

Sunset Limited Study Guide

Sunset Limited by James Lee Burke

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



Contents

Sunset Limited Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 - 7.....	4
Chapters 8 - 14.....	10
Chapters 15 - 21.....	14
Chapters 22 - 28.....	19
Chapters 29 - 34 and Epilogue.....	23
Characters.....	26
Objects/Places.....	31
Themes.....	34
Style.....	36
Quotes.....	38
Topics for Discussion.....	40

Plot Summary

Sunset Limited by James Lee Burke is a story of the South and the secrets it holds. Set in New Iberia Parish, Louisiana, it is the story of Dave Robicheaux, bait shop owner and investigator for the New Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department. Born and raised in New Iberia, Robicheaux's childhood was less than happy. He still carries the emotional scars of his mother's infidelities and the sight of Jack Flynn's body, nailed to the side of a barn. As an adult, Robicheaux is sometimes plagued by memories of his time in Vietnam during the war and nightmares in which he relives the murder of his first wife, Annie. These days, Robicheaux enjoys the simple life in New Iberia. He lives with his wife Bootsie and their adopted teenage daughter, Alafair. He can often be found in the bait shop with his helper, Batist, or on the lake fishing with Clete Purcel.

Robicheaux is not the only one who stayed in New Iberia after growing up there. His best friend and former Homicide partner, Clete Purcel is still around. In addition, Mout' Broussard, a fixture in New Iberia, and his son Willie who is known on the street as Cool Breeze, also have a history marked with murder and sadness. Cool Breeze's wife, Ida, supposedly committed suicide some years back and Cool Breeze has never been the same. Jack Flynn's children, Megan and Cisco, have recently returned to New Iberia. Since their father's murder was never solved, Megan and Cisco have chosen to stay away from New Iberia, feeling that the people of their hometown betrayed them. However, each of Flynn's children have since returned to New Iberia. One of them is contemplating revenge. New Iberia, like any other small town, has its share of colorful personalities, including Lila Terrebonne, the alcoholic daughter of the local power baron, Archer Terrebonne. Lila's drinking masks a horrible secret that even her father's money and prestige cannot blot out. Similarly, Archer Terrebonne's past holds an even more sinister truth and the wealthy descendant of slave-owners will stop at nothing to keep the secret from ever seeing the light of day.

Through an intricate series of twists and turns, Robicheaux finds himself investigating one murder after another. The intrigue begins with Cool Breeze Broussard's arrest for selling stolen VCRs from the Giacono crime family and Broussard's charge that he was mistreated by the guards at the New Iberia Prison. Soon, the FBI comes to New Iberia and threads linked to the Broussard case take on international significance. Robicheaux and his partner, Helen Soileau, travel throughout Louisiana as well as Colorado and Texas, unraveling the threads of the past and future, in hopes of laying to rest the specters of past wrongs and present demons.



Chapters 1 - 7

Chapters 1 - 7 Summary

Dave Robicheaux is a long-time resident of New Iberia, Louisiana. He works for the New Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department. When Megan Flynn, a childhood acquaintance, returns to New Iberia, her presence inadvertently touches off a chain of events which leads Robicheaux on a quest to solve the old murder of Jack Flynn. In addition to dredging up the horror of Jack Flynn's murder, Robicheaux also uncovers other dark secrets, long buried, in the town where he grew up. Old tensions between blacks and whites, rich and poor, are unearthed and exposed to the light of day. Dave Robicheaux becomes a crusader in the battle to put the ghosts of the past to rest in New Iberia.

Chapter 1 opens with Dave Robicheaux's traumatic childhood memory. As a boy, Robicheaux saw the body of a man who had been crucified, nailed to a barn wall. The man was a labor union organizer named Jack Flynn. Cleve Purcel tells Robicheaux that Megan Flynn, Jack Flynn's daughter, has come back to New Iberia. Megan Flynn is a Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist who is in town asking questions about a man named Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard. Broussard has leveled a brutality charge against the New Iberia Parish Prison.

When Robicheaux, who is now a member of the New Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department, visits Broussard in jail, he learns that Cool Breeze is in jail for selling stolen VCRs. Broussard has unwittingly fallen in with the Giacono crime family. It also happens that the Giaconos have been dubbing Kung Fu films made in Hong Kong. This puts the Giacono crew in direct competition with the powerful Chinese Triad gang.

Robicheaux then visits the home of Cisco Flynn, a screenwriter and "Hollywood type" bon vivant. Cisco is Megan Flynn's brother. William "Billey" Holtzner, a well-known producer and Cisco's financial backer, is also at the house that day, but Robicheaux and he are never introduced.

In Chapter 2, Robicheaux pays a call on Alex Guidry, one of the guards accused of brutality by Cool Breeze Broussard. Guidry claims Cool Breeze is lying about prisoners being mistreated on his watch. The following morning, Robicheaux returns to work at the Sheriff's Department, cutting his vacation short by a week. Robicheaux meets Special Agent Adrien Glazier, who has come to New Iberia as part of the Broussard investigation.

The sheriff tells Robicheaux that three months earlier a seventeen-year-old black woman named Sunshine Labiche claimed that he was raped and sodomized by two young white men. The men, who happen to be brothers, are from nearby St. Mary Parish. Both brothers have alibis for that day. Sunshine Labiche admits that just before the attack she was smoking crack and later drops the charges. Subsequently, the brothers are picked up by two men, one of whom wears a New Iberia Sheriff's uniform.



The two assailants drive the brothers to the Atchafalaya Swamp and murder them execution-style. Afterwards, one of the men takes Polaroid pictures of the scene.

Special Agent Glazier shows Robicheaux a video of Swede Boxleiter, a recently-released convict from California. Glazier tells Robicheaux that the FBI considers Boxleiter a person of interest. Glazier also tells Robicheaux that the FBI hopes Cool Breeze will turn informant and help the government make a case against the people involved in the Hong Kong dubbing scheme.

When Robicheaux returns to his bait shop, his daughter Alafair informs him that Megan Flynn is looking for him. It turns out that Megan wants Robicheaux to arrange for her to take photographs from inside the jail.

Mout' Broussard calls Robicheaux to tell him that Cool Breeze has escaped from the parish prison. Robicheaux recognizes Boxleiter in one of Megan Flynn's most famous photographs. In the photograph, five white police officers stand over the dead body of a black man convicted of rape. Boxleiter watches while eating an apple.

In Chapter 3, Mout' Broussard tells Robicheaux that Cool Breeze fears for his life. Mout' Broussard is a shoeshine man and something of a regular fixture in the town of New Iberia. Mout' tells Robicheaux about Cool Breeze's last day in the parish prison. Alex Guidry, facing suspension, gives Cool Breeze permission to do some clean-up work. While Cool Breeze sweeps the workshop, another inmate attempts to kill Cool Breeze. Instead, Cool Breeze kills the inmate and escapes by riding out of the prison compound in the barrel of a cement mixer.

Robicheaux and his partner, Helen Soileau, go to the country club to retrieve Lila Terrebonne again. Lila, known for her drunkenness, is the daughter of Archer Terrebonne, a very wealthy and influential man in New Iberia Parish. Lila and her father live on a former plantation in Jeanerette. Upon arriving at the Terrebonne home, Robicheaux and Soileau learn that Billy Holtzner is directing a film being shot on the Terrebonne plantation.

In Chapter 4, Megan Flynn telephones Robicheaux, claiming that Mout' Broussard called her to say that Cool Breeze wishes to turn himself in to the authorities. Cool Breeze, who is hiding in the Atchafalaya Basin, has a serious snakebite. Megan Flynn accompanies Robicheaux and the two of them go to the Athcafalaya Basin to pick up Cool Breeze Broussard.

At one point in time, Cool Breeze owned a small sundries store on a dirt road. His wife Ida worked in the fields picking peppers on a corporate farm. One day, Alex Guidry and an older man named Harpo Delahoussey came into Cool Breeze's store looking to purchase bootleg liquor. Cool Breeze was on parole for writing bad checks. Guidry and Delahoussey blackmail Cool Breeze into making Ida work for Delahoussey as a cook in Delahoussey's speakeasy. A white man from Mississippi convinces Cool Breeze into selling the bootleg liquor.



Things go downhill after Ida starts working for Harpo Delahoussey. On one occasion, Cool Breeze catches Ida snorting cocaine. Cool Breeze learns that Ida is prostituting herself for money to a predominantly white clientele. At one point, Ida writes Cool Breeze a letter, informing him that she is having an affair with Alex Guidry. Ida explains that Guidry protected her from Delahoussey's unwanted advances. Cool Breeze goes after Ida before he finishes reading the rest of the letter. The next morning, Ida's body is discovered in a bay off the Atchafalaya River. When Cool Breeze reads the remainder of the letter, he finds out that Ida had written an apology. It turns out that Ida felt neglected by Cool Breeze because he allowed Delahoussey to take her on as a cook.

Dave Robicheaux and Megan Flynn transport Cool Breeze Broussard back to civilization by boat. Adrien Glazier and other FBI agents intercept Robicheaux's boat and apprehend Cool Breeze Broussard. Glazier tells Robicheaux that he is out of his jurisdiction.

In Chapter 5, Clete Purcel tells Robicheaux that the killing of the two white brothers should be handled by St. Mary Parish, since that is where the murders occurred. Robicheaux sees Swede Boxleiter hanging around a swimming pool where a number of children are playing. Robicheaux and Purcel attempt to bait Boxleiter into doing something that would warrant his arrest. Boxleiter does not take the bait and simply walks away.

Robicheaux is told that Alex Guidry claims harassment because Robicheaux called the Humane Society to complain about the way Guidry treats his dogs.

When Robicheaux returns home that evening, Special Agent Adrien Glazier is waiting for him. Glazier shows him a file on Megan Flynn's illustrious career. Glazier thinks Megan Flynn is a showboating self-promoter and opportunist whose interest in the Broussard investigation hides an ulterior motive.

Lila Terrebonne causes a commotion when she pulls a gun on a bouncer in a local zydeco bar. Helen suspects that Lila Terrebonne is an incest survivor. It is revealed that Soileau once killed two perpetrators in the line of duty.

At the beginning of Chapter 6, Dave Robicheaux and Clete Purcel meet with a prostitute named Ruby Gravano. Ruby tells them about two "johns" who might have been policemen. Robicheaux and Purcel look into the murders of the two white brothers. Ruby tells Robicheaux that one of the men had mug shots in his shirt pocket.

