

Twelve Sharp Study Guide

Twelve Sharp by Janet Evanovich

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



Contents

Twelve Sharp Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Chapter 1.....	6
Chapter 2.....	8
Chapter 3.....	10
Chapters 4-5.....	11
Chapters 6-7.....	13
Chapters 8-9.....	15
Chapter 10.....	17
Chapters 11-12.....	19
Chapter 13.....	21
Chapter 14-15.....	22
Chapter 16.....	24
Chapters 17-18.....	25
Chapters 19-20.....	27
Chapters 21-22.....	29
Chapters 23-24.....	31
Characters.....	33
Objects/Places.....	37
Themes.....	39
Style.....	41
Quotes.....	43
Topics for Discussion.....	45



Plot Summary

Twelve Sharp is a Stephanie Plum novel by Janet Evanovich. Stephanie is a bounty hunter, but not a very good one. Not only this, but Stephanie is in love with two different men. One is Joe Morelli, a guy Stephanie has known since childhood, a guy who wants to marry her. The other is Ranger, a dark and mysterious bounty hunter who only wants one thing from Stephanie. When Ranger finds himself in trouble, Stephanie jumps at the chance to help, but helping Ranger means forcing herself to make a choice between love and commitment. It is not a choice Stephanie finds easy to make, especially when there is a crazy Ranger-want-to-be muddying up the waters. Twelve Sharp is part mystery, part romance, and completely entertaining.

A woman, Carmen, approaches Stephanie outside the bond office and claims to be Ranger's wife. Since Stephanie knows her friend Ranger has a commitment phobia, she does not immediately believe Carmen. However, Carmen is convincing, especially when she pulls a gun and tries to shoot Stephanie. Stephanie has Connie run a check on Carmen and learns she is married to someone using Ranger's name. This same day Stephanie learns Ranger has been accused of kidnapping his daughter, a daughter few people know about, from her school in Florida.

Stephanie knows Ranger would only kidnap his daughter if he thought he was protecting her. However, when Stephanie tries to call Ranger, he will not answer his phone or return her calls. After Carmen is found dead, Stephanie decides to go to Ranger's apartment and search his computer to see if she can find anything that will help her there. Stephanie finds nothing but two pictures of a stranger who bears a strong resemblance to Ranger. This confirms what Stephanie has already suspected, that there is someone pretending to be Ranger committing crimes in his name.

Stephanie returns to her apartment with these pictures and finds Ranger there. Ranger is wanted by the FBI so he cannot go home. Stephanie agrees to allow him to stay with her. This creates a new source of trouble for Stephanie who is involved with her childhood sweetheart, but also has strong feelings for Ranger. It also does not help that Ranger insists on sleeping in her bed with her. While struggling with this uncomfortable situation, Stephanie and Ranger go to Virginia to see if they can find a link between Carmen and this fake Ranger. While investigating the mall where Carmen's husband was reported to have worked, Stephanie learns that this man, Edward Scrog, was obsessed with Ranger after seeing him make an arrest in a music store where he once worked.

Ranger realizes Scrog wants to take over his life and therefore it seems reasonable to assume he will be coming after Stephanie. Ranger arranges for his men to follow Stephanie everywhere she goes, including following her as she apprehends her bond jumpers. In fact, there is one occasion when Ranger and his men help Stephanie arrest a particularly reluctant fugitive. Finally Scrog makes contact. Scrog instructs Stephanie to meet him in a parking garage. Ranger puts a tracking device on Stephanie and sends her to meet Scrog in the hopes it will lead them to Julie, his daughter. However, Scrog



finds the tracking device and gets rid of it before taking Stephanie away with him. Scrog takes Stephanie to Julie. Stephanie is relieved to see Julie is safe, but there is little she can do to rescue her at this point.

The next morning, Scrog straps a bomb to Stephanie's chest and insists on taking her with him in an attempt to find money. Stephanie suggests they take down a high bond fugitive for the money the bondsman would pay. While trying to take down the fugitive, Stephanie and Scrog run into another bounty hunter. During the altercation which follows, Stephanie gets away from Scrog. However, before they can reach Julie, Scrog returns and takes her away. Stephanie steps back and lets the police and Ranger's people take over the investigation.

