

Three to Get Deadly Study Guide

Three to Get Deadly by Janet Evanovich

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Plot Summary

Three to Get Deadly is the third installment in Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series. Stephanie Plum is an inept bounty hunter who has found herself in the unenviable position of hunting down one of the neighborhood's most beloved citizens, Uncle Mo. The longer Stephanie looks for Uncle Mo, the more bodies she stumbles over, causing her to question the sainthood of this kindly ice cream shop owner. The reader follows along as Stephanie fights the wrath of her friends and neighbors in her attempt to not only do her job, but do what she believes is right for the safety of the neighborhood. Three to Get Deadly is another of Evanovich's comical thrillers that will leave the reader breathless.

Stephanie Plum is given the assignment of bringing in Uncle Mo, a beloved member of the burg, the tight knit neighborhood where Stephanie grew up. Uncle Mo owns a candy shop in the burg and everyone loves him. However, Uncle Mo was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon and failed to make his court appearance. Stephanie does not want this assignment, but she needs the money the apprehension will bring her. Stephanie reluctantly agrees. Stephanie goes to the candy shop and runs into a neighbor of Mo's who happened to be one of Stephanie's school teachers. Stephanie tries to check out Mo's apartment behind the store, but the teacher calls the police. Stephanie knows the police officer and avoids arrest, but she does not get to search the apartment as thoroughly as she would have liked.

Stephanie returns to the shop a short time later and finds a key to the apartment. Stephanie slips inside and searches the apartment, finding not only unexpected bed time reading, but keys to the candy shop downstairs. Stephanie lets herself into the candy shop for a quick look around. Before Stephanie has much of a chance to take a look, someone else enters the store. Stephanie surprises the intruder, only to have him knock her unconscious. When Stephanie wakes, she finds the intruder dead. Stephanie calls her old friend, Joe Morelli. Morelli is a cop, so he is able to run interference for Stephanie, saving her from an arrest on trespassing charges.

At the same time, Stephanie is in need of a new car. Stephanie stops by a car dealership and buys a small truck. Now Stephanie needs more cash, so she picks up another case. Stephanie and Lula, a friend and co-worker, pick up the new failure to appear at his job in the mall. However, on their way to the police station, the new truck stalls. In an attempt to keep the truck running, Lula revs the engine and accidentally runs into the car in front of her. When Lula and Stephanie get out of the truck to inspect the damage, the failure to appear runs away.

Back at the office, a friend of Lula's tells them that her boyfriend has run off with her car and she wants Stephanie to help her find it. Lula and Stephanie drive around town looking for the car and get lost. While trying to make their way back to the burg, they spot the car. Lula tells her friend who then decides to stake out the car herself. A few days later, the friend discovers that her boyfriend is dead. At the same time, Stephanie



has gotten a tip on her missing Uncle Mo and is staking out an apartment building in the burg.

Stephanie has little luck with the apartment building. However, Stephanie has gotten the attention of a group of men somehow connected to Uncle Mo. These men drive to Stephanie's apartment and fire their weapons at her, telling her this is just a warning. A few days later, Stephanie runs into the same men at Mo's store where she has returned after getting a tip that Mo will be there. The men attempt to scare Stephanie away with violence, but are interrupted when the neighbors come over to see what is happening. Stephanie calls Morelli. As they are leaving, they smell something in the cellar. Morelli and Stephanie investigate only to find several bodies buried in the cellar floor. A few days later, Stephanie and Lula spot Uncle Mo in traffic. There is a body tied to the roof of Uncle Mo's car that falls off as Stephanie and Lula chase him. The body count is now up to eight.

Stephanie and Lula lose Uncle Mo. They pick up the body, put it in the trunk of the car, and take it to Morelli. Morelli tells Stephanie that all the bodies discovered thus far are known drug dealers. A short time later, Stephanie hears a rumor that Uncle Mo is in to making pornographic movies. Stephanie also learns that Mo has a house out in the country where he shoots these movies. Stephanie locates the house and takes Ranger with her to apprehend Mo. Just before Stephanie and Ranger take Mo out of the house, Mo's partner in crime shows up with a rocket launcher. The man destroys Stephanie's truck and engages in a gun fight with Ranger. Stephanie and Mo manage to escape into the woods and make it to safety.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Three to Get Deadly is the third installment in Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series. Stephanie Plum is an inept bounty hunter who has found herself in the unenviable position of hunting down one of the neighborhood's most beloved citizens, Uncle Mo. The longer Stephanie looks for Uncle Mo, the more bodies she stumbles over, causing her to question the sainthood of this kindly ice cream shop owner. The reader follows along as Stephanie fights the wrath of her friends and neighbors in her attempt to not only do her job, but do what she believes is right for the safety of the neighborhood. Three to Get Deadly is another of Evanovich's comical thrillers that will leave the reader breathless.

Vinnie presents Stephanie with the case file on Uncle Mo, Moses Bedemier, a local candy store owner in the burg. Uncle Mo is a much beloved man in the burg and Stephanie knows taking the case will mean facing the wrath of some of the people she has known all her life. Stephanie asks Vinnie what Mo did. Vinnie tells her an over-eager new cop arrested Uncle Mo for carrying a concealed weapon. It is not unusual for people in the burg to carry concealed weapons, so it is surprising that Mo would be arrested for such an offense. However, it does not change the fact that Mo failed to show up for his court appearance. Since it seems like a simple oversight on Mo's part, Stephanie relents and takes the case.

Lula, the bond office's filing clerk, talks Stephanie in letting her tag along to Mo's shop. Lula is an ex-prostitute that Stephanie befriended during her first case. The two of them take Stephanie's borrowed Buick. Stephanie's car was stolen and she has not had a chance to replace it yet. When they reach the candy store, they find it locked up tight. Stephanie and Lula go around to the neighbors. One of the neighbors, Mrs. Steeger, is an old teacher of Stephanie's who still has the power to make her feel like a naughty child. Mrs. Steeger and several of the other neighbors tell Stephanie that Mo has not been at his shop for several days.

Stephanie and Lula drive around to the back of the shop where Mo has an apartment. Stephanie and Lula go to the door of the apartment to attempt to get in, but find it locked. A cop shows up before they can do anything more. Stephanie knows the officer and explains what they are doing. Later, Stephanie suggests that she go see the sister while Lula stays and watches the store. Stephanie takes the long drive out to Staten Island to talk to Mo's sister, but she does not know any more about where Mo might be than Stephanie. Stephanie returns to the store to find Lula bored out of her mind.

Stephanie talks to a few more of Mo's neighbors. One of these is a young girl who tells Stephanie she saw Mo in his store a few days before. Stephanie gives the girl her card and asks her to call if she sees Mo again. Stephanie goes back to the office then and calls a friend at the DMV to get information on Mo's car. Once Stephanie has that, she



and Lula go driving through the burg looking for his car. They have no luck, so they decide to go back to Mo's apartment. Lula searches the garage for a key while Stephanie searches the yard. Lula finds a key.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Stephanie Plum is introduced in the first few pages of the novel through her protest in taking the Uncle Mo case. Stephanie shows herself to be earnest and intelligent, true to her neighborhood, but willing to do whatever it takes to keep that same neighborhood safe. Uncle Mo is a kind man who has been a staple in every kid's life in the burg over the last thirty years. Everyone loves Mo and Stephanie knows that taking a case that includes hunting him down will make her unpopular with some of the people she has known all her life. However, Stephanie also knows that to be a responsible adult, she has to make a living. Making a living as a bounty hunter sometimes means hunting down criminals who are not your typical, hard case criminal.

Stephanie begins her search and almost immediately the case appears to be more difficult than everyone thought it would be. Vinnie tells Stephanie it is most likely a case of poor memory on Mo's part, but Stephanie arrives at his shop to find him missing. Stephanie talks to Mo's neighbors and runs into a disliked teacher from her childhood. Stephanie is not happy about this and when the cops are called while she is looking at Mo's apartment, Stephanie knows who called. This event predicts for the reader that this old teacher will most likely be a thorn in Stephanie's side more than once throughout the development of the plot.

Stephanie does prove herself to be a thorough investigator, however, as she follows every lead she is able to gather. Stephanie interviews neighbors, leaving her card in the hopes that someone will call. Stephanie also contacts Mo's sister, establishing for the reader that Mo is such a private man that even his sister knows little about his life. The reader should wonder at this point why Mo is so private, expecting an explanation later in the novel. Stephanie also learns the make of Mo's car so she might track it down in the neighborhood. When all this fails, Stephanie returns to Mo's apartment with the hopes of gaining entry. When Lula, Stephanie's most unusual partner, finds the key, the reader turns anxiously to the next chapter in hopes of finding what is hidden behind Mo's closed door.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Stephanie and Lula go inside Mo's apartment and give it a cursory walk through before they are interrupted by a beat cop. Stephanie explains the situation to the cop, another friend, who instructs them to leave. Stephanie is discouraged. Stephanie had half expected to find Mo passed out on the bathroom floor or to see evidence of an abduction. Stephanie finds neither. The apartment is neat and all of Mo's personal belongings appear to be undisturbed. Stephanie leaves Mo's and discovers that Lula has left. Stephanie goes to her parents' house in hopes of getting a ride. Stephanie tells her mother and grandmother who she is looking for. Both ladies are shocked that Mo would do anything to require a bounty hunter coming after him and more shocked that Stephanie would agree to go after Mo. Stephanie's mother is also worried that she will get outraged phone calls from people in the neighborhood. In fact, Stephanie's mother receives one such phone call while Stephanie is explaining the situation to her.

Stephanie asks her mother and grandmother if they know where Mo might go, or if he has a girlfriend in the area. No one seems to know very much about Mo's personal life. Stephanie's mother gives her a ride to her office. When they arrive, Stephanie finds Joe Morelli, an old friend, leaning against her car. Morelli, a cop, has heard that Stephanie is looking for Uncle Mo. Morelli wants to know if Stephanie has any leads. Stephanie tells him what she has learned thus far. Morelli then warns Stephanie to be more careful.