After she pulls a gun on the bouncer at the zydeco bar, Lila Terrebonne is taken to Iberia General Hospital for observation. Robicheaux stops in Franklin to revisit the site of Jack Flynn's 1956 crucifixion. In Jeanerette, Robicheaux tells Lila's father, Archer Terrebonne, that Soileau believes Lila may have been sexually assaulted. Cisco Flynn assures Robicheaux that Swede Boxleiter is trying to change his life. Robicheaux finds this difficult to believe, given Boxleiter's violent history.

Later, Bootsie tells Robicheaux that Megan Flynn is trying to get to him through Clete Purcel. The sheriff tells Robicheaux to pick up Swede Boxleiter.



At the beginning of Chapter 7, Dave Robicheaux sees Cool Breeze Broussard walking down the street. Broussard informs Robicheaux that the FBI released him. When he phones Adrien Glazier, Robicheaux is told that Cool Breeze was released because the FBI no longer needed him. Robicheaux and Helen Soileau take a drive out to Lila Terrebonne's place in St. Mary Parish to look for Swede Boxleiter. Boxleiter is eventually arrested by Robicheaux and Soileau, but not without an altercation.

Clete drops in on Robicheaux before meeting Megan Flynn for a dinner date. Robicheaux is not pleased that Purcel is going out with Megan. He cautions Purcel to be careful. Later, Robicheaux goes to visit Mout' Broussard. Cool Breeze is staying with Mout'. Robicheaux asks Cool Breeze if Harpo Delahoussey ever had a son. Cool Breeze says he does not know. Robicheaux tells Cool Breeze that the white brothers from St. Mary Parish may have been executed by someone with the first name of Harpo. Cool Breeze remains noncommittal on the matter, refusing to tell Robicheaux anything.

That evening, Robicheaux tells Bootsie that he is worried about Clete Purcel getting involved with Megan Flynn. Robicheaux strongly suspects that Megan Flynn is hiding something. Back at the bait shop, Batist informs Robicheaux that Cool Breeze had come to the shop looking for him the previous night. Robicheaux phones Cool Breeze at Mout's house but there is no answer. Robicheaux has dinner with Bootsie and Alafair before going to Cisco Flynn's house alone. Robicheaux tells Cisco that the sheriff wants more information on why Swede Boxleiter has come to New Iberia. On another subject, Robicheaux grills Cisco about being in the drainpipe when the rapist in Megan's photograph was shot by police. Robicheaux introduces himself to Billy Holtzner's daughter Geraldine (Geri) and a large Malaysian man who are sitting at a patio table together. Robicheaux suspects that Holtzner's daughter is a heroin addict.

When Robicheaux arrives at the bait shop the next Monday, he finds Cool Breeze Broussard waiting for him. Cool Breeze then tells Robicheaux about his involvement with Jimmy "Fig" Figorelli. The Giacono crime syndicate murders Jimmy Fig's brother, Tommy. Jimmy Fig and Cool Breeze were inmates at Angola Prison for a time. Cool Breeze recently purchased a gun from Jimmy Fig, thinking he needed to protect himself from loan sharks the he is unable to repay. During the transaction, Jimmy Fig tells Cool Breeze that someone has put out a contract on a black man in New Iberia. This particular man is believed to have given authorities information regarding the Giacono family. At this point, Cool Breeze digresses, returning to the story of his wife Ida and her connection to Harpo Delahoussey.

Cool Breeze tells Robicheaux that Ida Broussard committed suicide by wrapping a chain around her own neck and drowning herself. Approximately one year after Ida's death, Cool Breeze worked in a cannery owned by Archer Terrebonne "putting up sweet potatoes" (p. 98.) At the time, Harpo Delahoussey was in charge of security at the cannery.

Subsequently, all the cannery workers were laid off, only to have their unemployment claims denied. Cool Breeze returned to the cannery, hoping to have a word with Archer



Terrebonne or someone else in authority. After a rather unproductive conversation with Delahoussey, Cool Breeze left the cannery. A week later, there is a fire at the cannery. It just so happens that Delahoussey has a nephew who goes by the name of Lil' Harpo. Breeze suspects Lil' Harpo of being one of the people who put the contract out on him.

Chapters 1 - 7 Analysis

The opening chapter of *Sunset Limited* provides an introduction of Dave Robicheaux, the novel's main protagonist. Robicheaux's best friend and former Homicide partner, Clete Purcel is also introduced. In addition, Megan Flynn is introduced. Due to the Flynn family's history in New Iberia, Robicheaux is suspicious to see Megan in town again so many years after her father Jack's mysterious murder. Coincidentally, Megan Flynn's brother, Cisco, has also returned to New Iberia. Jack Flynn's 1956 crucifixion is the first major plot point in *Sunset Limited*. Megan Flynn refers to Dave Robicheaux as "Streak." The origin of Robicheaux's nickname is never revealed in the narrative. Given that Dave Robicheaux is the primary protagonist in a number of James Lee Burke's other novels, one can only assume that the nickname's significance is dealt with in one of the other narratives.

Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard enters the narrative in Chapter 1 as well. Like Robicheaux, Purcel, and the Flynns, Broussard was born and raised in New Iberia Parish. This chapter also functions as a foray into long-standing racial tensions between blacks and whites in the New Iberia region. Like Megan Flynn and her brother Cisco, Cool Breeze's history offers something of a mystery. In addition, Broussard's involvement with the Giacono crime family provides a tangential thread which eventually leads Robicheaux into another murder investigation.

Special Agent Adrien Glazier and jailer Alex Guidry make their first appearance in the novel in Chapter 2. Both Glazier and Guidry are part of the Cool Breeze Broussard storyline. Guidry figures prominently in Cool Breeze's past as well as his current situation.

Swede Boxleiter, a convicted killer and Cisco Flynn's friend, is also introduced and becomes part of the Jack Flynn murder storyline.

Mout' Broussard, Cool Breeze's father, is introduced in Chapter 3. Mout's introduction into the narrative lays the foundation for the revelation of Cool Breeze's history with Alex Guidry. Harpo Delahoussey and Ida Broussard are both introduced in Chapter 4. The inclusion of the Broussard family's chronology in New Iberia balances that of the Flynn family's history. One family is black while the other is white. However, both family histories feature an unsolved murder. In the case of the Flynn's it is the murder of Jack Flynn which remains unresolved. In Broussard's case, the murder of his pregnant wife Ida has never been solved.

Clete Purcel's assertion that the murder of the two white brothers lies outside Robicheaux's jurisdiction broadens the scope of the narrative. Robicheaux is now



dealing with a larger area, which complicates the narrative. The murder of the two white brothers foreshadows Harpo Scruggs' involvement in Sunset Limited's first two major plot points. Scruggs is the nephew of Harpo Delahoussey, Ida Broussard's former employer.

Lila Terrebonne enters the narrative in Chapter 5. Helen Soileau's assertion that Lila Terrebonne is an incest survivor provides a foreshadowing which indicates that Lila Terrebonne also has a secret. The fact that Lila is an alcoholic also begs explanation.

Ruby Gravano's introduction to the narrative in Chapter 6 thickens the Jack Flynn murder story line. Gravano is the first peripheral character to enter the narrative. Peripheral characters in this novel are those characters who make only one or two appearances in the story but whose presence serves to further the plot.

Geri Holtzner and Anthony (Pollock), as well as Jimmy ("Fig") Figorelli are also peripheral characters. Cool Breeze Broussard's suspicion that someone named "Lil' Harpo" is out to kill him foreshadows Harpo Scruggs's prominent role later in the narrative.



Chapters 8 - 14

Chapters 8 - 14 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter 8, Robicheaux goes to Swede Boxleiter's house to question Boxleiter about the nature of his friendship with Cisco Flynn. Robicheaux thinks Boxleiter is blackmailing Cisco Flynn. The supposition is that Boxleiter told police that the suspect was hiding in the pipe. If Robicheaux's hunch is correct, then Megan Flynn's prize-winning photograph is based on a lie. Swede Boxleiter denies any wrongdoing and Robicheaux leaves.

While he and Clete Purcel are out fishing, Purcel tells Robicheaux that it is possible that the Giacono family has a contract out on Cool Breeze Broussard. Clete learns from Igor (a Giacono associate) that the family is not as powerful as it once was. Igor tells Clete that the Giaconos sometimes outsource their hits (assassinations) to other crime syndicates. Robicheaux and Purcel disagree about Megan Flynn. Clete tells Robicheaux that he intends to continue seeing Megan.

The following evening, there is some sort of trouble at Mout' Broussard's place in Vermillion Parish. In Chapter 9, the two white men at the door of Mout' Broussard's house want to locate his son, Cool Breeze. One of the men is the nephew of Harpo Delahoussey. The man's uncle is the individual who blackmailed Cool Breeze into allowing Ida to cook in his restaurant. The younger Delahoussey and his accomplice wait all night for Cool Breeze to show up at Mout's place. Shortly before daylight, the two men leave, but not before killing Mout' Broussard's dog, Rafe.

In Chapter 10, Robicheaux and Soileau talk to Mout' Broussard about the two men who came looking for Cool Breeze. Later, Robicheaux phones Special Agent Adrien Glazier to tell her that Cool Breeze's life is definitely in danger and that Harpo Delahoussey's nephew is involved. Sometime thereafter, when Cool Breeze is picked up and brought to Robicheaux's office, he tells Robicheaux that the two brothers in the Sunshine Labiche case were executed for something they did in St. Mary Parish, not New Iberia. Cool Breeze intimates that someone with a great deal of money and clout is behind the brothers' execution.

Father James Mulcahy telephones Robicheaux that day. Mulcahy is the parish priest of St. Peter's Church. Mulcahy (who has known Clete Purcel since Purcel was a child) tells Robicheaux that Lila Terrebonne is at St. Peter's refusing to leave. Robicheaux and Soileau go to St. Peter's to retrieve Lila Terrebonne. After they take Lila Terrebonne back to Jeanerette, Helen Soileau tells Robicheaux that, at some point during her life, Lila Terrebonne was raped.

In Chapter 11, Robicheaux calls his friend Clete Purcel in New Orleans. Clete is a private investigator and he keeps an apartment in New Orleans for business purposes. Not wanting to wait for Clete to return his call, Robicheaux drives to New Orleans to talk



to Clete about how to get Jimmy Fig to cooperate. When he arrives at Clete's apartment, Robicheaux runs into Megan Flynn. Megan is helping Clete Purcel move. Megan helped Clete Purcel secure a position as head of security on Billy Holtzner's film. Later, Clete and Robicheaux go in search of Jimmy Fig.