Stephanie goes home only to find Scrog there waiting for her. Scrog knows Ranger has been staying with Stephanie and he plans to wait there until Ranger returns. Stephanie tries to convince him Ranger has moved out. Scrog does not believe her. Before long the door to her apartment opens and Stephanie cannot be sure if it is Ranger or her boyfriend, Morelli. Stephanie wants to call out to warn whoever it is, but Scrog threatens to kill Julie if she does. When Ranger appears around the corner, Stephanie is forced to watch as Scrog shoots him point blank. Julie too is horrified by the sight. However, instead of falling into silent shock, Julie rushes Scrog, knocks his gun free, and shoots him. Ranger survives and Julie is reunited with her family in Florida. Stephanie, however, finds she is no better off now than she was before. Waiting to see which of her lovers would come into the room and face Scrog made her realize she was in love with both.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Twelve Sharp is a Stephanie Plum novel by Janet Evanovich. Stephanie is a bounty hunter, but not a very good one. Not only this, but Stephanie is in love with two different men. One is Joe Morelli, a guy Stephanie has known since childhood, a guy who wants to marry her. The other is Ranger, a dark and mysterious bounty hunter who only wants one thing from Stephanie. When Ranger finds himself in trouble, Stephanie jumps at the chance to help, but helping Ranger means forcing herself to make a choice between love and commitment. It is not a choice Stephanie finds easy to make, especially when there is a crazy Ranger-want-to-be muddying up the waters. Twelve Sharp is part mystery, part romance, and completely entertaining.

Stephanie is a bounty hunter who works for her cousin's bond business. At the office, Stephanie learns she has fallen behind on finding the customers who failed to appear at their court dates. Connie, the office manager, hands her a stack of files and suggests she get to work. Stephanie complains she would not be so behind if she had a little help so Connie agrees to put an ad in the paper to hire a new bounty hunter. Then Connie tells Stephanie she really needs to find a few skips or the company is going to go out of business. First, however, Stephanie needs a sugar rush and goes to the local bakery. While making her selections, Ranger, a fellow bounty hunter who recently started his own security firm, comes in. Ranger tells her he is going to Miami on business for a few days, then gives her a kiss before walking away. Stephanie watches him go, wishing she was not involved again with her on again, off again boyfriend Morelli.

Stephanie and her partner Lula go to the last known address of one of the skips, Lonnie Johnson. However, before they decide how to approach the house a car drives up and opens fire on the house. Stephanie decides they should move on to another skip. Stephanie chooses Melvin Pickle, a young man who was arrested for public indecency. Stephanie thinks it will be an easy arrest, but Melvin is spooked when she introduces herself. Melvin runs out of the shoe store where he works and runs through the mall to a hotel. Melvin then goes up to the sixth floor and threatened to jump off the balcony to the atrium below. Before long the police are called and Stephanie's boyfriend, who is a cop, arrives. Stephanie is trying to talk Melvin down at the same time she is trying to assure her boyfriend she is safe and does not need his help. Finally Stephanie tells Melvin she will get him a job at the bonds office and buy him some vitamins that will help him overcome his loser persona. Melvin accepts this deal and agrees to allow Stephanie to arrest him.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Stephanie Plum is introduced in this chapter. Stephanie is a bounty hunter and she openly admits to the reader that she is not very good at the job. The author goes on to



show the reader this by taking Stephanie first to apprehend a high bond fugitive only to give up without approaching the house because the man clearly has issues with someone more dangerous than Stephanie. Then Stephanie goes to apprehend another fugitive who should be easy since his bond is for a non-violent crime. However, this guy does not want to go to jail and he runs from Stephanie before she can make the arrest. Stephanie ends up having to talk the man down from a ledge by promising him a job and a personality overhaul. Not only does this introduce Stephanie, but it also gives insight into her job and her attitude toward her job.

The chapter also introduces several other characters of interest. First is Lula, Stephanie's partner. Lula is eccentric, an ex-prostitute who likes to dress in sexy clothes. Lula has recently joined a band is having fun buying odd costumes to wear on stage. Second is Lonnie Johnson. Johnson is a fugitive who failed to show up at court and therefore is a target for Stephanie to bring in on his bond contract. However Johnson seems to have someone more dangerous after him and Stephanie decides to wait on picking him up, suggesting he will be mentioned in a later chapter. Finally there is Melvin Pickle. Stephanie attempts to pick him up for not going to court to face charges on public indecency. However, Melvin does not want to go to jail because he is afraid for his safety. Melvin also thinks he is a loser. Stephanie promises to get him a job at the bond office and to buy him some vitamins to help with his loser persona if he will let her arrest him. Melvin agrees. Melvin will most likely show up in a later chapter then since he has been promised a job at Stephanie's place of work.

Stephanie introduces Ranger in this chapter as well. Ranger is a fellow bounty hunter who has recently started his own security firm. Ranger is a good looking, if mysterious, man that Stephanie has a history with. The reader gets the idea that this history is not purely work related when Ranger plants a seductive kiss on Stephanie before going on a business trip to Miami. However, Stephanie has already mentioned in the narration that she has a boyfriend and his name is Morelli. This boyfriend, a cop, is seen later in the chapter when he comes to Stephanie's rescue during the Pickle fiasco. The introduction of these two characters reveals a conflict in Stephanie's romantic life that the reader should expect to become more complicated before the novel reaches its conclusion.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Stephanie and Lula take Melvin to jail and then focus on another skip. This skip, Mary Lee Truk, lives out in the Burg. Since Stephanie's family lives there as well, she calls her grandmother to see if she knows anything about her. Grandma Mazur tells Stephanie that Mrs. Truk is going through menopause and made the mistake of asking her husband if she was gaining weight. When he hesitated, Mrs. Truk stabbed him in the butt. Upon hearing this, Lula has second thoughts about apprehending Mrs. Truk, but Stephanie is confident. Stephanie manages to convince the woman to go with them and then takes her to the bakery for some donut therapy.