Stephanie decides to go home and make some phone calls. Stephanie calls a friend from the burg to find out if there are any rumors about Mo. There are no rumors, but word has gotten around about Stephanie searching for Mo and the talk is not good. People in the burg love Uncle Mo and think that Stephanie is persecuting a saint. Stephanie then calls a cousin at the credit bureau and learns that Mo has a good rating and has not made any recent charges. Stephanie also learns that Mo does not have any utilities in his name under another address. At this point, Stephanie decides to call it a day.

The next morning, Stephanie stops by a car dealership on her way to the office. Stephanie test drives a Nissan truck and decides to buy it. Now Stephanie is in desperate need of money. Stephanie asks Connie if there is an easy failure to appear she can take. Connie gives her the file on Stuart Baggett, a young man who went on a drunken joy ride and shot up several cars, including a few cop cars, with an air rifle. Stephanie makes a few phone calls and establishes that Stuart is at work at a hot dog stand in the mall. Stephanie and Lula head to the mall in Stephanie's new truck.



Chapter 2 Analysis

Stephanie is finally able to get into Mo's apartment only to find there is no disturbance. It appears that Mo just stepped out for a few minutes. Stephanie is confused, wondering where Mo could be if he is not dead and was not abducted. Stephanie is confused because Mo is considered a saint in the neighborhood and Stephanie cannot imagine what other reason he might have for missing his court date. Stephanie's thoughts not only establish Mo's character as a good man, but also touch on the theme of appearances. The theme and Mo's character development continue when Stephanie talks to her mother, grandmother, and a few friends from the neighborhood, not to mention Mo's neighbors. Everyone believes Mo is a saint and that Stephanie is doing a terrible thing by hunting Mo like a common criminal. These opinions on the part of Stephanie's family and friends adds equal parts tension and comedy to the overall tone of the novel.

Stephanie quickly hits a dead end on the Uncle Mo case, which should have been a sure thing. Stephanie needs a new car so she buys a truck and then takes on another case to help her pay for it. Stephanie hopes this case will be a simple one since the young man involved is reputed to be less than intelligent. Stephanie also has the blind faith that her truck will be a reliable source of transportation. Both these assumptions seem reasonable. However, based on past experience the reader suspects this might not be true and looks forward to the next chapter to see if this suspicion proves to be well founded.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Stephanie and Lula do a little shopping in the mall before going to find Stuart Baggett. When they finally get to the hot dog stand, they find Stuart there alone. Stephanie explains to him that he needs to go to the court and reschedule his appearance. Stuart does not want to leave the stand because he is afraid he will be fired. Stephanie offers to buy all his hotdogs. When Lula throws in an offer to buy French fries and cokes too, Stuart agrees. Stuart packs up the hotdogs and then calls his boss, telling him he is sick. Stephanie and Lula then escort Stuart out to the truck. Halfway to the police station, the truck begins to stall. Lula is driving and decides she can keep the truck going if she revs the engine. However, while doing this, Lula accidentally rear ends the car in front of them. When Stephanie and Lula get out to check the damage, Stuart disappears.

Lula drops Stephanie at the police station in order to file an accident report. When Stephanie comes out, Lula is nowhere to be found. Stephanie calls the office and gets Lula to come pick her up. When they get back to the office, Jackie, a friend of Lula's, is waiting for Stephanie. Jackie's boyfriend has taken off with her car. Jackie does not care about the boyfriend, but she wants her car back and she wants Stephanie to find it. Stephanie feels sorry for Jackie, so she agrees. Stephanie and Lula drive around in Lula's Firebird, eventually getting lost down by the river. As they are trying to find their way out, Lula and Stephanie discover Jackie's car parked next to a high end apartment building.

Stephanie arranges to have her truck taken to a repair shop, then goes home and spends some time trying to come up with new ideas on how to find Mo. Stephanie cannot think of anything tangible, however, and decides to order a pizza for dinner. When the pizza arrives, Joe Morelli is delivering it. Stephanie reluctantly lets Morelli in and invites him to share her dinner. While they eat and watch a game on television, Morelli asks about Stephanie's progress on the Uncle Mo case. Stephanie has nothing to report, but does tell Morelli about Jackie's car. The next morning, Lula tells Stephanie that Jackie has decided to stake out her car so she can kill her boyfriend the second he comes back to it. Stephanie goes to see Jackie, hoping to talk her out of her mission, but Jackie is determined. Back at the office, Vinnie asks Stephanie how the Uncle Mo case is going. When Stephanie tells him everything he has tried, Vinnie tells her that she should find Uncle Mo's boyfriend, telling Stephanie how he once saw Uncle Mo in a restaurant with a man he sensed was his lover. Stephanie decides to check out a neighborhood in the burg where people have been known to find drugs and sex for sale.



Chapter 3 Analysis

As predicted in the previous chapter, Stephanie has little luck with Stuart Baggett. Stuart is a simple man, but Stephanie underestimates him. Stephanie's new truck stalls out and causes an accident. Stephanie turns her back on Stuart, trusting him to allow her to take him in quietly. Instead, Stuart takes advantage of Stephanie's distraction to escape her custody. Not only does this prove Stuart is not as dumb as he looks and suggests that he will return to the plot at a later date, but it also shows Stephanie's naivety, innocence, and lack of experience as a bounty hunter. Stephanie just seems to be too trusting to be an effective bounty hunter. However, these character flaws are not limited to Stephanie's profession. Stephanie also trusted the used car salesman when he told her the Nissan was a good truck. Now Stephanie is stuck with a broken car that she cannot return.

When the excitement dies down, Stephanie returns to the office to find a new case awaiting her. Jackie, a friend of Lula's, needs Stephanie to find her car. Jackie is a prostitute who also has a drug problem, outlining her character in such a way that the reader feels pity for her circumstances almost as deeply as Stephanie does. The fact that Stephanie agrees to take Jackie's case pro bono underscores Stephanie's basic sense of humanity. Stephanie and Lula find the car and Jackie decides to stake it out in the hopes that the boyfriend will return. Jackie wants to kill him. The reader sees this as foreshadowing to a time when Jackie might do exactly that.

Stephanie tries to focus on the Uncle Mo case again, but has no new ideas. Vinnie offers a few ideas, so the chapter ends with Stephanie going in a new direction. Before this, however, Morelli stops by her apartment and asks about Uncle Mo. This is the second time Morelli has sought Stephanie out to ask about Uncle Mo. The reader must wonder if Morelli's interest is based in the fact that Stephanie is the bounty hunter in question and he simply wants to have an excuse to talk to her. The reader also wonders if perhaps Morelli has a professional interest in Uncle Mo, since Morelli is a cop.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Stephanie sends Lula to Stark Street, a local area where people go to buy drugs, to see if she can find anyone who has seen Uncle Mo lately. Stephanie then goes back to her apartment where she spends the afternoon making phone calls only to come up with nothing. Lula appears at the door, frozen from the cold, and finds out that one of Lula's contacts saw Uncle Mo looking for a local drug dealer. Stephanie calls Ranger and asks him if he can find the dealer for her. The next morning, Stephanie returns to the mall to see if she can find Stuart Baggett. At the hot dog stand, Stephanie finds out that Stuart has quit his job. Stephanie goes to Stuart's parents' house and finds out he moved out. Another dead end. To add to Stephanie's troubles, she learns that Ranger cannot locate the drug dealer.

Stephanie finds herself outside Mo's apartment. Stephanie lets herself into the apartment and gives it a more thorough search. The only thing of interest to Stephanie are some pornographic magazines in Mo's bedroom. The magazines feature mostly women, blowing a hole in Vinnie's conviction that Mo is gay, and are of a fetish slant. Stephanie puts these aside and searches the drawers for a key to the candy store. Stephanie is successful and quickly makes her way to the back door of the candy store. Stephanie searches the store carefully, finding nothing unusual in the store itself. There is a cellar, but Stephanie chooses not to search it for fear of what she might find. Just as Stephanie has decided there is nothing to see in the store, she hears someone attempting to enter. Stephanie hides in the bathroom and listens as someone enters the store and begins to search it. Stephanie stands at the bathroom door and shines her flashlight in the intruder's eyes when he opens the door. The intruder is not blinded as Stephanie hoped he would be. The intruder knocks Stephanie against the wall, causing her to lose consciousness.

Stephanie awakes in a puddle of blood. Stephanie quickly sits up and inspects herself, discovering that the blood is not her own. Stephanie stumbles out of the bathroom and into the body of the intruder. The man has been shot. Stephanie runs from the store, keeping an eye out for the killer. Stephanie hides in the shadows a few houses down just as she begins to hear sirens. Stephanie calls Morelli. Morelli arrives on the scene, takes Stephanie to the hospital to be examined, then to the police station in order to give her statement. When Morelli takes Stephanie home, he questions her about where her gun is and what happened that night that she might not have felt comfortable telling the cops. Stephanie assures him that she told the police everything and that her gun is lost. A few white lies cannot hurt anyone, Stephanie believes. Stephanie goes to bed only to be woken a few hours later by a friend of hers who happens to be a cop. This friend tells Stephanie that she is a prime suspect in the murder of the intruder at Mo's store.



Chapter 4 Analysis

Stephanie is stubborn, the reader learns in this chapter, as she continues not only to search for Uncle Mo, but goes back to pick up Stuart Baggett. However, once again Stephanie has little luck with either case. Stuart has disappeared and Lula's single lead on Uncle Mo does not pan out. Stephanie is frustrated and desperate to find new clues in either case. Stephanie returns to Uncle Mo's and searches his apartment a little more closely. The discovery of Uncle Mo's curious bedtime reading is only important to the reader at this point in the fact that it seems to discredit Vinnie's opinion that Uncle Mo is gay. By discrediting this avenue of investigation, it seems that Stephanie has fewer avenues to investigate.