Robicheaux and Purcel find Jimmy Fig working in a sandwich shop which Figorelli owns. A minor altercation ensues and Clete Purcel ends up punching Jimmy Fig in the mouth. Robicheaux and Purcel learn that Jimmy Figorelli became a morphine addict after being wounded at Khe Sahn during the Vietnam War.

Three days later, Father Mulcahy visits Dave Robicheaux at home. Mulcahy tells Robicheaux and Bootsie that a man appeared on Mulcahy's doorstep the previous evening, cautioning the priest not to "break the seal" (128). Mulcahy is certain that he man was referring to the "seal" of confession, meaning that whatever a priest hears in the confessional is confidential information. However, what Lila Terrebonne revealed to Mulcahy was not said while Lila was in the confessional.

Robicheaux drives to Franklin to talk to the Chief of Police there. The chief puts Robicheaux in contact with a man who may know something of Lil' Harpo's true identity. The man's name is Clem Maddux. Maddux tells Robicheaux that a man by the name of Harpo Scruggs worked as a guard at Angola Prison forty years ago. Around that time, Scruggs was responsible for the murder of a young black man. Maddux also informs Robicheaux that Harpo Scruggs died in a fire in Juarez, Mexico, while in the company of a prostitute fifteen years prior.

Chapter 12 opens with Clete Purcel visiting Robicheaux at the New Iberia Sheriff's Department. Purcel invites Robicheaux to lunch. Megan Flynn accompanies them and the three of them have lunch at Lagniappe Too. Robicheaux asks Megan Flynn if she knows the significance of the Hanged Man (a card in the Major Arcana of the Tarot). Megan, believing the Hanged Man card to be a reference to her murdered father, leaves the table.

While working out a gym in Lafayette, Robicheaux once again encounters Geraldine (Geri) Holtzner and the large Malaysian man. The man, whose name is Anthony Pollock, is a studio accountant. Robicheaux suspects that Anthony is Geri Holtzner's drug connection and that it is he who supplies the director's daughter with heroin. Geri tells Robicheaux that Cisco Flynn owes her father a substantial sum of money. Apparently, Cisco Flynn keeps Swede Boxleiter around as some sort of bodyguard to keep Billy Holtzner and his thugs at bay.

Robicheaux stops at the New Iberia public library to do some research on the powerful Terrebonne family. Robicheaux learns that Elijah Terrebonne, one of Lila's ancestors, had been a prosperous slave owner. Upon his return from the Civil War, Elijah Terrebonne found his plantation had been looted. This proved to be such a hardship for Terrebonne that his wealth soon dwindled. Elijah Terrebonne had carried on an intimate relationship with one of his slaves, a woman named Lavonia who worked as a cook and nurse made to Terrebonne's children. When Terrebonne released his slaves, Lavonia



could not imagine a life beyond the plantation for herself and her four children. Lavonia was allowed to stay on with the Terrebonne's for one month. Lavonia poisoned the family's food with cyanide, thinking that the Terrebonnes would have to rely on Lavonia to nurse them back to health. As a result, Elijah Terrebonne's daughters both died. Lavonia was subsequently hanged.

Megan Flynn calls Robicheaux to tell him that Clete Purcel was arrested for driving under the influence. Also, an unidentified black man is thought to have started a fire on the movie set at the Terrebonne estate.

In Chapter 13, Robicheaux and Soileau arrive at Mout' Broussard's place just as the FBI is bringing Cool Breeze home. Robicheaux suggests to Glazier that she look into Harpo Scruggs' past at Angola Prison. Robicheaux surmises that Glazier and the FBI are using Cool Breeze as bait to catch the Chinese Triads for their illegal dubbing enterprise.

That afternoon, Robicheaux talks to retired Texas Ranger Lester Cobb about Harpo Scruggs. Lester Cobb tells Robicheaux that Harpo Scruggs is a pimp and a petty criminal with a mean streak.

Clete Purcel, out of jail, stops by to tell Robicheaux that he and Megan Flynn are no longer seeing each other. Robicheaux is glad to hear that Clete and Megan's relationship has run its course, but Robicheaux does not reveal this to Clete. After dinner, Robicheaux goes back to Cisco Flynn's house.

At the start of Chapter 14, a man purchases ammunition at a pawn and gun shop in New Iberia. The man begins to spout off about Lee Harvey Oswald killing President Kennedy. The clerk becomes suspicious and agitated. When the man leaves the pawn shop, the clerk records his license plate number and contacts the authorities.

Father James Mulcahy takes a trip on a friend's houseboat on the Henderson Swamp just outside Breaux Bridge. The tall man from the pawn and gun shop boards the houseboat and Mulcahy recognizes him as the visitor who cautioned him not to break the seal of confession. Mulcahy pulls a shotgun on the man, who leaves the houseboat at gunpoint.

Chapters 8 - 14 Analysis

Robicheaux's encounter with Swede Boxleiter in Chapter 8 foreshadows the revelation of the true nature of Boxleiter's friendship with Cisco Flynn. Also, Megan Flynn's credibility as a photojournalist is thrown into question by Boxleiter's appearance in Megan's award-winning photograph. Furthermore, Purcel's assertion that he will continue to see Megan Flynn socially creates tension between he and Robicheaux, thereby making the Flynn's an even bigger problem for Robicheaux.

Purcel's information about the Giacono crime family's outsourcing indicates that Cool Breeze's involvement with the underworld may be more significant than Robicheaux had initially believed. Harpo Scruggs's visit to Mout' Broussard's place in Vermillion Parish in



Chapter 9 proves that Scruggs's pursuit of Cool Breeze Broussard is connected to someone outside New Iberia Parish.

Cool Breeze's claim in Chapter 10 that someone rich and powerful is responsible for the execution of the two white brothers in St. Mary Parish foreshadows Archer Terrebonne's introduction into the narrative.

Father Mulcahy and his encounter with Lila Terrebonne, also in Chapter 10, further foreshadows the presence of a secret relating to Lila's tormented emotional state and her alcoholism.

In Chapter 11, Clete Purcel becomes part of the Billy Holtzner and Cisco Flynn story line when Megan helps him secure a position as Holtzner's head of security. Purcel's job also serves Robicheaux, in that Purcel is now in a position to feed Robicheaux pertinent information about the Terrebonne's and Holtzner's shady dealings with the Chinese Triad syndicate.

Jimmy Fig and Billy Holtzner are both Vietnam veterans. Holtzner's involvement with the Black Market foreshadows the character's propensity to align himself with people of dubious character, such as the Triads.

In Chapter 12, Clem Maddux is introduced. Maddux is another of Sunset Limited's peripheral characters. In this case, Maddux's conversation with Robicheaux functions to divert Robicheaux's attention away from Scruggs as a murder suspect.

The history of Elijah Terrebonne and the slave Lavonia in Chapter 12 gives background into the family's history with violence and racial tension. Clete Purcel's arrest in the same chapter paints the character as someone who is his own worst enemy. The incident also foreshadows Clete's eventual involvement with Geri Holtzner and Lila Terrebonne as well as setting the stage for Lila Terrebonne's subsequent death behind the wheel of Purcel's Cadillac.

Texas Ranger Lester Cobb is another peripheral character in the narrative. The information Cobb gives Robicheaux further advances Robicheaux's suspicions concerning Harpo Scruggs. Scruggs's appearance at a New Iberia gun shop and on the houseboat with Father Mulcahy prove that Clem Maddux was either mistaken about Scruggs's death or purposely lying to throw off Robicheaux's investigation of Scruggs.

Chapter 14 is told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator.



Chapters 15 - 21

Chapters 15 - 21 Summary

Father Mulcahy meets with Dave Robicheaux and the sheriff in Chapter 15. After the incident on the houseboat, Father Mulcahy knows that his life is in danger. Robicheaux presses Mulcahy to divulge what Lila Terrebonne said but the priest flatly refuses. The mysterious man who terrorized Father Mulcahy waits in a New Iberia jail cell. According to his driver's license, the man is Harpo Scruggs of Deming, New Mexico. Robicheaux and the sheriff agree that they have nothing with which to charge Scruggs and Scruggs goes free. Robicheaux believes that Scruggs is connected to the Flynn family. Jack Flynn, who is Megan and Cisco's father, was kidnapped from a Morgan City motel in 1956. Beaten with chains, the man was then crucified by unknown assailants. Flynn was a local labor union organizer.

During a conversation with Lila Terrebonne the following day, Robicheaux tells Lila about Father Mulcahy's ordeal on the houseboat. The next day, Sunday, Cleve Purcell accompanies Robicheaux and the two take a drive to Lafayette.

With Geri Holtzner and Anthony Pollock looking on, film director Billy Holtzner asks to rent Robicheaux's dock to do some filming. Robicheaux refuses. Purcell tells Robicheaux that Holtzner was kicked out of Vietnam during the war because of Holtzner's dealings with the Black Market. Later, Anthony, who is the studio accountant, is stabbed to death outside his apartment.

In Chapter 16, Robicheaux and Helen Soileau meet Ruby Gravano and her son, Nick, at the train station in Lafayette. Ruby is moving to Houston to start her life over. Robicheaux gives Ruby 300 dollars. First, however, Robicheaux takes Ruby to a motel, in hopes that Ruby will be able to identify Harpo Scruggs as one of Jack Flynn's kidnapers. Ruby recognizes Alex Guidry as the man who showed her mug shots of people Guidry had killed the night Jack Flynn was murdered. Ruby also places Harpo Scruggs and Alex Guidry in the same diner where she had gone with her friend Connie, another prostitute.

Later, two homicide detectives from Lafayette meet with Robicheaux. The detectives are planning to arrest Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard for starting the fire at the Terrebonne's estate. The detectives are convinced that Cool Breeze also stabbed Anthony Pollock. Robicheaux tells the detectives to talk to Swede Boxleiter about Pollock's killing. The sheriff instructs Robicheaux to pick up Alex Guidry for questioning in the Scruggs matter. The next day, Robicheaux and Soileau set out in search of Alex Guidry. They find Guidry playing golf at the New Iberia Country Club.

Guidry admits knowing Harpo Scruggs because of Guidry's past dealings with Harpo Delahoussey. Guidry becomes belligerent with Helen Soileau, saying that he has no



remorse about what happened to Ida Broussard. Robicheaux and Soileau are forced to let Alex Guidry go free.

On the way to Swede Boxleiter's house, Clete Purcel tells Robicheaux that Megan Flynn is concerned that her brother Cisco "[took] money from some guys in the Orient" (pg. 180.) Robicheaux and Purcel have a candid talk with Boxleiter. Robicheaux believes Swede Boxleiter is being set up to take the blame for something Harpo Scruggs did. On the way home from Boxleiter's place, Robicheaux expresses doubts about Ida Broussard's death being a suicide.

