ruining her career. Joe works with Elvis to find evidence to clear Angela, allowing her to resume her career should she choose to do so.

Angela Rossi

Angela Rossi is a tough female cop who aspires to be the first female chief of detectives. Angela made a mistake in a case a few years before the opening of this novel in which she did not properly mirandize a suspect before he confessed to the crime. The case was thrown out. Angela has had to work twice as hard since that mistake to prove herself a good cop. When a body is found off a scenic overlook, Angela is the only one equipped to hike down to the body without disturbing the evidence. Later, Angela and her partner go to inform the husband of his wife's death. While inspecting the area, Angela is the one to find the murder weapon lying in some vegetation near the main gate. After the arrest is made and the crime is about to go to trial, the defense attorney hires a detective to look into Angela's background and check out accusations that she has planted evidence in the past. Angela is cleared in this investigation, but the defense attorney twists the evidence and makes it appear that Angela took the murder weapon from the site where the body was found and planted at the husband's home. This causes Angela to be suspended from her job and allows the accused killer to be set free on bail.

Jonathan Green

Jonathan Green is a highly respected, highly successful defense attorney. Green claims he has never taken on a client he was not satisfied was innocent, therefore he has often been able to prove his clients innocent in court. Green claims to be on the side of the innocent and the law. However, when Green lies to the press and makes it appear that Angela Rossi has planted evidence in more than one case, Elvis Cole sets out to prove him to be a corrupt attorney. Through his investigation, Elvis is able to prove that Jonathan Green set out to free his client on bail in exchange for his client's entire estate, minus a few million dollars and a house in Rio de Janeiro. Green is eventually arrested for his actions, but he has kept his name off of all the evidence and manages to make it appear that his colleague, Elliot Truly, was behind all the unethical behavior associated with the case. Elvis, however, is not content to let Green get off so easily and he begins a media campaign against him.



Elliot Truly

Elliot Truly is a lawyer working for Jonathan Green. Truly is Elvis's connection to the Big Green Machine, contacting him when they need Elvis's help and arranging for Elvis to make television appearances when he makes an important find in the case. When Elvis and his partner, Joe Pike, begin investigating Green and his office, Truly shows up in a scheme to kill the mother of a criminal claiming that Angela Rossi planted evidence against him in his trial. Truly is killed, but not before he claims that Green ordered the killings and is behind all the illegal activity associated with the case. Later, Green manages to make it appear that Truly is the one who was behind it all, not himself, allowing him to get out of most of the charges against him.

Teddy Martin

Teddy Martin is an extremely wealthy man who owns several restaurants and other businesses in and around Los Angeles. Teddy's wife, Susan, was planning on getting a divorce and taking half of everything Teddy owns. Teddy decided to kill his wife. When the body is found, Teddy comes up with this story of how his wife was kidnapped and he attempted to make a ransom drop, but something clearly went wrong. However, the murder weapon is found on Teddy's property. Teddy is arrested and he employs Jonathan Green to be his defense attorney after firing several other attorneys. One night Teddy confesses to Green that he is guilty. Green has Teddy sign over all of his assets to Green in exchange for Green finding a way to get Teddy released on bail so that he can flee the country. Green does just this by causing mass confusion about the arresting officers background and planting fake evidence. Teddy Martin is able to escape to Rio de Janeiro.

LeCedrick Earle

LeCedrick Earle is a career criminal. When he was stopped during a routine traffic stop, LeCedrick attempts to bribe the officer, Angela Rossi, with counterfeit money. Rossi recognizes the money and wants to get her hands on more before arresting LeCedrick. Rossi agrees to return to LeCedrick's home with him where he presents her with several hundred dollars more of the counterfeit money. Rossi arrests LeCedrick and is later promoted based on this bust. However, LeCedrick claims that Rossi planted the money and set him up. Green asks Elvis Cole to investigate these claims, but Cole finds LeCedrick non-credible. In fact, LeCedrick's mother, who was at home at the time of the arrest, backs up Rossi's version of the story.