Stephanie finds the keys to the candy store and lets herself in there, searching everything but the cellar. It seems unfinished for Stephanie to skip the cellar and leaves the reader wondering if she might not regret this decision. Maybe Uncle Mo had a heart attack and died in the cellar, or maybe there is something hidden in the cellar that will explain Uncle Mo's disappearance. These things seem likely to the reader, but Stephanie has not yet decided to go there. While Stephanie is searching the store, she is surprised by another intruder. Stephanie faces this intruder only to be overpowered and then to wake in the intruder's blood. This intruder introduces a whole list of questions for the reader, particularly how he got into the store, why he was there, and did Uncle Mo have anything to do with his death. The reader has faith that these questions will be answered in a later chapter.

Finally, Stephanie calls Morelli in this time of trouble. Stephanie keeps claiming to not like Morelli all that much since he has been her on again, off again lover for many years and they are currently off. However, it is Morelli Stephanie keeps turning to, giving the reader the impression that her feelings for him run a lot deeper than she likes to admit. Morelli is concerned for Stephanie, asking her to be honest with him about the investigation and the danger she is putting herself into, but Stephanie keeps in mind that Morelli is a cop. Stephanie does not want to give Morelli a reason to arrest her. However, it seems Stephanie already has, as a friend of hers, another cop, comes by her apartment the next morning and warns her that some in the department believe her to be the prime suspect in the murder of the intruder at Mo's store.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Morelli is at Stephanie's front door. Stephanie believes Morelli is there to arrest her, so she slips out the building through a back door. Lula drives Stephanie to a local diner where she meets Ranger. Stephanie tells Ranger what took place the night before. Stephanie has learned that the intruder was a drug dealer named Anders. Ranger wonders if Mo shot Anders, but Stephanie cannot believe Mo would do such a thing. However, Stephanie needs to know who did shoot Anders so she asks Ranger to make a few inquiries. Before he goes, Ranger gives Stephanie back the gun she hid the night before and asked him to retrieve.

At the office, Connie gives Stephanie the file on a new failure to appear. The man, Leroy Watkins, lives with a friend of Lula's, so Stephanie takes Lula with her. They go to the man's apartment and knock on the door. Seconds later Stephanie can hear the sound of a rifle cocking. Lula and Stephanie run for the stairs and tumble out of the way seconds before someone fires the weapon through the door. Stephanie and Lula return to the office where Lula calls Leroy in a huff for shooting at them and insists that he give himself up. Leroy apologizes and promises to do just that. Stephanie and Lula return to the apartment only to find that Leroy has run.

Stephanie has Lula take her home. Morelli has left a message on her machine, as has her mother. Stephanie tries to call her mother, but the line is busy. Stephanie suspects this is because everyone in the burg is calling her mother about the murder in Mo's shop the night before. Stephanie gives up after her second attempt and decides to drive over there instead. Maybe she can get a free dinner. Stephanie is about to get in her car when a van drives up filled with ski mask wearing men. These men fire several shots at the Dumpster besides Stephanie's car and tell her if she does not leave Mo alone, they will not miss the next time.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Stephanie believes Morelli wants to arrest her, so she attempts to avoid him. The reader suspects there is more to this avoidance than the possibility of arrest since Stephanie has felt that Morelli is going out of his way to pretend they have never had an intimate relationship. No matter the reason, Stephanie avoids Morelli and returns to work. Stephanie enlists Ranger's help in finding Mo, introducing Ranger to those readers who have never met him before. Ranger is a mysterious, successful security agent and bounty hunter. Ranger is also very sexy, catching the attention of all the ladies in the novel, especially Stephanie. However, Ranger does not seem to be the focus of Stephanie's romantic fantasies at the moment.



Stephanie moves on to another case since she is having little luck with Uncle Mo and Stuart Baggett. Stephanie goes after Leroy Watkins only to have him fire a shotgun through his own door at her. Stephanie once again shows her trusting nature at this point, however, when she returns to his apartment a short time later on his word that he will be waiting for her. Of course he is not and Stephanie once again looks like a naive fool. Later, Stephanie is leaving her apartment building in order to sponge a free dinner off her parents when a group of men fire guns at her in the hopes of scaring her off of Mo's case. This episode not only changes the tone of the novel slightly, taking away some of the comedy and feeding in a little danger, but it also implies that someone out there does not want Mo caught. At first glance, it would seem people in the neighborhood might be behind this episode since so many people believe that Mo is a saint and should be left alone. However, the reader must wonder if these good people would really stoop to firing a weapon at Stephanie, another member of their close knit neighborhood.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Stephanie climbs into her car and calls Morelli, forgetting for a moment that he might want to arrest her. Stephanie tells Morelli what happened, then hangs up before he can tell her what it is he has been trying to ask. Stephanie goes over to her parents' house for dinner. Stephanie has only been there long enough to tell her mother and grandmother the story of how she happened to wake up in Mo's store next to a dead man when Morelli shows up. Stephanie's mother invites Morelli to dinner. Stephanie sits through dinner expecting Morelli to arrest her at any moment. Rather than allow him to do that, Stephanie sneaks out of the house before dessert. Stephanie goes to her friend Mary Lou's house to hide out, but she is just as uncomfortable around Mary Lou's children as she is Morelli.

Stephanie returns to her parents' house a short time later and finds Morelli gone. Stephanie thinks she has escaped Morelli, but when she returns to her own apartment she finds him waiting for her. Stephanie sneaks down to the corner store and calls Morelli, demanding to know how he got into her apartment and if he has eaten all the leftover cake her mother gave him. When Morelli threatens to eat all the cake, Stephanie relents and returns to her apartment. Morelli tells Stephanie all he has wanted was to talk. Stephanie tells him everything she knows about Uncle Mo, running through the events of the previous night once more. Stephanie wonders aloud if Uncle Mo could have been running drugs out of his store or if maybe he had turned vigilante and had been killing drug dealers for selling to the neighborhood kids. Morelli listens to her theories but has little to add. When Stephanie is done, Morelli leaves, making Stephanie wonder when their relationship became friendship rather than something a little more intimate.

Stephanie calls Ranger and asks if he has heard anything about Anders on the street. Ranger tells her that a lot of drug dealers are turning up dead lately and there have been a rash of over-doses on the street as well. When Stephanie hangs up the phone with Ranger, Lula calls. Jackie has found her boyfriend. Stephanie and Lula meet at the parking lot where Jackie has been staking out her car. Jackie is hysterical, telling them that her boyfriend is dead. Jackie takes Lula and Stephanie over to the Dumpster where a man is lying dead in the bushes. Jackie is furious that someone killed her boyfriend before she could. Jackie pulls out her gun and fires it repeatedly into the dead man. Stephanie hears sirens. Stephanie and Lula pull Jackie away from the body and all three jump in their cars and drive away.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Once again Stephanie turns to Morelli in a moment of crisis. This is the second time Stephanie has called Morelli for help creating a pattern that makes the reader believe



there is more emotional attachment between these two than Stephanie likes to believe. When Stephanie becomes annoyed with Morelli for treating their relationship like a friendship, this suspicion becomes obvious. Stephanie is clearly enamored with Morelli. However, the reader is unclear what Morelli's motivations are. Morelli keeps following Stephanie around in this chapter and Stephanie suspects he wants to arrest her. This proves to be untrue. The reader is left wondering what Morelli really wants. When Morelli asks Stephanie about the Uncle Mo case, and not for the first time, the reader begins to suspect that Morelli has an interest in this case that goes beyond neighborhood loyalties.

Stephanie learns from Ranger that a lot of drug dealers are dying on the street recently and that a lot of drug addicts are suddenly suffering drug overdoses. Stephanie does not have a chance to think this through, but the fact that this seems to be happening in relation to Uncle Mo, it leaves the reader wondering what the connection may be, if there is indeed a connection. Stephanie is then distracted when Jackie's boyfriend is found murdered. Jackie is angry that she did not have a chance to kill the man, pumping him full of bullets in a comical situation that will most likely land her, Lula, and Stephanie in jail. The reader wonders how this man is related to the other murders, however, since he is not a drug dealer but a pimp. Perhaps this murder is not related to the others, or it is and the motives for killing these people are different than the reader might suspect.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Stephanie, Lula, and Jackie meet up at a local restaurant. Stephanie insists that they call the police, but both Lula and Jackie do not trust cops. Instead, Lula makes Jackie promise to go into drug rehab. The next morning, Morelli knocks on Stephanie's door. Morelli wants to know what she knows about the dead body of Jackie's boyfriend. Stephanie denies knowing anything about the body, despite the fact that Morelli has witnesses who saw Stephanie, Lula, and Jackie near the body moments before the police arrived. However, Stephanie promises that Jackie is going into rehab. Stephanie goes in to the office and finds Lula there with Jackie. Stephanie has Lula drive her to the Nissan place to pick up her truck before she takes Jackie to rehab.

Stephanie takes her truck to an apartment building in the burg where Jackie says she has seen Mo. Stephanie checks out the apartment building, searching for Mo's name on the mailboxes and watching the people come and go. After several hours, Stephanie decides to call it a day. Stephanie drives through the neighborhood and her truck stalls. Stephanie nurses the truck to a local cop hangout where she finds Morelli. Stephanie asks him about the autopsy on Jackie's boyfriend, but they were unable to begin due to the fact that the body was frozen from being outside for so long. When Morelli leaves a few minutes later, he again treats Stephanie as though they are buddies and not romantically interested.