The following morning, Boxleiter tells Robicheaux that Scruggs is probably working for Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti. However, when Robicheaux and Soileau visit Scarlotti at his flower shop in New Orleans, Scarlotti denies everything.

While he is at Cisco Flynn's home, Robicheaux looks through an album of Megan Flynn's photographs. Robicheaux can understand how Megan won a Pulitzer since her photographs are striking and disturbing. One photograph shows Special Agent Adrien Glazier and other FBI agents arresting members of the American Indian Movement (AIM.) In a subsequent conversation with Megan Flynn, Robicheaux learns that Cisco and Swede Boxleiter lived in the same foster home as children in Trinidad, Colorado. Swede Boxleiter was raped by the boys' foster father. In the early hours of the following morning, Megan Flynn is attacked by two unidentified intruders.

In Chapter 17, Cisco tells Robicheaux that the attack on Megan was retaliation for what happened to Anthony Pollock. Cisco claims that Pollock was doing business with the Chinese Triad crime syndicate. Cisco also tells Robicheaux that Billy Holtzner embezzled 375,000 dollars from the studio in an insurance scam. The people financing Cisco's current film are based in Hong Kong. Robicheaux also learns that Holtzner's studio is in the process of filing for bankruptcy.

Robicheaux stops at Clete Purcel's place to inform Purcel of the attack on Megan Flynn. Purcel believes that Ricky the Mouse has something to do with the attack. Purcel and Robicheaux go to New Orleans to confront Scarlotti.

After visiting Megan Flynn in the hospital, Robicheaux intercepts Lila Terrebonne. Lila tells Robicheaux that the two brothers who were murdered in St. Mary Parish had raped her after the three of them met in a bar. Robicheaux suggests to Lila that her father, Archer Terrebonne, is behind the murders. Later that night, Clete Purcel phones Robicheaux from New Orleans.

In Chapter 18, Clete Purcel has an altercation with Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti in Scarlotti's New Orleans restaurant. Purcel roughs up a couple of Scarlotti's soldiers before going after Scarlotti himself. Benny Grogan, one of Scarlotti's men, is badly injured by a cast-iron skillet filled with chipped beef. Clete assaults Ricky the Mouse with a pair of vice grips. Purcel beats Ricky's face bloody, leaving him lying on the pavement outside the restaurant.



In Chapter 19, Robicheaux suspects that his friend Clete Purcel may be responsible for Ricky Scarlotti's injuries but Clete denies any involvement. Robicheaux tells Purcel that he thinks someone else may be responsible for the attack on Megan Flynn.

Robicheaux tells Cool Breeze Broussard that he believes Ida was murdered. He asks Cool Breeze to agree to have Ida's body exhumed so that an autopsy can be performed.

Robicheaux returns home to find his teenage daughter, Alafair, and three of her friends watching Swede Boxleiter swinging from a large tree. Robicheaux tells Boxleiter to stay away from his family. Boxleiter intimates to Robicheaux that Jack Flynn's murder was planned and implemented by some very influential people in New Iberia.

After the conversation with Swede Boxleiter, Robicheaux recounts the story of a young black man visiting relatives in Mississippi. Only fourteen years old at the time, the young man whistled at a white woman on the street one day. He was later kidnapped and murdered. The killers were never caught.

Robicheaux talks to Archer Terrebonne about the significance of the Hanged Man tarot card. Their conversation soon turns to Jack Flynn. Archer Terrebonne denounces Flynn as "a resentful, envious troublemaker" (pg. 217.) Terrebonne then reveals to Robicheaux that at the age of fifteen, Lila killed her cousin. Archer tells Robicheaux that Lila Terrebonne feels responsible for her cousin dying in an avalanche in Colorado.

In Chapter 20, Dave Robicheaux gives Megan Flynn a nine-millimeter Beretta pistol and arranges for someone to instruct Megan in gun safety. Rodney Loudermilk is introduced in this chapter. Loudermilk, an ex-convict who served a three-year term in Sugarland, Texas, has a penchant for inexpensive western wear. Loudermilk spends his days standing outside the entrance to the Alamo, pretending to be a tour guide to unsuspecting tourists. A man enters Loudermilk's apartment through an open window and murders Loudermilk while he is in the middle of a steak and baked potato dinner. Cecil Hardin of San Antonio homicide contacts Robicheaux. Hardin tells Robicheaux that a note was found near Rodney Loudermilk's body which could implicate Harpo Scruggs and/or Swede Boxleiter in the killing.

Before questioning Cisco Flynn, Robicheaux talks to Cisco's sister Megan. He tells Megan that Rodney Loudermilk was probably one of her attackers. Loudermilk was distinguishable because he had a bracelet of blue stars tattooed around his left wrist. Megan informs Robicheaux that at the time of Loudermilk's murder, Swede Boxleiter was sharing a meal with her and Cisco.

Robicheaux and his partner Helen Soileau go to the movie set on the Terrebonne estate to have a word with Swede Boxleiter. Swede gives Robicheaux and Soileau an alibi for the time of Loudermilk's death. Robicheaux and Soileau then go to the airport to find out if Boxleiter had recently flown to San Antonio. Two days later, Robicheaux and Cool Breeze attend the exhumation of Ida Broussard's body.



When the lid of Ida Broussard's coffin is lifted, Robicheaux, Cool Breeze, and the pathologist notice that Ida's body is perfectly preserved. The pathologist says that the preservation of Ida's body could be the result of "chemical seepage" (pg. 232.)

Chapter 21 opens with Bootsie telling Robicheaux that Megan Flynn came to their home looking for him. Later, at an out-of-the-way barbecue joint on State Road 70, Harpo Scruggs tells Robicheaux and Soileau that he wants complete federal immunity in exchange for his testimony in connection with Jack Flynn's death. Scruggs, too believes that Swede Boxleiter or Clete Purcel threw Rodney Loudermilk out of his 8th floor apartment window. Scruggs goes on to say that the only alternative to his receiving immunity would be to prevent Cool Breeze Broussard from testifying against the Giacono family. Robicheaux finds out that Scruggs took a train to Houston, spent the night in a Mexican brothel, and then made his way to Trinidad, Colorado.

During a conversation with Cisco Flynn, Flynn calls Loudermilk a cowboy and Robicheaux begins to think that Cisco along with Swede Boxleiter may have played a role in the murder of Rodney Loudermilk. Robicheaux then learns from the pathologist that Ida Broussard died of suffocation with wet towel. Ida Broussard was two months pregnant at the time of her death.

Chapters 15 - 21 Analysis

Chapter 15 returns to Robicheaux's first-person narration. Harpo Scruggs's identity is finally confirmed. The murder of studio accountant Anthony Pollock further confirms Billy Holtzner's dire position of indebtedness to the Chinese underworld.

Robicheaux's meeting with Ruby Gravano at the train station in Chapter 16 solidifies the connection between Harpo Scruggs and jail guard Alex Guidry and confirms the two characters' involvement in the murder of Jack Flynn. Alex Guidry's presence at the New Iberia Country Club ties Guidry to Archer Terrebonne. Guidry's admission of his involvement with Ida Broussard also makes the character a prime suspect in Ida's death. Also, Megan Flynn's statement about her brother's borrowing money from people "in the Orient" connects Cisco to the matter of Billy Holtzner's unpaid debt.

Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti's run-in with Clete Purcel in New Orleans further complicates the narrative, in that Scarlotti's involvement with Harpo Scruggs confirms Cool Breeze Broussard's assertion that someone is trying to kill him.

Megan Flynn reveals the true nature of her brother's friendship with Swede Boxleiter. Boxleiter and Cisco are former foster brothers. This accounts for Cisco Flynn's loyalty to his childhood friend. Megan Flynn's attack at the hands of two intruders places her brother, Cisco, at the center of Billy Holtzner's conflict with the Chinese moneylenders. Given Holtzner's Black Market dealings in Vietnam, it comes as no surprise that he has fallen in with the Asian criminal element once again. The supposition here is that Holtzner's Vietnam experience was simply the beginning of a lengthy involvement with the Triads.



Lila Terrebonne's claim that she was raped by the two murdered white brothers from St. Mary Parish implicates her father, Archer Terrebonne, in their murders. Ultimately, Sunshine Labiche's claim that she was raped by the same men turns out to have been a red herring. In other words, the brothers were, in fact, guilty of rape all along. The actual victim however is Lila Terrebonne.

Chapter 18 is told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator. Clete Purcel's attack on Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti in this chapter proves that Purcel is something of a loose cannon. Therefore, Purcel's future erratic behavior should not come as a surprise to the reader. Purcel is just as violent as the criminals he pursues.

Also in Chapter 19, Swede Boxleiter's assertion that Jack Flynn's murder was committed and covered up by someone very rich and very powerful brings to Robicheaux's mind the story of Emmett Till. Till, a young Chicago native visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi in 1956, was brutally murdered for supposedly whistling at a white woman. This story proves Robicheaux's statement that "the killers in Mississippi were white trash and [unlike the powerful Archer Terrebonne] economically dispensable" (pg. 216.)

Archer Terrebonne finally reveals the secret of his daughter's self-destructive alcoholism. The Hanged Man tarot card assumes a double significance in this chapter. First of all, it signifies the crucifixion death of Jack Flynn. Secondly, Terrebonne tells Robicheaux that Lila's cousin, who had been buried by an avalanche, was found frozen in the same posture as the Hanged Man.

Rodney Loudermilk's introduction in Chapter 20 further muddies the narrative waters of Sunset Limited. While Loudermilk is another periphery character, his presence serves to reinforce Robicheaux's suspicions about Swede Boxleiter's true character.

Scruggs's meeting with Robicheaux and Helen Soileau at the barbecue joint confirms that Scruggs was sent by the Giacono crime family to kill Cool Breeze Broussard. Scruggs's subsequent trip to Trinidad, Colorado, reinforces the connection between Scruggs, Swede Boxleiter, and Cisco Flynn. Also in this chapter, Ida Broussard's murder, and Alex Guidry's role in her death, once again come to the forefront.



Chapters 22 - 28

Chapters 22 - 28 Summary

While out fishing in Chapter 22, Clete Purcel tells Robicheaux that Swede Boxleiter stole jewelry and valuables from Elijah Terrebonne's wife's casket in the family crypt on the Terrebonne estate.

Billy Holtzner pays Clete 200 dollars to fire Swede Boxleiter from the movie security crew. Later, Robicheaux tells Cool Breeze what really happened to Ida. Cool Breeze is sure that he was not the father of Ida's baby. Robicheaux makes Cool Breeze promise to steer clear of Alex Guidry.