Mrs. Louise Earle and Mr. Walter Lawrence

Mrs. Louise Earle is LeCedrick Earle's mother. Mrs. Earle backs up Det. Rossi's version of LeCedrick's arrest, clearing Rossi in any wrong doing during both an Internal Affairs investigation and Elvis Cole's investigation. However, Mrs. Earle later changes her story



when Truly comes to her and tells her that her son is being mistreated in jail and the only way she can help him is to lie. After changing her story, Mrs. Earle goes to stay in the home of her long time beau, Mr. Walter Lawrence. Elvis Cole begins looking for Mrs. Earle in an attempt to understand why she has changed her story. Green and Truly decide Mrs. Earle is dangerous for them and they decide to kill her, but they have trouble finding her. Finally they kidnap Mrs. Earle and Mr. Lawrence with the intention of killing them, but Elvis and his partner manage to save them.

James Lester, Steve Pritzik, and Elton Richards

James Lester is an ex-con who changes his name from Stuart Langolier in order to gain employment. James Lester called the hot line the Green Defense Machine set up claiming to have talked to a couple of guys in a bar about kidnapping some rich woman. Elvis Cole interviews Lester and feels that his story has some merit and might prove Teddy Martin's story about his wife's kidnapping. Elvis checks out a man who fits the description of the blond man Lester spoke to in the bar and traces him back to a duplex rented by a man named Elton Richards. In this duplex, Elvis finds evidence that Pritzik and Richards planned the kidnapping of Susan Martin. However, Elvis is later able to prove that Lester set up these two men with the help of Elliot Truly, his lawyer. Elvis is also able to prove the evidence he found was fake and that Green had it planted for Elvis to find in order to present enough uncertainty in the prosecution's case against Teddy Martin to allow him to be set free on bail.



Objects/Places

Murder Weapon

Angela Rossi finds a ball peen hammer in some vegetation beside Teddy Martin's fence when she goes to inform him of his wife's murder. It is later suggested that Rossi planted this hammer in order to advance in her career.

Counterfeit Money

LeCedrick Earle claims that Angela Rossi planted counterfeit money on him in order to make a solid arrest against him. These claims are repeatedly denied by LeCedrick's own mother.

Map of Martin Home

Elvis discovers a hand drawn map of Teddy Martin's home as well as photographs of Susan Martin at the home of Elton Richards. This evidence appears to confirm Teddy's claim that Susan was kidnapped, but Elvis is later able to prove the evidence was planted at Jonathan Green's request in order to create a situation in which his client could get bail.

Client Contracts

Elvis forces an ex-employee of Green's to download the client contracts between Green and Teddy Martin. These contracts show that Martin signed over all his assets except for a few million dollars and a house in Rio de Janeiro to pay for his defense in his wife's murder.

Shower Door

James Lester is found dead in his bathroom after apparently falling into the shower door. However, Elvis is later able to establish that Lester was choked and pushed into the door to keep him from talking about his part in the scheme to plant evidence in the home of Elton Richards.

Corvette Stingray

Elvis Cole owns a 1966 Corvette Stingray, a classic two seater. Elvis has wanted a Stingray since he was a kid and jumped at the chance when this one became available.



Pike's Jeep

Pike has a Jeep that he keeps in mint condition and does not like for anyone else to drive. However, Pike agrees to allow Elvis to use it in order to pick Lucy and Ben up from the airport.

Earle Home

Elvis goes many times to the home of Mrs. Earle in order to interview her. It is after Mrs. Earle changes her story that Elvis goes there and learns that Green's head of security has been searching for Mrs. Earle as well.

Rossi Home

Angela Rossi lives in a prosperous community in Marina del Rey, causing some speculation that she might be on the take. However, Pike tells Elvis that the home is the result of some real estate Rossi inherited from her mother.

Green Home

Jonathan Green invites Elvis to his home during a party. Elvis picks this moment to accuse Green of lying about his investigation into Angela Rossi. Elvis quits the Big Green Defense Machine that same night.

Elvis' Home

Elvis has a split level home in the canyons above Los Angeles that he has reconstructed and renovated himself. Elvis invites Lucy and Ben to stay a week with him at his home when he learns that Lucy is coming to town on business.

Terminal Island

Terminal Island is the name of the prison where LeCedrick Earle is serving his time.