At the bonds office, Stephanie learns that a woman dressed in black has been there looking for her. Since Grandma mentioned the same woman looking for her at her parents' house, Stephanie is curious. The woman approaches her on the street and introduces herself as Carmen Manoso, Ranger's wife. Stephanie does not believe her since Ranger is not the commitment type and asks for identification. The woman produces a driver's license, but this does not prove she is married to Ranger. Carmen then tells Stephanie that Ranger emptied out their bank account and disappeared the week before. Carmen thinks Stephanie and Ranger are lovers and that Stephanie can lead Carmen to Ranger. Stephanie dials Ranger's number in an attempt to verify this information with him. Carmen becomes enraged that Stephanie has a cell number for Ranger that she does not and pulls a gun. Stephanie drives away but not before Carmen fires at her car and puts a ding in her bumper.

Stephanie spends the night at Morelli's even though she is still upset at the idea of Ranger being married. Stephanie tries to call Ranger a few more times, but only gets his voice mail. Stephanie asks Morelli to run Carmen through the police computers. The next morning when Stephanie arrives at the bonds office, she finds Carmen waiting for her in a black SUV. Stephanie tries to talk to her, but Carmen pulls her gun again. Instead, Stephanie gets the license plate number and asks Connie to run it. Stephanie and Lula then go to Lonnie Johnson's to attempt to apprehend him again and discover that someone has burned down his house. Stephanie decides to concentrate on other skips for the time being.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Stephanie apprehends another skip, this one a menopausal woman who stabbed her husband. Stephanie shows her softer side in this episode by sharing her theories on donut therapy with the woman, taking her to a bakery and helping her take comfort in pastry rather than rage. Later, Stephanie meets a woman who claims to be Ranger's wife. This opens up a range of emotions for Stephanie who finds herself jealous of the idea that Ranger might have married someone else and that he did not confide the truth



in her. By experiencing these emotions, the reader gets to see how deeply Stephanie feels for Ranger. This also begins to illustrate the theme of love versus infatuation, especially later in the chapter when Stephanie spends the night with Morelli. Now the reader can really see how torn between these two men Stephanie is. Stephanie wants to spend time with Morelli and she opens herself up to him in the most intimate of ways, but in the back of her mind she is still thinking of Ranger and jealous of the woman who claims to be his wife.

Stephanie has Morelli run a check on Carmen and at the same time she has Connie run one. Neither check seems to come up with anything interesting. Perhaps Carmen is as innocent as she claims to be, but Stephanie is still unclear on this. Stephanie tries to call Ranger a number of times but fails to reach him and instead leaves messages on his voice mail. Ranger's inaccessibility suggests trouble to the reader who must wonder if Ranger has disappeared because he did walk out on a wife and is trying to escape her. If this is true, Stephanie is about to learn a great deal about Ranger she never knew before. If not, there is something more important going on and Stephanie has been kept out of the loop. Either way, Stephanie is not happy about the situation, further revealing her emotions toward Ranger.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Lula and Stephanie go to Pleasure Treasures, an adult toy store, to apprehend Caroline Scarzoli, a skip who was arrested for shoplifting. The store is one Lula has wanted to visit for a while, so she takes her time browsing the merchandise before approaching Scarzoli. Lula buys a toy and a video to give to Stephanie. When they check out, Scarzoli tells them they are having a two for one sale, so Lula forces Stephanie to pick out a toy as well. Then they tell Scarzoli who they are and Scarzoli pulls a shotgun out from behind the counter. Lula and Stephanie take their purchases and leave.

Stephanie and Lula return to the bonds office, where Carmen has not moved from her spot, and discover a large number of people inside. Connie ran an ad looking for another bounty hunter and these people are the respondents. After they take all the names and send the applicants away, Joyce Barnhardt walks in. Joyce is another bounty hunter who occasionally works with them. Joyce is angry because she found out about the ad in the paper and figured if the office needed another full time bounty hunter they should have hired her. To soothe her hurt feelings, Connie gives Joyce some files from what they call the lost cause files. From there, Stephanie and Lula go looking for Luis Queen, a male prostitute they have bonded many times before. Luis is not happy to be picked up, but goes willingly.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Stephanie and Lula try to make an apprehension at an adult toy store, but first Lula insists on shopping. Lula's behavior is humorous as well as a little outlandish, embarrassing Stephanie as she takes her time looking over the various adult toys available. Lula is outgoing, open with her sexuality while Stephanie is a little more reserved, a little more modest. Stephanie's reaction to the toy store is a little ironic when the reader recalls the fact that she is in love with two different men. However, it does suggest Stephanie would never indulge in sexual behaviors with both men at the same time due to this level of modesty.