Robicheaux and Helen Soileau talk to Cisco Flynn on a remote movie set. Robicheaux sees Billy Holtzner and his daughter, Geri, eating lunch with two Chinese men there. Cisco tells Robicheaux that the two Chinese gentlemen are studio accountants.

Next, Robicheaux visits Leo Castile, the current owner of Alex Guidry's former home. Castile tells Robicheaux that he heard Guidry and Ida Broussard arguing the night Ida was killed. Swede Boxleiter is kidnapped by three men, driven to a remote location, and crucified.

In Chapter 23, Robicheaux and Soileau learn that Boxleiter was crucified in the same location as Jack Flynn. Robicheaux believes that Harpo Scruggs killed Swede Boxleiter in order to send "a message to someone" (pg. 257.)

Alex Guidry is livid that Robicheaux has reopened the Ida Broussard case. Later, Robicheaux learns that Harpo Scruggs owns a ranch just outside Trinidad, Colorado. The sheriff sends Robicheaux and Helen Soileau to Colorado to investigate Scruggs.

Robicheaux, Soileau, and Detective John Nash question Harpo Scruggs. Robicheaux tells Harpo Scruggs that Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti is upset because Scruggs stole money from Scarlotti. Scruggs denies any wrongdoing and Detective Nash asks Scruggs about Jubal Breedlove. Breedlove, Scruggs's former employee, has been hospitalized in Raton, New Mexico with "an infected knife wound" (pg. 265.) Breedlove is also considered a suspect in the Boxleiter crucifixion.

Robicheaux travels to Durango, Colorado to investigate Lila's cousin's death. He comes across an old photograph of Archer Terrebonne, Harpo Scruggs and a few other men taken shortly after the cousin's death. Robicheaux remembers that Archer Terrebonne never claimed to know anything about Harpo Scruggs. Robicheaux decides that Scruggs is blackmailing Terrebonne.

Late the next day, Clete Purcel arrives at Robicheaux's home in Chapter 24. Purcel thinks Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti might be out for revenge following his altercation with Scarlotti in New Orleans.



After he and Helen Soileau meet with Glazier in New Orleans, Robicheaux decides that Glazier knows for certain that Harpo Scruggs is one of Jack Flynn's killers. Robicheaux then goes to Gus Vitelli's French Quarter bookstore. Vitelli, an avid conspiracy theorist, knows nothing about a planned hit on Cool Breeze Broussard. Vitelli says that Ricky Scarlotti is apprehensive about implicating his Chinese Triad associates in the dubbing scheme.

Mout' Broussard finds Alex Guidry at the country club and tells Guidry how Ida Broussard died. Mout' also informs Guidry that he is the prime suspect in Ida's death.

In Chapter 25, Detective John Nash telephones Robicheaux with news of Jubal Breedlove. Breedlove disappeared from the hospital in Raton, New Mexico. Both Nash and Robicheaux believe that Harpo Scruggs killed Jubal Breedlove.

Billy Holtzner tells Robicheaux that he is being extorted by people who have threatened to harm his daughter, Geri. Robicheaux suggests that Holtzner file an anonymous complaint with the Sheriff's Department.

In Chapter 26, Alex Guidry learns from Robicheaux that Ida Broussard was pregnant with his child when she was killed.

Alex Guidry telephones Robicheaux two days later, requesting immunity in exchange for his testimony against Harpo Scruggs. Guidry is afraid that Scruggs will retaliate once he finds out Guidry has talked to the authorities.

Adrien Glazier tells Robicheaux that Cool Breeze is missing again. Glazier says that people in Hong Kong dispatched two associates to Louisiana to kill either Cool Breeze or Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti. Glazier believes one of the potential assassins is Rubén Esteban, a dwarf known for torturing prisoners during interrogation. Glazier then refers to Jack Flynn as a Communist.

Alex Guidry agrees to meet Robicheaux at the site of the Boxleiter and Flynn murders. Robicheaux and Soileau find Guidry sitting behind the wheel of his Cadillac. Guidry, fatally wounded, climbs out of the car only to be shot and killed by Helen Soileau.

In Chapter 27, Soileau and Robicheaux, along with Detective Daigle, visit Rubén Esteban in the Lafayette Parish jail. Esteban was taken into custody after causing a disturbance in a local bar. Later, while Robicheaux reviews the file on Alex Guidry's death, Megan Flynn comes into the bait shop. Megan is worried that Rubén Esteban was sent to New Iberia by the Chinese Triads.

Robicheaux and Helen Soileau search the property where Alex Guidry was killed. Finally, Robicheaux finds a glass jar containing three photographs. The photographs show Jack Flynn being beaten, tortured, and then killed. Robicheaux recognizes Archer Terrebonne in one of the photographs.

In Chapter 28, Dave Robicheaux arrests Archer Terrebonne for his role in the 1956 kidnap and murder of Jack Flynn. However, Terrebonne is not held for long. Cisco Flynn



tells Robicheaux that it was Swede Boxleiter who threw Rodney Loudermilk out of the apartment window. Cisco admits that the alibi he provided for Boxleiter was a lie. Robicheaux then informs Cisco of Archer Terrebonne's arrest, which Flynn finds difficult to believe.

In this chapter, there is also the revelation that Ricky Scarlotti hired Harpo Scruggs to kill Cool Breeze Broussard for selling the Giaconos their own VCRs.

Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti is shot and killed by an anonymous man driving a green delivery truck.

Chapters 22 - 28 Analysis

In Chapter 22, something important is revealed about the internal workings of Archer Terrebonne. When Terrebonne places the stolen items back in Elijah's wife's casket, Terrebonne's lack of emotion toward Swede Boxleiter reveals Terrebonne's utter disregard for those in lower social stations than himself.

Swede Boxleiter's crucifixion mirrors that of Jack Flynn, further implicating both Archer Terrebonne and Harpo Scruggs in Flynn's death. The presence of the two Chinese men on the movie set at the Terrebonne estate proves the validity of Billy Holtzner's fears about his daughter's safety.

Leo Castile is a peripheral character whose introduction into the narrative further solidifies Alex Guidry's involvement in the murder of Ida Broussard.

Chapter 23 confirms Harpo Scruggs's role as the potential assassin of Cool Breeze Broussard. The introduction of Jubal Breedlove is somewhat confusing, as Breedlove is soon disposed of. However, the character's presence in the novel could be seen as useful in terms of establishing Harpo Scruggs's guilt in multiple slayings, including that of Jubal Breedlove. Also, Robicheaux's discovery of the photograph taken shortly after the death of Lila Terrebonne's cousin proves that Terrebonne was lying when he claimed not to know anything about Harpo Scruggs.

Gus Vitelli, the bookstore owner and acquaintance of Dave Robicheaux, is a peripheral character. Vitelli's statements in Chapter 24 definitively tie Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti and by extension, Harpo Scruggs, to the Chinese Triads.

Alex Guidry's admission to knowing Harpo Scruggs in Chapter 26 commences the downward arc of the Jack Flynn murder case. Mout' Broussard's encounter with Harpo Scruggs at the New Iberia Country Club brings Ida Broussard's murder full circle.

Rubén Esteban's introduction in Chapter 26 is gratuitous in that Esteban's involvement in the possible contract killing of Cool Breeze Broussard is never clearly established in the narrative. However, Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti's murder by the man in the green delivery truck in Chapter 28 illuminates the possibility that Esteban was part of a team dispatched to kill Cool Breeze. Scarlotti's murder also proves that the Giacono crime

family has no qualms about liquidating one of their own. Alex Guidry becomes the third suspect killed by Helen Soileau in the line of duty.

In Chapter 27, Robicheaux obtains hard evidence of Archer Terrebonne's involvement in the killing and as such, the character's dilemma now becomes bringing Terrebonne to justice. The fact that Swede Boxleiter murdered Rodney Loudermilk in San Antonio proves that Boxleiter had come to New Iberia for reasons other than to straighten out his life, contrary to what Cisco Flynn originally told Robicheaux.



Chapters 29 - 34 and Epilogue

Chapters 29 - 34 and Epilogue Summary

In Chapter 29, Robicheaux visits Clete Purcel at home in Jeanerette. Robicheaux tells Clete that Harpo Scruggs has disappeared. The two men go to a cockfight in St. Landry Parish to look for Scruggs. When Scruggs finally arrives at the cockfight, Robicheaux tells Scruggs that Ricky Scarlotti is dead. This means that Scruggs will not be able to collect on the contract to kill Cool Breeze Broussard.

Lila and Archer Terrebonne visit Robicheaux at home. Lila tells Robicheaux that she has "forgiven" Archer for his past mistakes (pg. 337.) When Archer Terrebonne attempts to make peace with Dave Robicheaux, Robicheaux tells Archer that he knows Scruggs is blackmailing him. Lila Terrebonne slaps Robicheaux's face.

In Chapter 30, Jessie Rideau, another ex-prostitute, claims to have been at the Morgan City motel from which Jack Flynn was kidnapped. According to Rideau, she and another prostitute called Lavern Viator were both working the motel that night. Rideau claims Harpo Scruggs gave Lavern a lockbox to hide for him. When Lavern joined a cult in Texas, she left the lockbox with Jessie Rideau. Jessie Rideau also claims that Jack Flynn's crucifixion was Harpo Scruggs's idea. Jessie is afraid that Scruggs will try to kill her as well.

The following day, Special Agent Glazier informs Robicheaux that Rubén Esteban has escaped to the Italian Riviera. Robicheaux suggests to Glazier that Harpo Scruggs was a federal informant when Jack Flynn was murdered. That evening, Robicheaux watches as Clete Purcel is arrested on the ten o'clock news.

Chapter 31 begins with Robicheaux receiving a phone call from Special Agent Glazier. Glazier tells Robicheaux that Ruby Gravano's latest "customer" is also Rubén Esteban's suspected accomplice in the Scarlotti shooting. Glazier faxes Robicheaux a composite sketch of the man. Robicheaux arrives at Cisco Flynn's home only to find him arguing with Billy Holtzner. Megan Flynn returns the pistol that Robicheaux gave her and intimates that she may seek revenge on Archer Terrebonne for his part in Jack Flynn's death.

After dinner, Batist tells Robicheaux that a man with a scorpion tattoo was asking questions about Purcel and Geri Holtzner. Robicheaux tells Purcel that one of Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti's killers might be looking for him. Purcel confirms seeing the man with the scorpion tattoo at a convenience store. After flying into a rage about the man with the scorpion tattoo, Billy Holtzner fires Clete Purcel. The following day, Robicheaux meets Jessie Rideau at St. Peter's Cemetery. Rideau is hesitant to swear out a complaint against Scruggs.