In the middle of the night, Stephanie gets a phone call from the teenager with whom she left her name and number the first day she was looking for Mo. The teenager tells her that she can see lights on in the candy store. Stephanie calls Ranger to meet her and rushes to the store. Ranger shows up in his expensive BMW, leaving it in front of the store with the keys in the ignition. Ranger goes around to the back of the store and instructs Stephanie to watch the front. After a few minutes, Mo shows up with a paper bag in his hand. Stephanie suggests that he come with her to reschedule his court appearance, but Mo explains that he cannot allow her to take him in. Mo then pulls out a can of pepper spray that is bigger than hers. Mo jumps into Ranger's car and disappears.

Ranger is upset at the loss of his car. Ranger and Stephanie drive around for a while, looking for the car, but have no luck. Ranger decides they should call it a night and start again early the next morning. When Stephanie gets home, a couple of men in ski masks offer her an envelope full of money to stop looking for Mo. Stephanie refuses the offer. In the morning, Ranger and Stephanie canvass the apartment building where Jackie saw Mo, but find only one person who recognizes his photo. The witness sends Ranger and Stephanie to an older man's apartment, but this man claims to have no idea who Mo is.



Chapter 7 Analysis

Jackie has fired shots into her dead boyfriend. Stephanie, again proving her clear moral standards, wants to call the police. However, Lula and Jackie are afraid of the cops, so they offer up a stint in rehab for Jackie instead. Since Stephanie figures this is what the court would do anyway, she agrees to it. However, this choice causes Stephanie to lie to Morelli when he asks about her connection to the dead body. It is not a good habit to get into, lying to Morelli, when Stephanie clearly desires an intimate relationship with Morelli. This desire can be seen again in this chapter when Stephanie becomes frustrated at the way Morelli says goodbye to her after a chance meeting in a local cop hangout. Stephanie wants Morelli to want her. The only question is whether she wants to want him back.

Stephanie finds out that Jackie has seen Mo at an apartment building on Montgomery Street. Stephanie stakes out the building but never sees anything. Later, Stephanie returns to this apartment building with Ranger after Mo steals Ranger's car in a foiled attempt to trap him at his store. Stephanie allows Mo to steal the car out of fear of being sprayed with pepper spray, showing the reader that she is not one to place herself in danger on purpose, despite her chosen profession and her past behaviors. Working with Ranger is not a bad thing, as Stephanie finds Ranger silent, but good company, but Ranger makes Stephanie work harder than she might on her own. Ranger is a competent bounty hunter where Stephanie is almost inept. The contrast of their styles is like night and day. Adding Ranger into the mix gives the tone of the novel a more serious note and gives reason to hope that Mo will eventually be apprehended. However, when a group of men offer Stephanie money to stop looking, after having threatened to kill her, the reader begins to wonder if perhaps there is not more to Mo's disappearance than simply a man avoiding a court appearance.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Ranger and Stephanie stake out the apartment building on Montgomery for the rest of the morning. After lunch, Ranger suggests they start canvassing motels. Stephanie has no luck, so she calls it a day and goes to her parents' for dinner. After arriving, Stephanie calls Ranger and finds herself pressured into giving him an invitation to dinner. Stephanie's grandmother asks Ranger dozens of outlandish questions, finding the fact that he is a bounty hunter fascinating. Just as dinner is coming to an end, Ranger gets a call from one of his associates. Ranger asks Stephanie to help him with a take down. Ranger asks Stephanie to watch the front entrance of the building where he has been told his felon is hiding. The man runs out of the building, right into Stephanie. They both fall to the ground and struggle for a few minutes before Ranger arrives and pulls the man to his feet.

The next morning, Ranger is in Stephanie's bedroom when she wakes. Ranger makes her get out of bed and takes her for a run. Afterward, Ranger and Stephanie drive around for a while, searching for Ranger's car. Eventually Ranger decides Mo will not come out in the blowing snowstorm, so he takes Stephanie home. Stephanie spends the rest of the day in front of the television. As Stephanie's channel surfing, she remembers Mo telling her he had a lawyer. Stephanie calls Morelli and asks him to find out who Mo's lawyer is. Then Stephanie drives over to the apartment building on Montgomery Street. A cop friend of Stephanie's comes to sit with her in the car for a few minutes and suggests she talks to Reverend Bill, the creator and pastor of the Freedom Church, an establishment next door to the apartment building where Jackie saw Mo. The Reverend seems concerned, but has nothing of use to Stephanie.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Stephanie and Ranger spend the day together, doing basically what Stephanie has already done, staking out the apartment building on Montgomery. When nothing happens, Ranger encourages Stephanie to check out the local motels despite the time consuming boredom it will require. Stephanie has overlooked this avenue, so it seems the student is still learning from the master. However, this exercise does not yield anymore clues. Later, Stephanie helps Ranger take down one of his fugitives. Stephanie holds her own against the felon, proving she can do the job successfully when given the chance, a fact the reader might have doubted up to this point.

The next morning, Ranger proves his devotion to health when he wakes Stephanie before dawn and takes her for a run. Stephanie, once again, is a perfect contrast to Ranger, barely making it through half the run. Later, Stephanie spends the day in front of the television while the reader imagines Ranger working out in some elaborately outfitted gym. Once again the contrast between these two characters works to

emphasize Stephanie's personality and fortitude. Finally, Stephanie continues to stake out the apartment on Montgomery, showing the reader she is nothing if not stubborn. During this stake out, Stephanie tries a new avenue when she interviews the creator of the Freedom Church. Unfortunately, this yields no useful information.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

That night, Stephanie stacks some pots in front of the door to warn her if Ranger breaks into her apartment. However, Ranger somehow manages to get inside without knocking the pots over. Again Ranger drags Stephanie out on a run. The run does not go smoothly. Stephanie trips Ranger by accident and causes him to pull his groin. Back at her apartment, Stephanie gets a call from her mechanic telling her she needs a new carburetor. Stephanie okays the repair and then goes into the office. Once there, Stephanie learns that Lula has gotten a phone call from Leroy Watkins' girlfriend, telling them Leroy is back at the apartment. Lula and Stephanie go and knock on Leroy's door, but do not get an answer. When they discover the door is unlocked, Stephanie and Lula begin to search the small apartment. When Lula opens a closet door, Leroy falls out, naked and with a bullet in his head. Stephanie calls Morelli to report the body.

Stephanie and Lula stick around to give a statement to the cops. When Morelli is done with them, he says goodbye to Stephanie as though they are simply acquaintances. Convinced she is no longer attractive to Morelli, Stephanie decides to get red highlights put in her hair. Stephanie goes to the mall and is in the beauty salon waiting to have her hair rinsed when she sees Stuart Baggett. Stephanie chases after him, but loses him in the mall. Stephanie returns to the salon and discovers that she has allowed the chemicals to remain on her hair too long. Now her hair is orange. After dinner at her parents' house, Stephanie checks her messages and finds that someone has left a message saying Mo will be at his store that night. Stephanie goes right over to the store and sees a light in the windows.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Stephanie and Lula once again try to apprehend Leroy Watkins, again proving Stephanie's persistence when it comes to her job. However, they find Leroy Watkins dead. This is the fourth dead body Stephanie has come across since beginning the search for Mo. The reader begins to wonder if this is a coincidence or if the two are related. It seems all the dead have been drug dealers from the burg, except Jackie's boyfriend who was a pimp. This coincidence is beginning to look less like a coincidence and more like a vigilante on the loose. When Morelli arrives to investigate the death, Stephanie finds him cool and apparently uninterested in her once again. As a result, Stephanie begins to doubt her own sex appeal, once again revealing her desire to have Morelli interested in her.

Stephanie is at the mall having her hair done when she sees Stuart Baggett, another of her fugitives still on the loose. Stephanie has unfinished business with him, so she chases after him. This only results in the destruction of her hair treatment. It seems whenever something can go wrong for Stephanie, it does. Now Stephanie looks like a



clown, all in an attempt to make herself more attractive to a man she is not even sure she wants to be involved with. Stephanie's emotions are complicated and obvious to the reader, injecting a tone of comic error into the novel. Now Stephanie has gotten a message that Mo is going to be in his store. In light of the fact that many in the neighborhood do not want Stephanie anywhere near Mo, the reader wonders if this might be a set up.



Chapter 10-11

Chapter 10-11 Summary

Stephanie makes her way around the back of Mo's store. A man ambushes her there and forces her into the store at gun point. The men are the same as those who shot at her and offered her money before. Now they are more intent on forcing her to lay off of Mo. One of the men burns Stephanie's hand while the others tear at her clothing, telling her how they are going to hurt her in terrible ways so that she cannot chase after Mo. Before the men can do anything, however, two of the neighbors come to the door, attracted by the lights. A car pulls up to the store. The men decide it is a good time to leave. As Stephanie fixes her clothing, she discovers that Morelli is the one who has come to her rescue. Stephanie and Morelli share some ice cream and discuss the case thus far. Before they leave, they both notice a terrible odor coming from the cellar. Morelli leads the way into the cellar and there they find a half buried corpse.

Morelli calls in the police and they uncover four dead bodies. Morelli escorts Stephanie home. The next morning, Stephanie willingly goes running with Ranger, deciding that maybe being in shape is not such a bad thing after all. When they return to Stephanie's, Lula is waiting in the parking lot. Lula saw Mo going into the house across the street from hers. Ranger and Stephanie go to the house and talk to the landlady. The woman takes them upstairs to talk to her tenants on the second floor. The first two have no idea who Mo is, but the third, a recovering drug addict, recognizes him as a friend of her ex-boyfriend, Elliot Harp. Lula informs them that Harp is a drug dealer.