Stephanie returns to the office to find it full of applicants for the new bounty hunter position. Stephanie helps get rid of them only to have Joyce, an old acquaintance of Stephanie's and a woman she does not like, show up and demand the job for herself. Instead, to get rid of her, Connie gives her a bunch of files that no one else has been able to deal with. This gets Joyce out of the office for now, but the reader must suspect she will return. Later Stephanie makes another apprehension.



Chapters 4-5

Chapters 4-5 Summary

Stephanie goes home to make phone calls on her other skips. While working, Stephanie gets a phone call from her grandmother. One of the funeral parlors in town has new owners and they are having their first showing that night. Grandma Mazur wants to go and wants Stephanie to take her. Stephanie leaves to pick Grandma up and finds Carmen waiting for her in the parking lot. Stephanie kindly tells Carmen where she is going before driving off to pick up Grandma. At the funeral parlor, Stephanie meets the new owners, a nice gay couple, and welcomes them to town. While talking with them, Stephanie learns about a kidnapping in Florida and that the authorities think the kidnapper might come to Jersey. The victim, apparently, is Ranger's daughter and he is the suspected kidnapper. Stephanie returns home and immediately looks the kidnapping up on the Internet. Stephanie knows Ranger has a daughter from a short-lived marriage, but is convinced Ranger would not kidnap his child unless he had a good reason. Morelli calls and concurs with Stephanie.

The next morning, Stephanie helps Connie interview the applicants for the bounty hunter position, but none of the applicants seem sane enough to do the job. When all the applicants are gone, Stephanie and Connie discuss the kidnapping, trying to figure out if Ranger is in trouble. Connie runs a computer check on the girl's parents, but comes up with nothing. Stephanie calls Morelli and asks him to run a check on the business Carmen claimed Ranger had in Virginia. Stephanie specifically asks for a picture of the Ranger in Virginia, but Morelli says he cannot do this unless he has a driver's license there.

Stephanie and Lula go after another skip, this one a high bond wanted for arson. Stephanie calls him and claims to be looking for someone to kill her husband. The man agrees to meet her in a park. As they talk, Lula walks up with Bob, Morelli's dog. Just as the man is catching on that there is something wrong with the situation, Stephanie tries to stun him, but her stun gun is low on batteries. Instead, Lula hits him on the head with her purse and Bob jumps on him once he is on the ground. While he is unconscious on the ground, Stephanie handcuffs him.

Chapters 4-5 Analysis

While attending a viewing at a funeral home in the Burg, Stephanie learns about a kidnapping in which Ranger is the lead suspect. Stephanie immediately begins to think there is something more going on than Ranger getting married without telling her. Stephanie knows that Ranger was married once and had a child, but she does not believe he would kidnap the girl without good reason. Stephanie begins to investigate the kidnapping but has little luck on her own. Stephanie then asks Connie and Morelli to help, but they also come up with very little information. Interesting in Stephanie's



conversation with Morelli, however, is the fact that she asks him to find a picture of Ranger in Virginia. Since she already knows what Ranger looks like, this suggests to the reader that Stephanie is beginning to think someone else is posing as Ranger and committing these acts which seem so out of character for him, introducing the theme of identity theft.

Stephanie then goes after another skip, this one a high bond. Stephanie shows some creativity and bravery when she sets this man up to meet her in a park under the guise that she wants to hire him to kill her husband. However, the scheme goes wrong when the man becomes suspicious and then Stephanie's stun gun does not work. Lula saves her from sure disaster and they are able to take in the skip, showing the reader that Stephanie can handle herself when pushed to the limit, but also showing the reader how things rarely go the way Stephanie hopes they will. Also important to note is the introduction of the stun gun in this chapter, an object which will make many appearances later in the novel.



Chapters 6-7

Chapters 6-7 Summary

Stephanie and Lula drop the skip off at jail and stop in the bonds office. Connie tells Stephanie that Melvin has worked out well as a file clerk. Stephanie then heads home, surprised when Carmen does not follow her. Stephanie met a bonds man in Virginia a while back and she decides to e-mail him to find out if he met Carmen's Ranger while he was working as a bonds man there. Later Stephanie meets Morelli at her parents' house for dinner and then talks him into going to a bar where Lula's band is to perform that night. The performance goes bad, however, when a fight breaks out in the audience. The next morning, Stephanie helps interview the next wave of applicants for the bounty hunter's position, but again the applicants all appear to have mental health issues. When the ordeal is over, Stephanie notices Carmen's SUV parked across the street where it had been the night before. Stephanie is curious why Carmen did not follow her home last night and decides to go over and have a chat with her. However, the driver's seat is empty, but Stephanie sees blood. Stephanie calls Morelli.