Themes

Legal System

The American Legal System is something that is meant to provide justice for its citizens. However, many lawyers can manipulate the system in order to get the result they want. In this novel a man is charged with murder because his wife is dead, he is the last person known to be with her, and the murder weapon was found in his yard. This man's lawyer, however, claims that the murder weapon was placed in his yard by the same officer who found it. This officer, Angela Rossi, has a history of forgetting to read suspects their rights and has been accused of planting evidence in order to get a conviction. This opens a door for the accused murderer's lawyers to turn the spotlight off his client and onto the police officer.

Courts are set up to allow an accused to learn the charges against him and to defend himself from these charges. Lawyers often take this simple procedure and twist the facts to make them say whatever it is they want them to say. In this novel, Jonathan Green wants the facts to make it appear that his client's story that his wife was kidnapped is true. However, there is no evidence to show that. Therefore the lawyer creates evidence, planting it in a neutral place, and allows one of his own investigators to find the evidence. This allows for the accused man to go free on bail until the evidence can be properly evaluated. Instead, the client flees the country and never faces the charges of murder against him.

This book does not poke fun at the legal system, but shows flaws in the system in order to tell an entertaining story about a corrupt lawyer who took advantage of the twists and turns in the legal system in order to get a good outcome for his client. This lawyer not only got his client free long enough for him to split the country, but he also made a great deal of money for himself. It is for this reason that the legal system is a theme of this novel.

Ethics

Ethics are defined as a system of moral standards that govern a person or group of people. In this novel, ethics defines the morality of the members of law enforcement, the members of the court system, and the actions of Elvis Cole and his partner, Joe Pike. Elvis lives under the understanding that the cops arrest the bad guys and the court puts them in jail. It is with this understanding that Elvis agrees to help Jonathan Green and his Big Green Defense Machine in the defense of Teddy Martin. Elvis investigates Angela Rossi, the arresting officer in the case, to prove that she did not plant evidence on a previous criminal, therefore implying that she could have planted the murder weapon in the Martin case. Elvis finds Angela Rossi innocent and reports this to Jonathan Green.



Unfortunately, Jonathan Green does not live by the same ethics as Elvis and Rossi. Green takes Elvis's investigation and twists it, telling the public that Rossi is a corrupt cop who planted evidence once before and more than likely did it again in this case. When Elvis attempts to confront Green about this accusation, Green accuses Elvis of being a poor investigator who did not look hard enough to find evidence against Rossi. Elvis quits his association with the Big Green Defense team and begins investigating the charges against Rossi on his own. This shows the reader how deep Elvis's sense of ethics go and how corrupt Green really is.

Elvis finds evidence that further exonerates Rossi and more evidence that proves that Green as motive to do whatever he can to free his client. Elvis becomes involved in a gun fight to protect an old lady who lied for Green to protect her only child. Afterward, Elvis proves to the district attorney that Green is corrupt, but Green manages to hide behind the people who work for him to protect himself from prosecution. Still laboring under his own sense of ethics, Elvis begins a media campaign against Green in order bring him down.

Love

While Elvis is fighting to ensure that the innocent people are proven innocent and the guilty pay for their crimes, Elvis is also falling in love with the woman of his dreams. Lucy Chenier is a lawyer from Baton Rouge whom Elvis met on a previous case. Lucy and Elvis have been seeing each other as often as they can despite their long distances from one another. Lucy comes to Los Angeles during this case and convinces Elvis that he wants her to be at his side for a long time. However, Elvis knows that Lucy has a controlling ex-husband and a child that inhibit her ability to pick up and move. Elvis decides that he must move to be with Lucy.

As the visit continues, Lucy grows distant, pushing Elvis away. Elvis fights this, afraid of losing this woman he has come to love. Eventually Lucy tells him the cause of her distance and tells him that she loves him, that she wants to make their relationship work. Elvis decides to give up the detective business and move to Baton Rouge. Elvis is unhappy with the results of his last case and unhappy being so far from Lucy. However, Lucy calls to tell Elvis that she has been offered a job in Los Angeles, leaving them with the choice of which partner should move. It also opens some questions into their relationship and how serious it really is, leaving the reader, and this loving couple, in a sort of limbo until the next book. This is why love is a theme of this novel.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. Elvis Cole, a private detective in Los Angeles, is the narrator. Elvis takes the reader along with him as he investigates a police officer, Angela Rossi, in order to establish if she has ever been guilty of planting evidence in any of her cases that resulted in an arrest. Rossi has been accused of this by a career criminal and the defense attorney for a murder suspect, Teddy Martin, wants to know if it is possible she planted the murder weapon in Martin's case. Elvis invites the reader into his everyday life during this case, sharing not only his professional experiences, but also those in his personal life.