Later that morning, Lula and Stephanie go looking for Harp. They have little luck, so they decide to go over to Montgomery Street and sit at the apartment building for a while. Stephanie and Lula sit there for a while, eating donuts and talking about Ranger, about how he is so mysterious and like a superhero, and Jackie, who is still fighting it out in rehab. Lula catches sight of a car that has an odd shaped, garbage bag covered package perched precariously on its roof. Stephanie sees it at the same time and realizes it is Mo. Stephanie and Lula give chase as the car moves into traffic. Mo pulls onto the highway, weaving in and out of traffic. Lula pulls up behind Mo. The garbage bags fall off his cargo and Stephanie realizes it is a body. The body is tied too loosely and falls off the car, right into Lula's windshield. Lula stops on the side of the highway. Lula and Stephanie discuss what they should do next. Stephanie wants to call the police, but her cell phone is dead. Lula wants to get off the highway before someone runs them down. Finally they decide to load the body into the trunk. Stephanie directs Lula to the home of her cop friend, but he is not home. Stephanie and Lula then drive to Morelli's.



Chapter 10-11 Analysis

The tone becomes deeply serious when Stephanie is ambushed and taken at gunpoint into Mo's store by the men who have warned her off with a gun and then tried to buy her off. This time they mean business and they proceed to prove their point by burning her hand with a cigarette. Luckily Stephanie is saved by the teacher who has filled her nightmares since third grade. Morelli also comes to her rescue, walking in like a white knight to fulfill her every fantasy even though she believes he is no longer interested in her romantically.

Tension and mystery also enter the plot when Morelli and Stephanie find four dead bodies in the cellar. Now there is a definite connection between Mo and the dead drug dealers that have been showing up all over Trenton. The only question that remains is what Mo has to do with these deaths. Stephanie is more determined than ever to find Mo now. Stephanie gets a good lead when Lula sees him go into the house across the street from her house. Stephanie and Ranger establish that Mo was looking for a drug dealer named Elliot Harp. Stephanie and Lula spend the rest of the day trying to find Elliot Harp, only to find Mo carrying him around on the top of his car. The tone becomes comical when Lula and Stephanie decide to shove the body in the back of Lula's car and drive it to the police. The reader laughs out loud at the image of Harp's foot sticking out with a red bandana tied around it, least Lula should get a ticket.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Morelli takes Lula and Stephanie to the police station in order to drop off the body. While they are waiting for the man from the coroner's office, Stephanie overhears a cop talking and tells Morelli that she thinks he might be one of the men who attacked her at Mo's shop. Morelli promises to look into it. Later, Morelli brings pizza to Stephanie's. Morelli tells Stephanie that the police department has people on Montgomery Street looking for Mo in connection with Elliot Harp's death. Then Morelli leaves, again appearing to have no attraction to Stephanie. Stephanie cannot take it anymore and decides to spy on Morelli under the belief that he is seeing someone else. Stephanie calls up her girlfriend, Mary Lou, and together they go to Morelli's house to spy on him from the alley. While they watch Morelli talk on the phone, a neighbor's dog gets loose and chases them back to their car.

Back at her apartment, Stephanie gets a harassing phone call from someone promising her harm if she continues to look for Mo. Stephanie calls Ranger and arranges another run for in the morning. Stephanie invites Lula along as well since Lula has decided that she wants to get closer to Ranger so she can dispel some of the mystery that surrounds him. After their run, Lula convinces Ranger to give her a ride to work. Stephanie sends her off with the request that she keep an eye out for Stuart Baggett if she should go out to lunch that afternoon, assuming Stuart has gotten another job at one of the many fast food restaurants around town. A short time later, Lula calls Stephanie and tells her that she has found Stuart at a local chicken restaurant. When Stephanie arrives, she discovers that Stuart is dressed as a chicken in a promotional role. As Stephanie approaches him, Stuart threatens her with bottles of condiments. Before long Stephanie and Stuart get into a fight. Stephanie manages to take Stuart down just as the police arrive. When Stephanie shows her paperwork on Stuart, the police allow her to take him in. At home, Stephanie gets a call from Ranger. Mo called him and told him he could pick up his car at the candy store. Ranger and Stephanie arrive to find that Mo has left the car in his garage. However, there is no clue as to where the car has been or where they might find Mo.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Stephanie completely shows her hand when it comes to her feelings about Morelli. While confessing that she really does not want an intimate relationship with him, Stephanie goes to his house in order to spy on him in the hopes of finding out whether or not he has a girlfriend. Clearly Stephanie still has romantic feelings for Morelli and she is not ready to allow him to move on to another woman. How this might affect the plot is not clear at this point, but the reader suspects there might be romance in Stephanie's future.



Stephanie finally manages to take down one of her failure to appears. Stuart Baggett is working in a chicken restaurant. Stephanie manages to arrest him, but not before making herself look like a fool when he fights the arrest with bottles of secret sauce. Again the tone becomes comical, not only making Stephanie look like an inept bounty hunter, but also giving the reader and Stephanie's co-workers a big laugh. Later, the tone switches again, becoming serious when Ranger reappears. It seems Ranger is always a contrast to Stephanie's casual approach to life. Ranger has gotten a phone call from Mo, proving the elusive man is still alive, telling him where he can find his car. While this event does little to help Stephanie find Mo, it does show that Mo knows the difference between right and wrong. Mo does not want to keep Ranger's car or profit from the theft. This seems to be in contrast to Mo's previous behavior, making the reader question how Mo could have such a moral standard as to want to avoid theft, but is involved in the deaths of eight people.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

Stephanie returns to Mo's neighborhood and speaks to her old teacher. Stephanie also stops by the homes of several of Mo's other neighbors, but finds them all hostile and unhappy with her attempts to take down such a saintly man. Later, Stephanie picks up her truck from the mechanic and then decides to stop by Morelli's on the spur of the moment. Morelli offers Stephanie some liquor to help her warm up. Stephanie has several glasses and finds herself feeling very relaxed. Before she knows it, Stephanie and Morelli are making out on the kitchen floor. Suddenly they hear a crash outside the window. When Morelli gets up to see what caused the noise, Stephanie becomes ill and passes out.

Stephanie wakes in her own bed the next morning, alone. That afternoon, Morelli calls her to tell her that he has found out who Mo's lawyer is. It turns out that Mo hired Dickie Orr, Stephanie's ex-husband. Morelli has an appointment with Dickie to discuss the conditions under which Mo is willing to turn himself in. Stephanie meets Morelli at a diner a few minutes before he is due to see Dickie. Stephanie gives him some information on Dickie that he can use as leverage at the meeting. When Morelli returns, he refuses to tell Stephanie what Dickie had to say. Stephanie calls Lula and together they go to Dickie's office. Stephanie allows Lula to intimidate Dickie hoping he will tell them what he told Morelli. However, Dickie does not tell them anything useful.

After taking her truck to a mechanic Morelli recommended because it is still stalling, Stephanie goes home. On her answering machine is a threatening message from someone who claims to have watched Stephanie and Morelli at his house the night before. Stephanie calls Morelli and then rushes over to his house with the tape. After hearing the message, Morelli smashes some dishes to prove to Stephanie that he is angry. More important to Stephanie is the fact that there are only enough dishes in the sink for one person. The next day, Stephanie gets her truck back and discovers that it is finally fixed, and for much less than the dealership had charged.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Finally Morelli shows his true emotions. Morelli clearly still has feelings for Stephanie as he becomes intimate with her in his house. Unfortunately Stephanie has had too much to drink and the romantic moment ends before it can begin. However, this episode finally establishes that both Morelli and Stephanie have feelings for each other, they just are not sure what those feelings mean. The next day, things are back to serious as Morelli prepares to meet with a lawyer who claims to be representing Mo. The fact that this lawyer happens to be Stephanie's ex-husband is just an ironic twist of fate. Stephanie helps Morelli prepare for the meeting, but he does not return the favor by telling her what the lawyer had to say.



The men who have been trying to get Stephanie off of Mo's case are clearly still working their old game. Stephanie gets a phone call from these men telling her that they are watching her. Tension fills the plot while the reader worries that Stephanie's life might really be in danger. Morelli is unhappy with this as well, showing Stephanie in a rare display of emotion. Finally, Stephanie has gotten her truck fixed, hopefully ending her run of bad luck with the vehicle. Perhaps things are beginning to look up for Stephanie, but the reader has a right to continue to be skeptical about this fact.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Stephanie decides to visit Dickie again. Stephanie barges into his office and finds Dickie physically shaking. Dickie ran into some goons in the parking lot who told him to stop working on Mo's case. Dickie thinks the goons work for Stephanie, but she thinks they are probably the same people who have been harassing her. Stephanie insists on learning what Mo plans to trade in the event that he gives himself up. Stephanie tells Dickie if he does not talk to her, she will tell a local cop that Dickie has been sleeping with his wife. Dickie relents. Dickie tells Stephanie that he got discouraged by the drug dealers selling to the kids in the neighborhood and mentioned his feelings to an acquaintance. This acquaintance convinced Mo to bring the drug dealers and he would scare them out of the neighborhood. Mo did not know it at first, but this acquaintance was killing the drug dealers. When Mo finally realized what was happening, he was in too deep and could not stop leading these dealers to their deaths. On the day Mo was arrested, the gun he was found with was the same gun that killed one of these drug dealers. This is why Mo missed his court date. Now Mo wants to turn in his partner in crime in exchange for a lighter sentence. Stephanie listens to this story, and begins to wonder if maybe Mo is not hiding so much from her as from his partner in crime.

Stephanie decides to go to the mall and have her hair fixed, but the salon can do little about the color of her hair. When Stephanie arrives at home, she is ambushed by two men who are waiting in her apartment. These men have guns. One of the men takes a packet of cocaine out of his pocket while the other retrieves Stephanie's gerbil from his cage. The man with the drugs then begins to cook it into heroine. They intend to inject the gerbil with an overdose in order to show Stephanie why they have been killing drug dealers to protect the children in the neighborhood. Stephanie loves her gerbil and cannot allow them to kill him. Stephanie fights the men, knocking one out and driving the other to his knees until her neighbors arrive with guns.