Morelli arrives with an investigative team and finds Carmen's body in the back of the SUV. While they are doing their jobs, Stephanie discovers that Carmen has found some information on Ranger's company in Virginia. It turns out that the business has many outstanding debts, something Ranger would never allow to happen. Morelli asks Stephanie to step outside and tells her Carmen has been shot in the head and her gun was left untouched. With all this information together, Stephanie feels confident in telling Morelli that she believes someone was impersonating Ranger in Virginia and has come to Jersey to kill Carmen and perhaps Ranger too. Despite thinking there is some merit to her theory, Morelli warns her not to narrow her investigation by holding too tight to this theory.

Stephanie calls it a day and returns home where she finds a response to the e-mail she sent the night before. The description her colleague gives of Ranger further convinces her there is an imposter. Stephanie decides to go to Ranger's apartment and search his computer. Stephanie spends a great deal of time searching his computer, but Ranger is so careful not to leave information that can hurt him on his computer that she finds very little. However, Stephanie finally does find pictures of a man who looks remarkably like Ranger. Stephanie returns home and is surprised to find Ranger waiting for her. Ranger confirms her theory about the imposter, telling her he was in Miami trying to find the man when his daughter was kidnapped. Ranger is wanted by the police so he cannot go home. Ranger is staying in a safe house his company keeps, but he needs Stephanie's help. Ranger needs Stephanie to be his eyes and ears. Stephanie quickly agrees.



Chapters 6-7 Analysis

Stephanie continues to investigate Ranger's possible impostor in Virginia by contacting a colleague she met there a few months before. Again Stephanie is hoping to get a physical description that will confirm her suspicion someone is impersonating Ranger and it is this man who has kidnapped Ranger's daughter. The next morning, still wondering why Carmen did not follow her home the night before, Stephanie goes to have a chat with her only to find her missing and blood on the driver's side of the SUV. Stephanie calls Morelli, convinced someone has killed Carmen. It turns out someone has killed Carmen and left her body in the back of the SUV. Morelli tells Stephanie how it happened and that it is clearly murder, implying Ranger might be a suspect. Stephanie gives her theory on an impersonator, but Morelli is reluctant to encourage Stephanie to hold on to this theory in case it is not true.

Stephanie continues to investigate the possibility, however. Stephanie gets an e-mail with a description of Ranger so unlike the Ranger she knows that she feels it is another confirmation of her impostor theory, again highlighting the theme of identity theft. Stephanie goes to Ranger's apartment to search his computer and after a long search, finally happens upon two pictures of a man who looks remarkably like Ranger. Stephanie knows this must be the impostor and that Ranger must have been aware of him. This theory is confirmed when she returns to her apartment and finds Ranger waiting for her. Ranger does know about the impersonator and was on his tail, but was not quick enough to stop him before he kidnapped Julie, Ranger's daughter. However, Ranger is on the case and Stephanie agrees to help him.



Chapters 8-9

Chapters 8-9 Summary

Stephanie gets out of bed the next morning and finds Ranger in her apartment using her computer. Ranger wants to canvas a neighborhood and look for his impostor, so Stephanie quickly gets dressed. The neighborhood turns out to be a tough Jersey neighborhood where Ranger grew up. Ranger thinks his imposter may have spent time there trying to get information on him. However, when Stephanie talks to local business owners, they all believe the picture of the impostor she shows them is Ranger. Ranger decides they should go to Virginia since this is where the impostor married Carmen and where he had his bonds office. On the way, Stephanie gets a call from Morelli who quickly figures out Stephanie is with Ranger and warns her she is aiding a wanted felon.

In Virginia, Stephanie speaks to a couple of women gathered at Carmen's family home and asks about Ranger. These girls tell Stephanie how Carmen met Ranger while he was working as a security guard at a local mall. Stephanie and Ranger go to this mall where Stephanie talks to a man who remembers a guard fitting Ranger's description. The man tells Stephanie this fellow was a cop-want-to-be who seemed to have mental health issues. The man also supplies a name, Edward Scrog. Stephanie gives this information to Ranger who quickly has his men run a check on him. In minutes they have an address for an apartment nearby. When Ranger and Stephanie search the apartment, they find a scrapbook with pictures of Ranger as well as captions which suggest Scrog intends to kidnap both Julie and Stephanie in order to recreate Ranger's family for himself. Ranger is notably upset by the pictures of Julie, so when they return to Jersey, Stephanie invites him to stay the night at her apartment.

Chapters 8-9 Analysis

Ranger and Stephanie began to investigate the impostor now they have more information. Ranger guesses that since the man has posed as him successfully for a time, he must have gathered information on him from somewhere. Therefore, Ranger takes Stephanie to his old neighborhood to see if the impostor spent any time there. However, everyone Stephanie asks seems to think the picture of the impostor is really Ranger, so she has no success. However, Ranger decides they should try Virginia since this is the first place the impostor showed up.