In Chapter 32, Harpo Scruggs enters Robicheaux's bait shop armed with a "blue-black . 2 Ruger revolver with ivory grips" (pg. 363.) Scruggs, who has been shot, compels Robicheaux drive him to Opelousas. Scruggs tells Robicheaux that Archer Terrebonne paid Scruggs's partner to kill him. Scruggs confesses to the murder of the two brothers at Atchafalaya Swamp. Scruggs wants revenge on Archer Terrebonne.

Scruggs and Robicheaux finally arrive at their destination, which turns out to be a dilapidated old brothel. Robicheaux then finds out that Scruggs murdered Jessie Rideau. In the basement, Robicheaux sees "a woman's shoe and the sole of a bare foot" (pg. 367.) Scruggs points Robicheaux to a box containing evidence linked to Jack Flynn's murder. Harpo Scruggs shoots himself in the head.

In Chapter 33, Clete Purcel and Robicheaux strategize as to how to bring Archer Terrebonne to justice. Megan Flynn informs Robicheaux that she is going to Paris. She also tells Robicheaux that Cisco walked out on Billy Holtzner and the film. Glazier tells Robicheaux that Rubén Esteban's accomplice is a French-Canadian assassin named Jacques Poitier. Poitier sports a scorpion tattoo. A man in a blue Ford follows Lila Terrebonne from Holtzner's movie set on Henderson Swamp to Cisco Flynn's house where a lawn party in progress. Megan Flynn has a conversation with the Ford's driver, Jacques Poitier.

Lila has a brief encounter with Cisco Flynn during which she throws a drink in Cisco's face. Lila Terrebonne then leaves Flynn's home, only to be followed by Poitier in the blue Ford. Moments later, Lila Terrebonne is killed after her Cadillac blows a tire and collides with a dump truck hauling asbestos.

In Chapter 34, Archer Terrebonne and Billy Holtzner arrive at the scene of Lila's accident within twenty minutes. Robicheaux publicly blames Archer Terrebonne for indirectly causing Lila's death. If not for Terrebonne's murky association with Holtzner, Poitier would never have come to New Iberia. Robicheaux also believes that Megan Flynn's brief conversation with Poitier had something to do with Lila's death.

Later, Robicheaux arrives at Acadiana airfield just as Megan Flynn is about to board a private jet for Paris. He tells Megan Flynn that she played a role in Lila's demise by leading Poitier to believe that it was Geri Holtzner who was driving the Cadillac. Megan does not deny anything, knowing that Robicheaux does not have enough evidence against her to make an arrest.

Sunset Limited's Epilogue does little to shed light on the Jack Flynn murder. The narrative gives no evidence that Archer Terrebonne is ever arrested for the murder. Megan Flynn and her brother both leave New Iberia again and life simply continues as before. Robicheaux's final contemplation of life in New Iberia reveals a sense of resignation about the workings of evil borne of power and wealth.



Chapters 29 - 34 and Epilogue Analysis

The final chapters of *Sunset Limited* bring the resolution of several major plot points. The final peripheral character, Jacques Poitier, is introduced once Esteban exits the narrative. Consumed with guilt for his role in Jack Flynn's murder and on the run from Archer Terrebonne, Harpo Scruggs eventually commits suicide. Scruggs manages to leave behind enough evidence which solves the mystery of Jack Flynn's death once and for all. In addition, Scruggs's confession means that he finally has his revenge on Archer Terrebonne.

Jessie Rideau is the last of Harpo Scruggs's victims and the last character in the narrative, besides Scruggs and Terrebonne, who was alive the night Jack Flynn was kidnapped and murdered.

Megan Flynn's real reason for returning to New Iberia is never revealed, but Robicheaux realizes that Megan still harbors resentment against Archer Terrebonne for what Terrebonne did to her father. Megan Flynn feels no remorse for having caused Lila Terrebonne's death. It was she who convinced Poitier that Geri Holtzner was the driver of Cleve Purcel's Cadillac. Given her somewhat shady methods, Megan Flynn proves herself to be no better than the men who murdered her father.

Lila Terrebonne's untimely death proves that Billy Holtzner's trouble with the Chinese underworld remains unresolved. Holtzner, however, is unaware of the fact that he and his daughter are still very much in danger. Holtzner's new association with Archer Terrebonne signals the director's potential for even more trouble. Terrebonne has used his wealth and power against lesser men in the past; a fact which seems to escape Holtzner altogether. Ultimately, things in New Iberia remain the same. Those in power remain in power. Those without power remain marginalized and disenfranchised.

The Epilogue to *Sunset Limited* finds Dave Robicheaux at home, again, with his family. Robicheaux's encounter with Mout' Broussard and the Korean woman causes the character to evaluate all that has happened during the course of the narrative. Robicheaux's reflections prove that, while the character remains somewhat cynical about recent events, he nonetheless holds hope that someday things will be different, if not better, for the people in New Iberia Parish, Louisiana.



Characters

Dave Robicheaux

Robicheaux is an investigator who works for the New Iberia Sheriff's Department in New Iberia Parish, Louisiana. Robicheaux is an avid fisherman who spends good deal of time on the water. Robicheaux's first wife, Annie, was murdered some years ago and Robicheaux is still haunted by her death. Currently, Robicheaux lives with his second wife, known only as Bootsie, and their adopted daughter, Alafair. Robicheaux owns a bait shop and can often be found there with his old friend and former Homicide partner, Clete Purcel. Robicheaux grew up in New Iberia and he is familiar with many of the people who live there.

As a boy, Robicheaux and his father saw Jack Flynn's body after Flynn had been nailed to the side of a barn, crucifixion-style. Flynn's children, Megan and Cisco, are contemporaries of Dave Robicheaux and Robicheaux, as well as the others in New Iberia, is hesitant to become involved with them. Robicheaux is fascinated with Megan Flynn and challenged by her seething anger about her father's murder. Robicheaux is reluctant to investigate Jack Flynn's killing, realizing that it would open old wounds that some would prefer to forget. Dave Robicheaux's childhood was less than ideal. His mother's infidelities proved confusing and disturbing to Robicheaux. He was also perplexed by his father's behavior. His father would always take her back when her love affairs failed.

Temperamentally, Robicheaux is fairly unemotional on the surface. However the Epilogue portrays the character as someone who is a deep thinker. Robicheaux is folksy and has simple values where home and family are his primary priorities. Robicheaux is loyal, straightforward, and does not suffer liars or fools gladly. Above all, Dave Robicheaux has a well-defined sense of right and wrong. This is not simply in terms of the law, but in terms of everyday morality.

Megan Flynn

Megan Flynn is Jack Flynn's daughter and Cisco Flynn's sister. Since the death of her father, Megan carries a chip on her shoulder. Shuttled from foster home to foster home, Megan harbors a deep resentment against the people of New Iberia. She and Cisco feel betrayed by the people in their hometown because Jack Flynn's murder remained unsolved for so many years. As an adult, Megan is an award-winning photojournalist who uses questionable methods to achieve stunning photographic results. Megan never clearly states her real motivation for returning to New Iberia after such a long absence. Bootsie Robicheaux and Special Agent Adrien Glazier are both quite vocal about their mistrust of Megan Flynn.



Megan and Clete Purcel have a short-lived romantic involvement until Megan breaks it off. Physically, Megan could be considered beautiful. She is trim and athletically built, and prefers to dress rather casually. Megan Flynn has thick and dark red hair. She is especially fond of a certain floppy straw hat. Robicheaux remarks that Megan's "eyes [have] a reddish-brown cast in them like fire inside amber glass" (pg. 122.) Robicheaux also says that Megan Flynn's eyes could make a person feel as though they were "genuinely invited into the mystery of her life" (pg. 2.)

Cletus Purcel

Clete Purcel is Dave Robicheaux's former partner on the Homicide squad. Purcel is an attractive and masculine man who has a tendency to drink too much. Purcel works as a freelance private investigator. He also works as Security Chief on the Terrebonne estate film set until he is unceremoniously fired by Billy Holtzner. Clete Purcel is rather large and quite muscular. Robicheaux asserts that Purcel's arms are thick and that his neck resembles a fire hydrant. Clete has reddish hair and an easygoing disposition. Clete has a scar above his left eye. Clete Purcel seems to be his own worst enemy. At one time "the best cop [Robicheaux] ever knew, Purcel's life became a tragedy fraught with marriage and legal troubles" (pg. 57.)

Willie Broussard

Cool Breeze Broussard is the son of Mout' Broussard. Cool Breeze is a very large man, weighing approximately two hundred pounds. His skin is the color of chocolate. Cool Breeze is bald and his eyes droop "at the corners like a prizefighter's" (pg. 5.)

Cisco Flynn

Cisco Flynn is the brother of Megan Flynn. Cisco is a screenwriter and occasional actor who keeps a summer home near Bayou Teche, just south of Loreauville, Louisiana. Cisco is fairly attractive and Robicheaux describes his eyes as "reddish-brown" (pg. 7.) Cisco once worked as a stuntman and actor. Currently, he is a screenwriter. Billy Holtzner finances Cisco's film, which is being shot on a set constructed at the Terrebonne estate. As a boy, Cisco was in the same Colorado foster home as Swede Boxleiter.

Swede Boxleiter

This individual is a former convict who has recently been released from prison. Boxleiter was caught murdering another inmate in broad view with a camera recording his every move. Formerly housed at the Colorado State Penitentiary in Canon City, Boxleiter is an associate of Cisco Flynn. Boxleiter's hair is bleached blond and worn in a flattop. His large head resembles "a person with water on the brain," (pg. 58) and he has a small



mouth. While he and Cisco Flynn were foster brothers in Colorado, Boxleiter was raped by his foster father on more than one occasion.

Mout' Broussard

Broussard, whose given name is actually "Mouth," is a shoeshine man in New Iberia, Louisiana. Mout' is also the father of Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard. Mout' is a large man, whose physique resembles a haystack. Mout' is fond of cigars.

Lila Terrebonne

Lila Terrebonne is the only child of Archer Terrebonne. Lila is an alcoholic. She has milky green eyes.

Alex Guidry

Alex Guidry works as a guard at the New Iberia Parish Prison. A former associate of Harpo Delahoussey, Guidry once had an affair with Cool Breeze Broussard's wife Ida. Guidry possibly fathered a child with Ida Broussard. Guidry comes from a working-class family. He is described as "aging" but "well-preserved" (pg. 13.)