The next morning, Stephanie gets a phone call from a girlfriend. The girlfriend tells Stephanie a story she heard from another friend. Stephanie finds the story so intriguing that she goes to the main source, a young man she went to school with, and double checks the facts. Then Stephanie goes to the office to grill Vinnie about the man he saw Mo with, the man he thought was Mo's boyfriend. When Stephanie tells Vinnie what she is thinking, Vinnie becomes excited and agrees to do some research for her. Stephanie then meets Morelli for lunch where he tells her that the men who broke into her apartment the night before are members of the Freedom Church. Stephanie thinks about that and realizes that Reverend Bill, the leader of the Freedom Church must be Mo's partner in crime. Suddenly it is all coming together.



Chapter 15 Analysis

Stephanie and the reader have been wondering since the opening pages why a saintly man like Mo would miss his court date. Also we are left to ponder the body count that has been piling up since Stephanie took the Uncle Mo case. Now Stephanie finally has some answers when she blackmails her ex-husband into breaking attorney-client privilege. Mo's motivations are clear when Stephanie learns that he has someone gotten himself involved in a vigilante deal with a mystery partner. Now Mo wants to turn himself in, which further explains why the ski-masked men have been harassing Stephanie. These same men attack again a short time after Stephanie learns Mo's secrets, touching on a theme of the novel. Stephanie shows the reader she can take care of herself and manages to overcome these men. Later, Stephanie learns who these gentlemen are, also revealing to her who Mo's secret partner in crime is.

Stephanie also gets a phone call that answers another question, but one she does not allow the reader to know at this point. Stephanie is attempting to build the suspense of the plot by investigating this lead, but not telling the reader what the lead is. However, it seems everything is quickly coming together and the identity of Mo's partner in crime, Reverend Bill, is the icing on the cake. The reader suspects Stephanie will soon have her man.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Vinnie has found an address for Stephanie. It turns out that Mo has a side job, making pornographic films. Vinnie has contacts in the business and got an address from a friend who hires the same actresses that Mo uses. Apparently Mo has a house in the country under a pseudonym where he films his movies. Stephanie makes the drive out to the house and then calls Ranger to come back her up. When Ranger arrives, he decides to go around to the back of the house while Stephanie goes in from the front. Stephanie parks in the driveway and goes to the front door. Mo looks almost relieved to see her. Apparently Mo has been afraid that Reverend Bill would find him first and kill him.

While they wait for Ranger, Mo tells Stephanie how a drug dealer named Brousse was blackmailing him. In order to get him off his back, Mo told Reverend Bill about him, thinking Reverend Bill would rough him up a little, try to scare him into leaving the neighborhood. Instead, Reverend Bill killed him. After that, Reverend Bill pressured Mo to identify other drug dealers. Mo felt trapped. Mo only knew a few drug dealers. Most of his connections were with neighborhood men who could hook him up with prostitutes for his movies. Mo wanted out, so he got a lawyer, but Reverend Bill kept pressuring him. Then Mo was arrested with the gun that was used to kill Brousse.

A car pulls up in the driving, frightening Mo. However, it is only Lula. Unfortunately, Reverend Bill followed Lula and comes into the driveway before Stephanie, Ranger, and Lula can get Mo out. Reverend Bill blows up Stephanie's truck with a rocket launcher and then begins firing guns on the house. Ranger sends Stephanie, Lula, and Mo out the back to his SUV. Moments after Stephanie and Lula leave, they hear the house explode. Then they realize Mo has been shot. Morelli and a handful of cops arrive at Mo's house and end the standoff. Mo is taken to the hospital and it looks like he will not spend any time in jail in exchange for testifying against Reverend Bill.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Stephanie finds Mo with help from her cousin, Vinnie. Mo has been making pornographic movies. Ironically, it is this side job that got him in the trouble that he is in. Mo was being blackmailed by a drug dealer who knew about his film career and threatened to tell the people in the neighborhood. Mo gave the drug dealer to Reverend Bill and then found himself trapped by Reverend Bill in a vigilante scheme. This explains the dead bodies that keep popping up around Mo and why Jackie's boyfriend was killed despite the fact that he was not a drug dealer, but a pimp. It was because he provided prostitutes for Mo's movies.



Lula, who has been enthusiastic in learning the bounty hunter trade, follows Stephanie to Mo's and is in turn followed by Reverend Bill. Thank goodness Morelli followed Reverend Bill, most likely because he suspected Stephanie would get into trouble based on her past history. Stephanie seems to be a magnet for trouble, as shown by the truck she bought to replace her car that was stolen, only to have it break down three times, and then, once finally repaired, to be bombed by Reverend Bill. However, things appear to have worked out this time. The bad guy is in jail, Uncle Mo is safe, and Stephanie no longer has to watch over her shoulder for ski-masked men wanting to hurt her.



Characters

Stephanie Plum

Stephanie Plum is a bounty hunter working out of her cousin Vinnie's bail bonds office. Stephanie has been trained by the best in the business, Ranger, but she does not always get her man without a series of mishaps taking place first. Stephanie is assigned the file on Uncle Mo, a local candy/ice cream store owner who is a failure to appear on a concealed weapons charge. Uncle Mo is very popular in the neighborhood where Stephanie grew up, known as the burg, and therefore it is a case that has the potential of earning Stephanie the ire of her friends and neighbors. Stephanie refuses the case at first, but when Vinnie assures her it is most likely a case of memory lapse, Stephanie agrees.

When Stephanie goes to Uncle Mo's, she discovers he has been missing for several days. Stephanie can find no clue as to his whereabouts and none of his neighbors are willing to help her in any way. Stephanie continues the search, however, keeping her ears open for any gossip that might reveal Uncle Mo's whereabouts. Stephanie follows several tips, but none of them pan out. Eventually Stephanie hears a story that leads her to Uncle Mo, but not until she has discovered eight bodies, each one with ties of one kind or another to Uncle Mo.

Stephanie is close to her family and visits them often during her search for Uncle Mo, learning from them what the word in the neighborhood is about Mo. Stephanie also keeps in close contact with her friends from the neighborhood, including old flame Joe Morelli. Morelli seems to appear every time Stephanie has new information on Mo and Morelli is also Stephanie's go-to-guy every time she finds herself in need of a cop. However, Stephanie gets the feeling Morelli is no longer interested in her romantically despite her frequent attempts to get him interested. Morelli has grown up from the irresponsible kid she once knew and Stephanie is not quite ready to meet him on his new, mature level.

Joe Morelli

Joe Morelli is a cop who grew up in the burg, just like Stephanie, and is currently assigned to the homicide division. Morelli shows up shortly after Stephanie takes on the Uncle Mo case, telling her he is simply interested in what is going on with this neighborhood icon. Later, Morelli shows up again when Stephanie calls him after finding a dead man in Uncle Mo's store. Morelli takes Stephanie home and makes sure she is safe, and is back at her doorstep early the next morning. Stephanie becomes convinced that Morelli wants to arrest her, so she ignores his pleas to open the door. In fact, Stephanie ignores him the entire day, even missing out on dessert at her parents' house when he invites himself to dinner.



When Morelli turns the tables and begins treating Stephanie as though they are just old pals, Stephanie becomes upset. Stephanie convinces herself that Morelli has a new lover and decides to spy on him. This spy mission uncovers nothing, but Stephanie is still convinced that Morelli has moved on without her. Morelli soon proves this is not true, confessing that he has feelings for her that go deeper than friendship. However, Morelli has clearly matured, moving out of his apartment into a house, and his maturity leaves Stephanie behind.

Lula

Lula is an ex-prostitute that Stephanie met while working a previous case. Lula works for Vinnie as a file clerk, but she rarely spends much time in the office. Lula wants to be a bounty hunter and she often goes with Stephanie on stake-outs and fugitive recoveries. Lula has a fear of cops, however, so every time a situation requires police involvement, Lula disappears. Lula is enthusiastic for the job, however, and she puts a great deal of effort into helping Stephanie. During the search for Uncle Mo, Lula does many things to help, including getting shot at by a fugitive and driving around with a dead body in the back of her car. However, Lula also has the same bad luck as Stephanie. When Stephanie goes out into the country to arrest Mo at his country home, Lula follows. Lula, in turn, is followed by Mo's partner in crime, bringing trouble after her. Luckily, Morelli follows the bad guys, so Stephanie and Lula survive their brush with death.

Ranger

Ranger is an ex-mercenary who is now a bounty hunter, occasionally taking jobs from Vinnie Plum. Ranger took Stephanie under his tutelage when she first became a bounty hunter and taught her most of what she knows. Ranger is a health nut who eats healthy and likes to exercise. When he works with Stephanie to find Uncle Mo, Ranger makes Stephanie run with him early in the mornings. Ranger is also a mystery. Ranger gives a fake address as his home address and he keeps an office to collect mail and phone messages. Ranger is intensely private, refusing to answer questions about his personal life with specific information. This arouses curiosity in the people in his life, especially Lula who spends part of the novel trying to find out where he lives. Stephanie does not seem bothered by Ranger's need for privacy, deciding she likes the idea of a little mystery in her life.

Moses 'Uncle Mo' Bedemier

Moses Bedemier, aka Uncle Mo, is the owner of a candy/ice cream shop in the burg. Mo is a kind man who is well liked by the people in the burg, many of whom remember spending afternoons in his store and allows their children to do the same. When Mo misses a court appearance for carrying a concealed weapon, most people believe the arrest must be a mistake because Mo would never do anything wrong. Stephanie hits



this wall of disbelief when she attempts to find Mo. As Stephanie investigates Mo's disappearance, she discovers eight dead drug dealers who appear connected to Mo in one way or another. Stephanie is beginning to believe Mo is not as innocent as everyone believes. Eventually Stephanie finds out that Mo likes to make pornographic movies on the side and has become involved with a vigilante group who think the war on drugs should include killing both drug dealers and addicts.