The point of view of this novel is almost like a diary in which the main character is sharing his daily activities with an objective observer. The main character, Elvis Cole, takes the reader along as he investigates his case, but also as he deals with the woman in his life, Lucy Chenier. The point of view is highly intimate, offering a perspective to the reader that might not be available in a similar novel written in a third person point of view. This point of view allows the reader to see and feel Elvis' outrage at the outcome of his case, as well as feel the power of his feelings for Lucy Chenier. It is a point of view that works well for this genre and this character, creating a well rounded character that makes the reader both laugh and cry.

Setting

The novel is set in Los Angeles. This setting is important in that it presents a backdrop that is both bright and exciting, such as when Elvis comes in contact with Hollywood stars, but also gritty and dark, as when Elvis meets up with drug addicts and unethical lawyers. The setting is a backdrop to the main plot, but it is also a character in itself, giving the plot a tone that is both light and dark, a tone that both shocks and surprises the novel's characters and readers alike.

The setting is a familiar one. Many readers of this genre know Los Angeles well from other novels and movies that use the same setting. However, in this novel the narrator takes such pride in his surroundings that it transforms the setting somewhat, creating a world that is less about movie stars and drug addicts, and more about beauty and innocence. It is difficult to give innocence to such a gritty setting, but this narrator does that by looking at the city through the eyes of someone who loves it for both its people and its natural beauty. Reading about Los Angeles in this novel is like looking at it through fresh eyes, a difficult task that the author pulls off well. For that reason, the setting of this novel becomes like another character, creating a setting that works well within the plot.



Language and Meaning

The novel is written in a simple English that contains some slang and foreign phrases that are easy for readers of all ages to understand. The author uses language that is common to the area in which the novel is set and the education level of the characters speaking it. The language contains some slang that is associated with the legal or criminal world, but this slang is common enough that most readers should have no problem understanding its meaning. The foreign language phrases often refer to food items or business names and are again simple for the reader to comprehend.

The novel uses a language that is simple and easy for most readers to understand. The language in this novel reflects the lives and education level of all the characters, changing within the dialogue to reflect differences between characters. The language is used in such a way that it only enhances the characters, not impeding the comprehension of the overall plot. For this reason, the language in this novel works well with the plot and is comprehensible to readers of all ages.

Structure

The novel begins with a long prologue that outlines the events on the day Susan Martin's body was found. This prologue is told in a third person point of view, but it is clear by the end of the prologue that the first person narrator, Elvis Cole, is presenting this information for the clarification of the following story for his readers. The novel contains thirty-nine chapters, most of which contain as few as two pages and some as many as fifteen. The novel is told in a linear fashion, beginning with the death of Susan Martin and continuing through the plotting of her killer's defense, and ending with the arrest of the defense attorney, Jonathan Green.

The novel contains two major plots with several subplots sprinkled throughout. One main plot follows Elvis Cole as he investigates the actions of Det. Angela Rossi in a case involving a career criminal who claims Rossi planted counterfeit money on him during an arrest in his home. This investigation pushes Elvis into defending his name in the press when the defense attorney for Teddy Martin accuses Elvis of shoddy work and claims Rossi did plant evidence in the counterfeit money case. The second plot follows Elvis as he spends a week with his long distance lover, Lucy Chenier. The subplots mostly involve the defense attorney's attempts to free his client on bail. All the plots come to a satisfactory conclusion at the end of the novel, except for Elvis' relationship with Lucy, a relationship that has come to a crossroads that will most likely be dealt with in a subsequent novel.