In Virginia, information comes quickly. Stephanie finds out how Carmen met the impostor, so she and Ranger go to see if they can learn a name. Not only do they get a name, but they also learn that the man wanted to be a cop before turning his attention to the possibility of being a bounty hunter. They also find an apartment based on the name. In the apartment is a scrapbook of Ranger, proving the man has been following Ranger for quite some time. The album also includes information which leads Ranger to believe the impostor might have taken Julie and might be after Stephanie because he

believes them to be Ranger's family and he wants to make them his own family. If Ranger is right about this, it could mean Stephanie will be a target of this man now that it appears he is in Jersey. This assumption is based on the fact that the impostor is most likely the one who killed Carmen only days before.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The next morning Stephanie wakes with Ranger in her bed. Ranger claims the couch was too uncomfortable. Stephanie knows Ranger wants to be intimate with her, so she quickly gets out of bed, trying hard to be faithful to Morelli despite her own desires to be with Ranger. Before Stephanie can get dressed, she gets a call from Melvin telling her he is alone in the office and he has been overrun by applicants for the bounty hunter's job. Stephanie quickly dresses so she can go rescue him. When Stephanie gets there, she organizes the applicants and then begins to interview them. Just like the time before, however, all the applicants turn out to have mental health issues and are unsuitable for the job.

Connie, Stephanie, Lula, and Melvin decide to have Italian for lunch. Just after the food arrives, Joyce shows up. Joyce is mad because she believes the cases Connie gave her are a wild goose chase. In fact, one of the cases is for a man who died months before. An argument breaks out and ends with Stephanie covered in spaghetti and Joyce knocked out by a stun gun. Stephanie goes home to change and finds Ranger there. The safe house has been taken over to protect a witness so Ranger has no where else to go. Not only that, but Ranger has more reason to believe Scrog will come after Stephanie after reading a blog he wrote.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The theme of love versus infatuation begins to show itself in this chapter. Stephanie has spent the early part of the novel with Morelli, showing the reader a strong relationship full of mutual affection. However, in this chapter Stephanie wakes with another man in her bed. Not just any man, but Ranger, a man she finds sexually appealing and strongly attracted to her. It is clearly difficult for Stephanie to get out of that bed and be faithful to Morelli. Later when she learns Ranger has to stay with her for an extended amount of time, Stephanie's thoughts go straight back to the feel of sleeping in his arms. Staying in a small one bedroom apartment with a man she wants to be intimate with while still trying to be faithful to her boyfriend will prove to be difficult for Stephanie and will fill the following chapters with quite a bit of tension as the situation unfolds for the reader.

Ranger has discovered a blog on Scrog's computer which mentions Stephanie on many occasions. This further convinces Ranger that Stephanie will be a target of Scrog's just as his daughter was. Ranger is concerned for Stephanie and this adds to his motivations for staying in her apartment despite her clear discomfort. Scrog's possible intentions add tension to the plot. Joyce also adds tension. Joyce is a subplot who keeps showing up at the most unexpected times, attempting to get work which rightfully belongs to Stephanie. Joyce and Stephanie do not like each other and their encounters add entertainment to the novel. However, it is important to note in this situation that

Joyce is picking up contracts from the same bond office where Stephanie gets her assignments, which presents the possibility that their paths might cross once again as the plot continues to develop.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In his background search of Scrog, Ranger finds a point at which their paths crossed. Scrog worked in a record store where Ranger once made an arrest. They never spoke, but Scrog was clearly impressed with what he saw. Ranger also warns Stephanie that his men will be following her, watching for Scrog to make a move against her. Stephanie agrees, since she knows she has little choice, and returns to the office. There a sane applicant comes in about the bounty hunter's job. Connie hires the woman on the spot. Lula and Stephanie return to the Pleasure Treasures to attempt to arrest Caroline Scarzolli again. However, the moment they walk through the door Scarzolli pulls a gun on them, forcing Stephanie to buy a toy she does not need and leave.

Stephanie wakes a second time in Ranger's arms. Out of guilt, Stephanie calls Morelli and finds him sleeping in after an all-nighter at work. Stephanie and Ranger then get in her car and drive around town buying muffins, trying to flush out Scrog. The only thing they flush out, however, is a group of bounty hunters after Ranger. They do have time to talk and Ranger admits an emotional attachment to Stephanie, but agrees with her assessment that marriage and a family is the last thing he wants from anyone, Stephanie included. Ranger does want her to stay safe, however, and gives her a panic button she is to wear until this situation is resolved.