Reverend Bill

Reverend Bill is the creator and pastor of the Freedom Church, a small storefront church in the burg. Reverend Bill wants to clean up the burg and when Mo tells him one day about a drug dealer who has been soliciting children in his store, Reverend Bill tracks the drug dealer down and kills him. Soon after this, Reverend Bill pressures Mo into giving him more names of local drug dealers. Reverend Bill has several people in his congregation who have lost children or loved ones to drugs and he wants to clean up the streets to protect the surviving children of the neighborhood. Reverend Bill goes on a vigilante rampage, killing not only the drug dealers, but causing overdose deaths of the addicts as well. When Stephanie begins searching for Mo and stakes out an apartment building next door to the Freedom Church, Reverend Bill becomes worried and sends a group of men to persuade Stephanie to leave Mo alone. When Stephanie refuses on three occasions, Reverend Bill sends two men to kill Stephanie's gerbil in the same way their children have been dying on the street, with an overdose of heroin. Stephanie saves her gerbil, but comes up against Reverend Bill himself a few days later when she finally locates Mo and attempts to arrest him. Reverend Bill blows up her car with a rocket launcher.

Stuart Baggett

Stuart Baggett is a young man who missed his court date after being arrested for firing an air gun at parked cars, including two cop cars. Stephanie goes to arrest Stuart at his job in the mall only to allow him to escape while she is distracted by a fender bender. Later Stephanie catches sight of Stuart in the mall while she is having her hair done. Stephanie chases him through the mall but loses him and ends up with orange hair. Finally, Stephanie tracks Stuart to a local chicken restaurant, but before she can arrest him they become engaged in a battle of condiments. The resulting mess becomes a joke at the police station despite the fact that Stephanie finally got her man.

Jackie

Jackie is a prostitute and drug addict who is a friend of Lula's. Jackie comes to Stephanie and asks her to help find her car. Jackie's boyfriend took off with her car and Jackie needs it in order to have a safe place to engage in her profession. Stephanie finds it right away in a parking lot. Jackie stakes out the car, waiting for her boyfriend to show up so she can kill him. However, Jackie finds her boyfriend has already been



killed and been hidden in a Dumpster near the parking lot. Angry, Jackie fires her gun into his dead body anyway. Afterward, Lula and Stephanie arrange for Jackie to enter rehab rather than turn her over to the police for mutilating a corpse.

Ski Masked Men

Several times during her search for Uncle Mo, Stephanie is approached by a group of men wearing ski masks. These men first try to scare Stephanie off the case by shooting their guns at her and promising to kill her if she does not back off. Next the men offer Stephanie money if she will stop looking for Mo. Then the men tell Stephanie Uncle Mo is at his store and when she shows up, they ambush her and attempt to torture her. Finally, the ski masked men break into her apartment and try to kill Stephanie's pet gerbil. Stephanie thwarts the attempt and finds out that the men are members of Freedom Church, Reverend Bill's church. It later turns out that these men are vigilantes working with Reverend Bill, killing the drug dealers and addicts in an attempt to clean up the burg.

Grandma Mazur

Grandma Mazur is Stephanie's grandmother. Grandma Mazur is a funny lady who is always coming up with outlandish anecdotes to fit Stephanie's circumstances. When Stephanie tells her she might be a suspect in a homicide, Grandma Mazur advises her to take a large dose of Kaopectate so the cops will not watch her going to the bathroom in her cell. Later, after meeting Ranger, Grandma Mazur decides she needs a boyfriend. Grandma Mazur goes to bingo where she meets an older man who is missing one eye. When Stephanie's father finds out the old man likes Grandma Mazur because he needs a place to live and he likes the Plum home, he throws the old man out of the house and nearly throws Grandma Mazur out with him. Grandma Mazur is comic relief in a novel that is both humorous and deadly serious, making her an important character.



Objects/Places

Nissan Truck

Stephanie buys a Nissan truck to replace her car that was stolen. However, this truck proves to have mechanical problems. Stephanie has the truck fixed three times before it finally runs properly. Then the truck is blown up by Reverend Bill's rocket launcher.

Donuts

Stephanie has a weakness for junk food, especially donuts.

Chicken Suit

When Stephanie finally catches up with one of her failure to appears, Stuart Baggett, he is wearing a chicken suit, causing a great number of jokes in the police station when word gets out about the arrest.

Morelli's House

Stephanie has become aware that Morelli has moved into a house, something that seems out of character for his wild nature. Stephanie later learns that Morelli inherited the house from an aunt.

Pornographic Movies

Uncle Mo likes to make pornographic movies, mostly fetish films. This is what gets Mo involved with Reverend Bill. Mo is being blackmailed by a drug dealer who threatens to tell people in the neighborhood about Mo's other job. Mo tells Reverend Bill about the drug dealer, hoping he will scare him away. Reverend Bill kills the man instead.

Stephanie's Gun

Stephanie owns a gun, but she rarely carries it or loads it with bullets because she dislikes guns.

Montgomery Street

Stephanie spends a great deal of time on Montgomery Street, staking out an apartment building where Mo might have been seen.



Freedom Church

Freedom Church is the church that Reverend Bill runs on Montgomery Street next door to the apartment building Jackie thinks she sees Uncle Mo entering.

Mo's Country House

Stephanie finally finds Mo at the house in the country he uses to film his movies in.

Mo's Cellar

Stephanie and Morelli find four bodies buried in the cellar under Mo's candy store. Later Stephanie learns that Mo's partner in crime, Reverend Bill, buried the bodies in the cellar when he could not find anywhere else to hide the bodies.

Vinnie's Bail Bonds

Vinnie's Bail Bonds is owned by Stephanie's cousin Vinnie and is where she works as a bounty hunter.

Mo's Store

Moses Bedemier owns a candy/ice cream shop in the burg. Mo's shop is a popular one and Mo is known locally as Uncle Mo, a kind, grandfather type man.

The Burg

The burg is a middle class neighborhood in Trenton, New Jersey where Stephanie grew up and where her parents continue to live.



Themes

Appearances

Appearances are important to many of the characters in this novel. Uncle Mo is the most obvious character to whom appearances are everything. Uncle Mo runs a candy/ice cream shop in which many children from the neighborhood tend to spend most of their afternoons. Everyone knows Uncle Mo and trusts him with their children since he has been in the same spot for more than thirty years, having served most of the children's parents as well. When it is learned that Uncle Mo is a fugitive from the law, everyone is shocked. Not only this, but most people believe that Mo could not hurt anyone and believe Stephanie is persecuting an innocent man by hunting him down. If everyone knew that Uncle Mo also likes to make pornographic movies, they most likely would not be as trusting of him. It is this secret that Uncle Mo wants to hide and the reason he is in such a mess.

Uncle Mo uses drug dealers and pimps to help him secure actresses for his movies. One of these drug dealers realizes what it would do to Uncle Mo's reputation should people learn the truth, so he begins to blackmail him. Uncle Mo does not want to be blackmailed, so he gives this man's name to a local vigilante whom he believes might scare him out of the neighborhood. Instead, the vigilante, Reverend Bill, kills the drug dealer and then traps Uncle Mo into giving him the names of more drug dealers. Mo tries to get out of this arrangement by hiring a lawyer to advise him, but then he is arrested carrying the gun that was used to kill the first drug dealer. This is how appearances get Uncle Mo in trouble with the law and make him the target of a manhunt by Stephanie Plum.

However, Uncle Mo is not the only character who tries to keep up appearances. Another is Ranger. Ranger likes to keep people guessing, to be mysterious. Ranger gives out a fake address when asked and does not allow anyone to see where he lives. Ranger also drives vehicles that appear to be above his means with no explanation as to where these vehicles came from. Ranger wants to be mysterious, as this is part of what makes him good at what he does. Another character who keeps up appearances is Morelli. Morelli wants Stephanie to believe that he is not interested in her romantically. Therefore, Morelli spends a great deal of the novel treating her as though they are only buddies, causing Stephanie a great deal of stress. Finally Stephanie backs him into a corner, causing him to reveal his true emotions, which is possibly exactly what he wanted. It is for these reasons that appearances is a major theme of the novel.

Secrets

In this novel, it seems everyone has a secret. Uncle Mo hides the fact that he likes to make pornographic movies. By doing this, Uncle Mo becomes involved in a vigilante plot that nearly gets him killed. Reverend Bill is a preacher by day, but a vigilante at



night. Reverend Bill believes the best way to fight the war on drugs is to kill the drug dealers and the drug addicts, despite the fact that this is murder and goes against everything the Bible teaches. These secrets cause these characters to come up against each other and force Stephanie to come between them, nearly getting herself killed.

There is a group of men in ski masks who keep harassing Stephanie. First these men shoot up a dumpster with the hope that this will scare Stephanie into ending her search for Uncle Mo. The men then offer Stephanie a great deal of money to make her stop. Next these men ambush Stephanie outside Uncle Mo's store and threaten to torture her. A few harassing phone calls are made to Stephanie's house. Finally, two men break into Stephanie's apartment and threaten to give her gerbil an overdose of heroin. In the end, it turns out these men are from the burg, and one of them is a childhood friend of Stephanie's. These men have a secret. They have been working with Reverend Bill, killing drug dealers and addicts in order to protect the children of the neighborhood. This secret is a huge one that will see these men in jail by the end of the novel. It is because of this that secrets is a theme of the novel.