Ida Broussard

This individual is Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard's wife. Once a sharecropper, Ida becomes Harpo Delahoussey's cook and later begins working as a prostitute. Ida has an illicit affair with Alex Guidry and later becomes pregnant with Guidry's child. Ida is eventually murdered by Guidry.

Helen Soileau

Helen Soileau is Dave Robicheaux's partner at the New Iberia Sheriff's Department. Helen is rather masculine, preferring to wear "shirts and men's slacks" to work. Helen has blond hair that is "molded to her head like a plastic wig" (pg. 35.) Robicheaux describes Helen Soileau's face as "lumpy" (pg. 35.)

Anthony Pollock

Anthony Pollock is a Malaysian studio accountant and Geri Holtzner's boyfriend and heroin connection. Pollock is a large and dark-skinned man with a gap between his two front teeth. He wears his long black hair pulled back in a ponytail. Pollock is later stabbed to death just outside his apartment. Pollock is somehow connected to the Chinese moneylenders who threaten to harm Billy Holtzner's daughter.



Harpo Scruggs

The nephew of Harpo Delahoussey, Scruggs is a violent and vindictive man who is out to kill Cool Breeze Broussard. Scruggs is a part-time contract killer for the Giacono crime family. Scruggs is a very tall man who often sports "a smoke-colored Stetson" cowboy hat (pg. 155.) Harpo Scruggs chews Red Man tobacco. He wears "yellow-tinted glasses" and has a grizzled face. Scruggs is believed to have been a confidential federal informant at the time of Jack Flynn's murder. Scruggs is also one of the men who murdered Flynn, along with Archer Terrebonne and at least two other men.

Ruby Gravano

Ruby Gravano is a prostitute and the mother of a nine-year-old autistic son named Nick. Ruby is quite thin and has long black hair. Her eyelashes and fingernails are false. Ruby wears "foundation on her thighs and forearms" (pg. 68.) Ruby's son is "a strange-looking child" with black hair and a "narrow face" which closely resembles his mother. Robicheaux notices that Nick's eyes are "unnaturally far apart, as though they had been pasted on the skin" (pg. 172.)

Archer Terrebonne

Archer Terrebonne is one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in New Iberia Parish. Descended from slave-owner Elijah Terrebonne, Archer Terrebonne is involved in a number of commercial ventures. One of these ventures includes providing financial backing for Cisco Flynn's most recent film, which is being shot on the grounds of the Terrebonne estate. Archer is somewhere in his seventies. He is well-preserved and well-dressed. Terrebonne is a member of the New Iberia Country Club set.

Special Agent Adrien Glazier of the FBI

Adrien Glazier has come to New Iberia as part of an FBI investigation concerning Cool Breeze Broussard's allegations of abuse at the hands of guards in the New Iberia Parish prison. Special Agent Glazier has ice blue eyes "that could have been taken out of a Viking's face" (pg. 19.) Her hair is "ash-blond, wispy and broken on the ends" and Robicheaux describes her face as "big-boned and adversarial" (pg. 19.)

Jessie Rideau

Jessie Rideau is another local prostitute working in and around New Iberia Parish. Rideau claims that she can positively identify Harpo Scruggs as one of the men who kidnapped and subsequently killed Jack Flynn. Rideau is in fear for her life. Jessie has turquoise eyes. Her wavy hair is copper-colored and she has "brown skin and freckles like a spray of dull pennies on her face and neck" (pg. 359.) When Robicheaux meets



Jessie Rideau face-to-face at St. Peter's Cemetery, he comments on her wide shoulders and "breasts like watermelons" (pg. 359.) Also, there is something about Jessie which indicates that "she had no means of defending herself against the world" (pg. 359.) Jessie's fears are realized when she is later killed by Harpo Scruggs.

Bootsie Robicheaux

The book does not contain a lot of information about this individual. Bootsie is Dave Robicheaux's wife. Robicheaux does remark that Bootsie has beautiful and thick hair "the color of honey with caramel swirls in it" (pg. 25.) Throughout the narrative, Bootsie expresses her suspicion of Megan and Cisco Flynn.

William Holtzner

William "Billy" Holtzner is a film producer and the father of Geraldine "Geri" Holtzner. Holtzner's age is undertermined. He has a beard growing along his jawline and seems to have no other body hair. Holtzner is fond of twisting people's noses. Robicheaux makes a point of mentioning that Holtzner wears socks with sandals.

Batist

Batist works in Dave Robicheaux's bait shop. Batist is a black man of undetermined age who once worked with Robicheaux's father, "trapping and fishing" (pg. 91.) Batist is strong with upper arms that bunch "like cantaloupes when he [moves]" (pg. 91.) Robicheaux points out that Batist is "illiterate and sometimes contentious" but adds that Batist is "loyal" and "decent" (pg. 91.)



Objects/Places

Baton Rouge

This is the capital city of the state of Louisiana.

New Orleans

This is the largest city in the state of Louisiana.

San Antonio

This is the second-largest city in the state of Texas. San Antonio is also the site of the Alamo.

Atchafalaya River

This is a river located in the state of Louisiana.

Trinidad

This is a small town in the state of Colorado.

Raton

This is a small town located in the state of New Mexico.

Mekong River

This is a river located in the country of Vietnam.

The Sunset Limited

This is the name of a train whose route originates on the East Coast and extends across the United States, ending in Hollywood, California.



Café du Monde

This is a popular coffee shop located in the French Quarter section of New Orleans, Louisiana.

Sugarland

This is also spelled Sugar Land and is a city located in the state of Texas.

Lagniappe Too

This is a restaurant located in New Iberia, Louisiana.

Angola

This is another name for the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Po'Boy

This is a kind of submarine sandwich famous in the South.

Canon City

Sometimes spelled Cañon City, this is the site of the Colorado State Penitentiary.

Vermillion Parish

This is a county in the state of Louisiana.

Jeanerette

This is a small city located in New Iberia Parish, Louisiana.

Morgan City

This is a city in Louisiana located on the Atchafalaya River in Louisiana.

St. Mary Parish

This is a county located in the state of Louisiana.



Guadalcanal

This is an island located in the South Pacific. This is also the site of World War II conflict between U.S. forces and the Imperial Japanese Army.

The Angel of Goliad

The Angel of Goliad is a prostitute involved in saving the lives of soldiers during the Texas Revolution. According to the narrative, one of Megan Flynn's ancestors was saved by this unknown woman.



Themes

Race Relations

Historically, the American South has been identified as the site of racial unrest between blacks and whites. This undercurrent of racism and racial mistrust still exists in the modern-day Louisiana of *Sunset Limited*. The author gives the reader a glimpse of race relations both past and present. For example, the inclusion of the Terrebonne family's history with slavery proves that such difficulties are self-perpetuating. The Terrebonne family's position as a rich and powerful force in New Iberia began with Elijah Terrebonne who is a prominent slave owner who returns from the Civil War only to find his plantation looted. Terrebonne's former slave, a woman by the name of Lavonia, is put to death for her role in the inadvertent deaths of Elijah Terrebonne's daughters. Lavonia's decision to poison the family was borne of the desperation brought about by the end of slavery in the South. In another lengthy passage, the murder of Emmett Till, who remains unnamed in the narrative, is discussed. In 1956, Till, a fourteen-year-old African American boy visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi, was brutally murdered by at least two white men for allegedly whistling at a white woman.

In terms of Burke's novel, twenty-first century Louisiana is not much different than it was at the time Elijah Terrebonne lived. In the New Iberia Parish of *Sunset Limited*, blacks remain marginalized and without social agency. In fact, the black characters represented in *Sunset Limited* are all squarely positioned at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. And while it may simply be an accident of fiction, it bears noting that this phenomenon exists in Burke's novel. The blacks in New Iberia Parish are much like their predecessors and at the mercy of the whites around them.

For example, Mout' Broussard is a former shoeshine man who now sells flowers. His son, Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard is a petty criminal who is constantly in and out of jail. Cool Breeze alleges cruelty on the part of the white guards at the New Iberia Parish Prison. Cool Breeze's wife, Ida, works as a sharecropper before becoming Harpo Delahoussey's cook. Ida later turns to prostitution with an almost all-white clientele. To stave off the advances of Harpo Delahoussey, who is a white man, Ida Broussard turns to Alex Guidry for protection. Guidry is another white man who subsequently fathers her child. Batist works in Dave Robicheaux's bait shop. Sunshine Labiche, the young black woman who claims she was raped by two white men, admits to smoking crack with her boyfriend at the time the alleged attack occurred. There is a preponderance of African-American characters in stereotypical situations in *Sunset Limited*.

Wealth and Power

The Terrebonne family sits at the pinnacle of wealth and power in New Iberia Parish. Archer Terrebonne is a man who is feared and respected for his influence and his cruelty. He is unapologetic about the scope of his power over those around him. Jack



Flynn's murder at the hands of Archer Terrebonne and others, and the resulting fallout surrounding Flynn's crucifixion, belie the existence of a wall of silence purchased and constructed by Archer Terrebonne's money. Flynn was a union organizer and, as such, he stood in direct opposition to those in power. Flynn's role was that of a "man of the people." Consequently, his fight for the rights of workers was what ultimately led to his death. Archer Terrebonne's far-reaching influence makes it possible for him to avoid capture and prosecution for a number of years. Terrebonne uses his money as a weapon against those who would threaten to unseat him, even if it means having someone murdered. Dave Robicheaux is aware that Archer Terrebonne's power could very well prevent Terrebonne from ever being brought to justice for Jack Flynn's death. Terrebonne's daughter, Lila, is notorious for her alcoholic antics. Yet due to her family connections, Lila's erratic behavior and history of flagrant public drunkenness never seem to catch up with her in any significant way. Ironically, Lila's death is completely unrelated to her status as Archer Terrebonne's daughter.

Hatred

While hatred may not be readily recognizable as a theme in Burke's narrative, upon close examination, it can be asserted that it is a major motivation for certain characters. For example, Megan Flynn's hatred for the people of New Iberia is a motivating factor in her choice to return there after so many years. Her presence is like rubbing salt into an open wound and the character's vehement anger and mistrust of the town itself fuel her hatred for all those who live there. Additionally, Archer Terrebonne's hatred of Jack Flynn is what prompts Terrebonne to take part in Flynn's murder. Lila Terrebonne's self-hatred is what motivates the character to medicate her guilt with alcohol. Willie "Cool Breeze" Broussard's hatred of Harpo Delahoussey and Alex Guidry is what compels Cool Breeze to lash out at his wife, Ida, just before her death. Even Dave Robicheaux is motivated by his hatred of Archer Terrebonne to see to it that Terrebonne is implicated and prosecuted for his part in Jack Flynn's death. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, Special Agent Adrien Glazier's blinding hatred of Megan Flynn prompts the agent to refer to Megan's father, Jack, as a communist. Oddly enough, Glazier's disgust for Megan Flynn is neither fully explained nor reconciled during the course of the narrative.