Stephanie returns to the office where Meri Maisonet is due to start her first day. Stephanie leaves a group of files for Meri to run background checks on before going to arrest another of the skips on her list. This one is Bernie Brown, a man arrested for simple assault after punching a waiter attempting to put out a fire in Bernie's hair. Bernie refuses to go with Stephanie when she appears on his doorstep because his burned head looks bad. Stephanie agrees to take him to have it shaved in privacy if he will agree to be arrested. Bernie agrees. Stephanie takes Bernie to the funeral parlor and asks Scooter, one of the owners, to shave Bernie's hair. Scooter agrees and when he takes Bernie and Stephanie back to one of the prep rooms, Stephanie sees Carmen's body. It turns out Carmen's body has been sent to the funeral home to be prepared to be sent back to Virginia, but they cannot send her until Thursday. Stephanie calls Ranger and has him, as the husband of record, arrange a viewing, hoping this will flush out Scrog.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Ranger knows now when and where he came into contact with Scrog, and what cause Scrog to become so obsessed with Ranger. However, Ranger's bigger concern is Scrog's apparent infatuation with the people in Ranger's life, Stephanie specifically. Ranger puts Stephanie under surveillance with the men from his security business. The next day, after Stephanie once again fails to arrest Scarzolli, Stephanie wakes in



Ranger's arms again. It is proving more difficult for Stephanie to resist Ranger, but she manages once again to climb out of the bed and put distance between them. It does not help, however, when Ranger later admits to feelings for her that would make her kidnapping more difficult than his daughter's. Ranger's admission touches on the theme of love versus infatuation again, especially when Ranger admits he is not prepared to offer Stephanie marriage and family despite the fact that Morelli is.

Later, Stephanie returns to work where a new woman is set to start work as another bounty hunter. Stephanie goes after a man who assaulted a waiter trying to put out a fire in his hair. Stephanie makes a deal with this man, not unlike the deal she made with Melvin, to have his hair shaved if he will go with her to jail. The man agrees and Stephanie takes him to the funeral home because there she can guarantee that he will not be seen by anyone who knows him. While there, Stephanie learns Carmen's body is there. Stephanie gets the bright idea to have a viewing of the body, something she knows will bring out a large crowd and something she hopes will bring Scrog out into the open so they can bring him in. The viewing takes place in the following chapters, leaving the reader anxious to read on in order to see if Stephanie's plan will work.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Stephanie returns to the office and tells Connie and Lula what she has done at the funeral parlor. As they discuss the Ranger situation, the new girl asks some leading questions. Suddenly uncomfortable, Stephanie leaves. Stephanie drives randomly through town, hoping to flush out Scrog. Stephanie stops at her parents' house and finds Grandma Mazur all excited about Carmen's viewing which she plans to attend with a friend. Stephanie's mother makes Stephanie promise to keep Grandma out of trouble. When Stephanie leaves the house, Ranger calls to tell her Scrog is following her. However, after a short chase, Ranger and his men lose Scrog when he ditches his car in a parking garage and leaves on foot.

Stephanie meets Lula later that evening to try to arrest Scarzolli once again. This time they plan to wait for her outside the store at closing time, hopefully surprising her into submission. However, when Scarzolli comes out of the store, she walks in the opposite direction from where Stephanie and Lula are waiting so they are forced to give chase. Suddenly Tank, Ranger's top guy, and Ranger step out of the shadows in front of Scarzolli. Scarzolli kicks Tank in the groin before Ranger takes her down and helps Stephanie cuff her. Afterward, Lula hooks up with Tank.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The fact the new girl in the bond office is curious about Ranger makes Stephanie uncomfortable, therefore the reader wonders who this girl is. Right now Stephanie's feelings are just intuition, but later chapters might reveal more suspicions about this girl that the reader should watch out for. Stephanie then goes for a ride and Scrog makes an appearance. Unfortunately, Ranger loses him in a parking garage. Ranger's failure to keep up with Scrog is curious as well because it seems this crazy guy is better at getting away than Ranger and his men are at their security jobs. After Stephanie's description of their professionalism, this seems unlikely unless Scrog has some skill which Ranger and his team have failed to take into account.

Stephanie's grandmother wants to go to the viewing of Carmen's body, reminding the reader that this event is to take place in the following chapters. Not only this, but Stephanie's mother's wish that Grandma be kept under control also warns the reader Grandma Mazur may have some mischief in mind that will cause trouble at the viewing. Later that night, Stephanie and Lula finally get Scarzolli under arrest with help from Ranger and his man, Tank. It is a difficult arrest and Stephanie is not able to make a deal with the skip this time. However, it does create a situation in which Stephanie is able to leave early with Ranger and Lula is introduced to Tank. Lula finds Tank interesting and practically kidnaps him for a date, providing a little romance to the story and setting up a relationship which will be revisited later in the plot.



Chapter 14-15

Chapter 14-15 Summary

Later that night Ranger and Stephanie get word that one of Ranger's men was shot checking out a possible break in at the bonds office. Ranger takes Stephanie to the hospital and sends her in to find out how his man is doing. Stephanie learns the man had a bullet proof vest on and has only suffered a wound in his arm. Stephanie asks if he saw the man who shot him and he says he thought it was Ranger on first sight, but realized too late that it was not. Stephanie stays with Ranger's man until he is out of surgery, then returns to her apartment. When Stephanie gets ready for bed she finds Ranger already there. Stephanie refuses to get into bed with him and instead goes out to sleep on the couch, but finds it too uncomfortable. Resigned, Stephanie goes to sleep in her bed with Ranger, making him promise to keep his hands to himself. The next morning, however, Stephanie wakes to find herself in Ranger's arms again. Ranger begins to kiss Stephanie and they are close to being intimate when Stephanie hears the front door open. It's Morelli and he has decided to move in while Stephanie is in danger from Scrog.