Romance

Stephanie has known Morelli since she was a small child. Stephanie and Morelli grew up together in the burg. Morelli was Stephanie's first lover, and continues to be her lover off and on now that they are grown. Lately it has been off. Stephanie is used to Morelli making passes at her, always treating her as though he has only one thing on his mind. However, recently Morelli seems to think of her as more of a friend than a lover. Stephanie drives herself crazy over this behavior. First Stephanie has her hair done, thinking it will make her more attractive. However, the dye job goes wrong and Stephanie comes out of it with orange hair. Later, Stephanie spies on Morelli, trying to find out if he has a girlfriend. This, too, goes badly and Stephanie fails to learn what she wants to know.

Stephanie tells herself that she is not interested in Morelli. However, Stephanie finds herself at Morelli's more and more, wondering why he moved into a house when he is a confirmed bachelor who was once more comfortable in an apartment with a month to month lease. One night, Stephanie gets drunk and seduces Morelli, but ends up getting sick before anything can happen. It is a complicated relationship. However, when the novel comes to its conclusion, it finds Morelli and Stephanie in each other's arms. It is the tension, the insecurity, and the devotion of this relationship that makes romance a major theme of the novel.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. The narrator is Stephanie Plum, the heroine. Stephanie is a bounty hunter who is prone to bad luck and is at times inept at the job. Stephanie has a great number of friends who help her with her work, but in the end it is always Stephanie's keen intuition that helps her find her man. Due to Stephanie's intuition, she at times can be an unreliable narrator as she attempts to keep certain details to herself in order to build suspense. This habit of keeping information from the reader allows the reader to see the complicated layers of Stephanie's personality, making her seem accident prone and brilliant all at once.

The point of view of this novel works because it keeps the novel focused on the main character, Stephanie Plum. The reader is privy to all of Stephanie's thoughts and feelings, solving her cases alongside her as well as struggling with her romantic life as she tries to figure out what it is she wants from Joe Morelli. There is an intimacy in the first person point of view that is not usually present with other points of view that allow the reader to care deeply what happens to the main character. In this novel that is extremely important because Stephanie often finds herself in a place of personal danger that keeps the reader glued to the page.

Setting

The novel is set in Trenton, New Jersey. Stephanie lives in Trenton proper, but she grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Trenton called the burg. It is the burg that makes up the bulk of the setting for this novel. The burg is a tight-knit neighborhood where everyone knows everyone else. One of these neighbors is Moses Bedemier, the owner of a neighborhood candy/ice cream store where all the kids in the neighborhood spend their afternoons and their weekly allowance. Stephanie is given the unlucky task of having the hunt Mo down after he fails to keep a court date on a felony arrest. This makes Stephanie very unpopular in the neighborhood even when it begins to look like Mo killed eight people.

The setting of this novel is important because it influences the help and hindrances Stephanie encounters when searching for Uncle Mo. Even though Stephanie is a member of the tight-knit neighborhood of the burg, people turn against her when she starts hunting down the popular Uncle Mo. These people refuse to help Stephanie, some of them even try to stop her from finding Uncle Mo. It is because of this that the burg is almost like another character in the book. If the novel had been set elsewhere, perhaps in a neighborhood that was not as close as this one, Stephanie would not have had to face the same obstacles and the story would have been infinitely different.



Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. There is nothing difficult to understand in the language of this novel. There are no foreign words or phrases, no regional dialect, or any other techniques often used in novels. There is some slang in the novel, but the author does not try to attempt special police dialect or other oddities of language that are often used in police procedural novels. The author keeps her language simple, universal, and easy to read, using language to tell a story but not to act as a separate character or a way of teaching her readers.

The language of this novel works because it is so simple that it does not slow the pace of the novel or attempt to teach. The language is simple enough for the youngest readers, but complicated enough to keep more educated readers interested. There is nothing in the language of the novel that might break up the reader's concentration, not even funny techniques in the dialogue that might mistakenly make the novel hard to read while adding little to the plot. It is because of this simple language that the novel is a joy to read and entertaining all at the same time.

Structure

The novel is divided into sixteen chapters, each approximately twenty pages long. The chapters are divided into scenes, each scene separate from the one before it by a space to alert the reader to a change. There is only one narrator, therefore there is no switch in point of view or narrating character. The structure of the novel is simple, with the story told in equal parts of exposition and dialogue in order to help the author tell the story rather than show it.

The novel has one main plot and several sub plots. The main plot follows Stephanie Plum as she attempts to locate and arrest Moses Bedemier, also known as Uncle Mo. Stephanie runs into many problems trying to find Uncle Mo, including eight dead bodies. One of the subplots of the novel follows Stephanie trying to locate another failure to appear, Stuart Baggett. Stuart escapes from Stephanie's truck the first time she arrests him and then assaults her with condiments the second time. Another subplot is the romance that is trying to bloom between Stephanie and childhood friend, Joe Morelli. Stephanie is used to Morelli constantly coming on to her, but when he stops she does not know what to think. These subplots work well with the main plot, moving in and out of the story seamlessly and coming to a climax with the main plot.

Quotes

"It was January in Trenton. The sky was gunmetal gray, and the air sat dead cold on cars and sidewalks. Inside the offices of Vincent Plum, bail bond agent, the atmosphere was no less grim, and I was sweating not from heat but from panic," Chapter 1, p. 1.

"Lula credited me with saving her life, and I blamed myself for endangering it. I was in favor of wiping the slate clean, but Lula formed a sort of attachment to me. I wouldn't go so far as to say it was hero worship. It was more like one of those Chinese things where if you save a person's life they belong to you...even if you don't want them," Chapter 1, p. 7.

"Life was simple in the burg. Sins were absolved by the Catholic Church, dirty windows were an abomination to the neighborhood, gossip greased the wheel of life and you'd better be damned careful what you said face-to-face to a woman about her daughter. No matter if it was true," Chapter 2, p. 29.

"Ranger had been my mentor when I'd started in the business and was one very bad bounty hunter. In this case, bad meaning ultracool. He'd been one of those army guys who went around disguised as the night, eating tree bark and beetles, scaring the bejeezus out of emerging third-world insurgents," Chapter 2, p. 39.

"Even though I had a key to his apartment, there were some who might regard what I was about to do as breaking and entering. Of course I could always fib, and say Uncle Mo had asked me to look after his things. If it was a judge who was doing the asking I guess my answer might fall into that undesirable area of perjury. Perjury seemed like a good thing to avoid. Although in Jersey, written law often bowed to common sense. Which meant perjury was better than being dispatched to the landfill," Chapter 4, p. 71.

"There's a small possibility I might be a homicide suspect," Chapter 6, p. 111.

"Only an idiot would think they could talk to Morelli and not be talking to Morelli the cop. Cops never stopped being cops. It had to be the world's hardest job," Chapter 7, p. 127.

"Trenton is creepy at three in the morning. Forlorn and subterranean, the pulse of the city checked behind black glass and acid-etched brick. Even the night people, the drunks and the kiddie crews, were tucked away, leaving the occasional fluorescent wash of light to derelict pigeons, walking the sidewalks, pecking at fool's food," Chapter 7, pp. 139-140.

"I didn't feel like being open season on an empty stomach, so I detoured to my parents' house," Chapter 8, p. 147.

"We pulled into traffic and had gone about a half mile, looking for a place to turn, when I got to worrying about Harp. I wasn't sure how it would go over with the Trenton police if



we drove up to the station with a dead drug dealer hanging out of Lula's trunk. They might not understand the decision-making process that led to moving him off the side of the road," Chapter 10, p. 215.

"I thought it wouldn't hurt to look professional when I went to see Mrs. Steeger, so I'd dressed in a tailored black suit, white silk shirt, leopard print silk scarf, taupe stockings and heels. I wasn't a master at long division, but could accessorize with the best of them," Chapter 13, p. 247.

"Undoubtedly there were some closet vigilantes still at large, but they were keeping a low profile. Some of the wind had gone out of the movement's sails when Mo's secret life was made public information. And whatever vigilante momentum had been left had died a natural death without Reverend Bill acting as catalyst," Chapter 16, p. 318.



Topics for Discussion

Who is Moses Bedemier? Why are people in the burg so against Stephanie looking for him? How does this sentiment affect the way Stephanie searches for Mo? Is Stephanie right in going after Mo? What would have happened if she had refused to search for Mo? Did Stephanie really have the option not to search for Mo?

Discuss Stephanie Plum. Is Stephanie a good bounty hunter? Why does she do the job? Does she like it? Why does Stephanie not carry a weapon? Who taught Stephanie to do her job? Why? Did he do a good job? Who is to blame when Stephanie makes mistakes?

Discuss Ranger. Who is Ranger? Why is he so mysterious? Is this a façade or is there a real reason for the mystery? Compare and contrast Ranger and Stephanie. How are they different? How are they the same? Why do you think the author offers these contrasts? How does Ranger enrich the novel?

Discuss Lula. Who is Lula? Why is Lula afraid of the police? What are some of Lula's character motivations? Does Lula change or grow through the plot of this novel? If so, how? Why does Lula tag along with Stephanie during the search for Uncle Mo? What is Lula's role in the final showdown of the novel? Is this Lula's fault?

Discuss Joe Morelli. Who is Joe Morelli? Why does Morelli seek out Stephanie at the beginning of the novel? Why does Morelli's treatment of Stephanie make her upset? What is the nature of their relationship? How has it changed? Why is Stephanie upset that Morelli has moved into a house? Why does Stephanie spy on Morelli? Does Stephanie get the result she wants from this spy mission?

Discuss Stephanie's family. Why does Stephanie continuously go home? What is Stephanie hoping to gain from these visits? How do these visits help Stephanie in the hunt for Uncle Mo? Is Stephanie close to her family? How does this affect the theme of the novel?

Discuss the tone of the novel. What is tone? What is the tone of this novel? How does the tone fluctuate as the plot develops? How does the tone affect the overall story? Does the author use tone to make fun of her characters? Does the author use tone to lessen the seriousness of Stephanie's job? Is so, how? If so, why?