Style

Point of View

As is common in the murder mystery genre, the majority of the novel is told from the perspective of the main protagonist, Dave Robicheaux. The only exceptions to this assertion can be found in Chapters 4, 14, and 18, which chronicle events that take place in the past. By breaking away from the first-person perspective, the author grounds the greater overall narrative in both time and space outside the story. In addition, the use of an omniscient narrator in Chapters 14 and 18 affords the reader the luxury of determining what impact these historical events have on the present lives of Dave Robicheaux and the other characters in the novel. Furthermore, historical information (pertaining to the American south and to the personal life of Dave Robicheaux) offer an opportunity for broader discussion of such subjects as marital infidelity and black and white race relations in America. Robicheaux's first-person narration is uncomplicated and straightforward. Throughout the narrative, Robicheaux will often editorialize on what is happening to or around him. Thus, the reader is able to follow the Robicheaux character's inner workings as well as the mysteries Robicheaux is attempting to unravel. The Epilogue which follows Chapter 34 allows the reader into Robicheaux's mind and emotions after both of the cases are solved. Interestingly, the Epilogue reveals more about Dave Robicheaux than the other thirty-four chapters of the novel. Robicheaux is a man of substance and by including his thoughts and feelings after the fact provides texture and closure to a plot, which is at times very convoluted and difficult to follow.

Setting

The entire novel is set in modern-day Louisiana. The author references places that actually exist. This works to ground the narrative in fact. Situating fictional happenings in actual locations gives the novel credibility within the crime mystery genre. The majority of the narrative takes place in New Iberia Parish, Louisiana. A parish is much like a county. Some of the action occurs in New Orleans, the largest city in Louisiana, as well as Jeanerette, a town located in Iberia Parish. Outlying areas of Louisiana reference in the novel include Henderson Swamp and Atchafalaya Swamp, the largest of its kind in the United States. Characters in *Sunset Limited* also travel to Baton Rouge, the capital of Louisiana.

Interestingly, the characters in James Lee Burke's novel who converge in New Iberia are from a variety of different locations. Swede Boxleiter, for example, comes to New Iberia from California and Alex Guidry owns ranch in Trinidad, Colorado. Jubal Breedlove is hospitalized in Raton, New Mexico and Rodney Loudermilk lives in San Antonio, Texas. The inclusion of so many geographical locations in one novel serves a dual purpose. First of all, it gives the reader the impression of a far-reaching scope of the plot. Secondly, providing a substantial number of places to keep track of reinforces



the complex nature of the mysteries Dave Robicheaux is trying to solve. By featuring characters living in other states, the author signals to the reader that Robicheaux is involved in matters that go far beyond the small-town borders of New Iberia. Robicheaux is thus positioned as a character whose small-town sensibilities serve him well, regardless of geographical setting.

Language and Meaning

Sunset Limited is written in standard English. The reader must be aware however, that since this can be considered a "regional" novel or a novel whose primary plot centers on a particular geographical area, there are words and phrases included which are only used in the southern portion of the United States. Also, the primary protagonist is an avid fisherman who owns a bait shop. Thus, there are words included in the narrative which may only be readily understood by a certain audience. For example, words such as "sandspit" and "sac-a-lait" would not be immediately recognizable to some readers.

Secondly, it is understandable that since Dave Robicheaux is involved in law enforcement, there is also a considerable amount of jargon used by the characters in Sunset Limited. For example, in Chapter 5, Clete Purcel talks to his former partner about "chippies" or young girls, "junkies" or intravenous drug users, "mainlining" or injecting drugs into one's veins, "balloons" or packets of heroin and "beef" or disagreement or unresolved animosity. The use of street jargon gives the narrative itself a certain amount of credibility. In other words, using jargon enables the reader to more readily believe that (a) the characters really are involved in police work and (b) that the author himself is savvy in terms of "street-speak."

Structure

The physical structure of Sunset Limited is standard. The novel consists of thirty-four chapters and an epilogue comprising just under four hundred pages. Each chapter is roughly twelve to fifteen pages in length.

The narrative structure is decidedly linear. Exceptions include those passages which are devoted to past events such as Robicheaux's childhood and the family history of Archer and Lila Terrebonne. These passages are also told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. There is no discernible arc in the novel's action. Events unfold in a systematic fashion. However, since Dave Robicheaux is involved in the investigation of multiple unsolved murders, it becomes necessary for the reader to follow several distinct and overlapping story lines. Robicheaux investigates the unsolved 1956 murder of union organizer Jack Flynn, the murders of two white brothers at the Atchafalaya Swamp, Ida Broussard's mysterious drowning, the killing of Rodney Loudermilk, and the stabbing death of Anthony, the Malaysian studio accountant.



Quotes

"I admired the Flynn's, but you paid a price for their friendship and proximity to the vessel of social anger their lives had become" (Chapter 1, pg. 3.)

"Their attitudes were those of people who used geographical areas and social cultures as playgrounds and nothing more" (Chapter 1, pg. 7.)

"When I opened the door, she stared at me with ice blue eyes that could have been taken out of a Viking's face" (Chapter 2, pg. 19.)

"[Special Agent Adrien Glazier] was one of those you instinctively knew have a carefully nursed reservoir of anger they draw upon as needed" (Chapter 2, pg. 19.)

"But prison shrinks were not people you confided in, at least if you were put together like Swede Boxleiter and ever wanted to make the street again" (Chapter 2, pg. 27.)

[Lila Terrebonne] would dry out and by order of the court attend AA meetings for a few weeks, working on a crossword puzzle in the newspaper while others talked of the razor wire wrapped around their souls..." (Chapter 3, pg. 36.)

"Please drive me out on the highway and drop me wherever people break furniture and throw bottles through glass windows" (Chapter 3, pg. 37.)

"Except for the grizzled line of beard that grew along his jawline and chin, [Billy Holtzner's] body seemed to have no hair, as though it had been shaved with a woman's razor" (Chapter 3, pg. 40.)

"But Cool Breeze secretly knew, even though he tried to deny it himself, that Harpo Delahoussey had not blackmailed him simply to acquire a cook, or even to reinforce that old lesson that every coin pressed into your palm for shining shoes, cutting cane, chopping cotton, scouring ovens, dipping out grease traps, scrubbing commodes, cleaning dead rats from under a house, was dispensed by the hand of a white person in the same way that oxygen could be arbitrarily measured out to a dying hospital patient" (Chapter 4, pg. 46.)

"[Cool Breeze] felt it was he who was somehow on display, in a cage, naked, small, an object of ridicule and contempt" (Chapter 4, pg. 49.)

"The hunters tied a Budweiser carton to [Ida Broussard's] wrist to mark the spot for the sheriff's department" (Chapter 4, pg. 53.)

"But like all people who are driven by a self-centered fear, [Lila Terrebonne] talked constantly, controlling the environment around her with words, filling in any silent space that might allow someone to ask the wrong question" (Chapter 6, pg. 72.)



"[Batist] didn't like black people with jail records, primarily because he believed they were used by whites as an excuse to treat all black people unfairly" (Chapter 7, pg. 92.)

"But I never underestimated the power of the rain or the potential of the dead, or denied them their presence in the world" (Chapter 13, pg. 150.)

"[Megan Flynn's] great talent was her ability to isolate the humanity and suffering of individuals who lived in our midst but who nevertheless remained invisible to most passersby" (Chapter 16, pg. 189.)

"I felt the vastness of the world and all the promise it could hold for those who were still its children and had not severed ties with the rest of the human family" (Chapter 20, pg. 219.)

"But Rodney [Loudermilk] had learned his lesson: Stay off of roofs and don't try to turn watermelon pickers into successful house creeps" (Chapter 20, page 222.)

"You ever see a hooker that ain't made up to look like your own personal pinball machine?" (Chapter 20, pg. 223.)

"A poor man's got hate in his glands. It don't wash out" (Chapter 21, pg. 237.)

"I didn't know if Alex Guidry was a sociopath or not, but on Monday Helen and I began tightening a couple of dials in his head" (Chapter 26, pg. 291.)

"[Norma Jean] intuitively felt, without finding words for the idea, that the retarded and insane were put on earth to be cared for by those whose souls might otherwise be forfeit" (Chapter 27, pg. 308.)

"You could smell the raw odor of blood and feces and testosterone and dried sweat and exhaled alcohol that I suspect was very close to the mix of odors that rose on a hot day from the Roman arena" (Chapter 29, pg. 332.)

"I knew [Clete] would be back on the street in the morning, nothing learned, deeper in debt to a bondsman, trying to sweep the snakes and spiders back into their baskets with vodka and grapefruit juice" (Chapter 30, pg. 349.)

"History books are written by and about the Terrebonnes of this world, no jarheads up the Mekong or people killed in oil-well blowouts or illiterate Cajun women who believe the locomotive whistle on the Sunset Limited calls for them" (Chapter 30, pg. 350.)

"[Jessie Rideau] stared at the crypts in the cemetery, her eyes recessed, her face like that of a person who knows she will never have any value to anyone other than use" (Chapter 31, pg. 360.)

"[On] certain mornings you wake and know with absolute certainty you've been chosen as a participant in a historical script, for reasons unknown to you, and your best efforts will not change what has already been written" (Chapter 31, pg. 360.)



Topics for Discussion

What is the source of Special Agent Adrien Glazier's vehement dislike of Megan Flynn?

Why does Ida Broussard begin an affair with Alex Guidry?

What kind of hold does Swede Boxleiter have over Cisco Flynn?

Who is actually responsible for planning and implementing the successful plot to assassinate Jack Flynn?

What is the real reason for Swede Boxleiter's presence in New Iberia?

Explain the connection between Harpo Delahoussey and Harpo Scruggs.

How does Dave Robicheaux identify Archer Terrebonne in the photo of Jack Flynn's execution?

Why does Helen Soileau believe that Lila Terrebonne is a sexual abuse survivor?

Identify the three of the major plot points in *Sunset Limited*.

What is Rodney Loudermilk's connection to Harpo Scruggs?

Why is the novel entitled *Sunset Limited*?

Who killed Annie Robicheaux?

What is the author's purpose in chronicling the Terrebonne family's history with slavery?

Who is Nig Rosewater and what is his connection to Ricky the Mouse Scarlotti?

What is the origin of Mout' Broussard's first name?