Quotes

"It looked real, and it also looked dead." Prologue, pg. 3

"I did not think, nor did I have reason to believe, that Susan Martin's murder and everything that grew from it would have such a profound and permanent impact upon my life." Prologue, pg. 13

"We worked out my fee, Elliot Truly cut me a check, and the Big Green Defense Machine left me to get on with it." Chapter 2, pg. 23

"It wasn't as nice as actually being with her, but if romance were easy, everyone would do it." Chapter 3, pg. 35

"By nine o'clock the next morning I had gained some measure of control over the sappy grin and was once more feeling focused, productive, and ready to swing into investigative action." Chapter 4, pg. 38

"That Pike is something, isn't he?" Chapter 9, pg. 62

"Another day, another moron. And to think, some people have to work for a living." Chapter 11, pg. 90

"I moved with the crush of bodies the way a leaf is carried by the wind, a part of an unseen world, yet not." Chapter 17, pg. 133

"I took a deep breath, let it out, then leaned back in my chair and wondered if I could feel any more out of the loop. I could, and in about twelve seconds I did." Chapter 18, pg. 139

"Home is the detective, home for the night. Sandbagged, unemployed, and feeling more than a little suspicious." Chapter 23, pg. 169

"I guess he just couldn't understand how someone could turn his back on so much opportunity. I guess he'd be thinking about it most of the night." Chapter 29, pg. 214

"The law is an adversarial contest that defines justice as staying within the rules and seeing the game to its conclusion. Justice is reaching a conclusion. It has very little to do with right and wrong." Chapter 38, pg. 269



Topics for Discussion

What is the Big Green Defense Machine? Why is it called that? Why does Elvis Cole jump at the chance to join this group? What is Elvis to do for this group? Why does Green search outside his own investigators for a private detective to work on the case he has assigned Elvis? Is this suspicious? How does Green react when Elvis gives him his final report? How is this reaction belied by Green's later action in the press?

Who is Elvis Cole? What does he do for a living? Who is his partner? Why does his partner not participate in this case until after Elvis has already quit working for Jonathan Green? Why does Elvis' partner not like where the case has gone and Elvis' involvement in it? Why does Elvis continue his involvement in the case even after he quits working for the client? Why does Elvis begin to investigate Jonathan Green? What has Green done wrong?

Who is Louise Earle? How is she connected to the murder of Susan Martin? Why does Elvis go to visit Mrs. Earle? What does Mrs. Earle say that makes Elvis believe Rossi is innocent of misconduct? Why does Mrs. Earle later change her story? Why does Elvis believe Mrs. Earle is in danger? Why does Elvis search for Mrs. Earle? How does Elvis save Mrs. Earle's life?

Who is LeCedrick? What does LeCedrick say about Angela Rossi that causes Elvis to investigate him? Why has LeCedrick said this? What does he hope to get out of his story? Does he? Why does Elvis later return to visit LeCedrick with Rossi? What does LeCedrick tell Elvis and Rossi that causes them to rush away and get themselves into a gun battle? Is LeCedrick a bad person? What opinion is the reader left with regarding LeCedrick when the novel ends?

Who is Angela Rossi? Why is Angela Rossi a target of the defense in the case of Teddy Martin? What has Rossi done in the past to place suspicion on her? What has she been accused of? What does Elvis learn about her when he investigates her? Is this information accurate? Why does Elvis agree to continue working on Rossi's case even after she is discredited in the media? What does Elvis eventually learn about Rossi? What does the reader believe will happen to Rossi and her ambitions when all is said and done?

Who is Lucy Chenier? Why has she come to Los Angeles? What is her relationship to Elvis Cole? Why does she stay at his house? Who is Ben? What does Elvis hope to have happen in this relationship? What are the obstacles? How are Elvis and Lucy handling these obstacles? What impression is the reader left with as to this relationship? Where does the reader believe this relationship will end? Why?

Discuss Jonathan Green. What is legal ethics? Does Green have legal ethics? Are lawyers allowed to lie? When does Green lie? Are these lies hurtful to Green or the legal system? Explain. Why does Elvis target Green? Is this the actions of someone

disgruntled or is this a legitimate investigation? Why is Green arrested? What is the outcome of this? How does Elvis react? Why? Explain.