At the office, the new girl, Meri, still is overly curious about Ranger, again making Stephanie uncomfortable. Stephanie grabs Lula and leaves. However, neither feels like working, so they return to the office and sneak into Lula's car in order to lose Ranger's men. Stephanie and Lula go to the beach for the day, upsetting Ranger who has spent the day worried despite having guessed where she was and sending two of his men to watch her. When Stephanie returns home, she ignores both Ranger and Morelli's lecture on her protection and gets ready for the viewing.

Chapter 14-15 Analysis

One of Ranger's men is shot by a man he thinks is Ranger at first glance. The man is going to be okay, however, this proves that Scrog must look a great deal like Ranger if even one of his men could not see the difference right away. It also shows Scrog is dangerous, willing to shoot at the smallest provocation. This adds danger to the plot as it continues to develop in the next few chapters. Later, Stephanie returns home and finds Ranger in her bed. Illustrating the theme of love versus infatuation, this further dramatizes Ranger's infatuation with Stephanie and her struggle between her feelings for Ranger and her feelings for Morelli. The next morning, Stephanie and Ranger come close to consummating their desires when Morelli shows up, announcing he is moving into the apartment until Scrog is found. Morelli's decision sets up an interesting lover's triangle, with all three participants living in a small one bedroom apartment. Stephanie will have to deal with this situation, but the reader does not know how at this point.

Stephanie decides to take the day off and have fun with Lula. Ranger is not happy about this, but he knows Stephanie well enough that he figures out where she was



going and sends two of his men to watch over her. Ranger's feelings for Stephanie confuse the reader just as much as they do Stephanie. Ranger seems to be so concerned with her and to know her so well that the reader, as well as Stephanie, cannot understand why he would not be willing to commit to her.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Grandma is at the funeral parlor when Stephanie arrives, eager to see the body, but there are so many people there it is difficult to even see where the coffin is. Grandma makes her way to the coffin finally and a moment later there is a commotion. Stephanie knows right away that Grandma Mazur must have tried to open the casket. Stephanie makes her way to the casket where a near riot has broken out. Everyone wants to see the body. To distract them, Stephanie announces that Sally and Lula are going to sing. Sally and Lula put on an impromptu concert after some persuasion, distracting the crowd and causing some of them to leave. Grandma Mazur likes the music, however, and Lula suggests she join the band since most of their gigs have been at old folks homes lately.

Stephanie starts to make her way through the crowd again when someone comes up behind her. It is Scrog. Scrog will not let her turn around, but tells her he will be coming for her very soon. Stephanie tries to grab his arm and stop him from leaving, but he stuns her. When Stephanie wakes, Morelli is standing over her. Morelli has been watching her all along, but he did not see Scrog. However, they have locked down the building and are letting people out one at a time to find Scrog. Scrog still manages to escape, however. Later, at her apartment, Stephanie tells both Morelli and Ranger she is going to bed, but she does not. Stephanie escapes out the window. Ranger and Morelli catch her because Tank is watching the building, but Stephanie insists on leaving anyway and goes to stay with her parents.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Grandma Mazur offers some comic relief when she tries to open the casket at Carmen's viewing. In order to stop the riot this causes, Stephanie has Sally and Lula sing a song, which causes the crowd to disperse. Then they offer a job to Grandma Mazur who readily agrees, setting up a scene in a following chapter in which Grandma Mazur will attempt to sing with a group wearing provocative clothing. Later, as Stephanie is making her way through the crowd, Scrog approaches her. Scrog confirms what Stephanie and Ranger have known all along, that he wants to kidnap her as well. However, when Stephanie tries to stop him from leaving, he stuns her. This is the first of many times in which a stun gun will be used against Stephanie.

Stephanie returns home and finds both Morelli and Ranger in residence. Stephanie knows this will be an uncomfortable situation since she knows both men will want to share her bed and she will have to choose Morelli, knowing Ranger is sleeping in the living room. The situation, a unique lover's triangle, illustrates again the theme of love versus infatuation. Stephanie decides rather than dealing with this situation, she will run away. Stephanie goes to her parents' house in the Burg.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

The next morning Ranger calls Stephanie and tells her Scrog called and left a message on her answering machine. Ranger wants her to come back to the apartment to change the incoming message in case Scrog calls again. Stephanie goes to the office first where a delivery of flowers arrive. They are from Scrog. When Stephanie returns home, Ranger is reviewing the security camera footage from the funeral parlor. Ranger finds a good shot of Scrog's back, which does not look much like Ranger, but there are no shots of his face. Then Stephanie listens to Scrog's message. Scrog speaks like he is Ranger and promises to come for Stephanie very soon.

Stephanie goes back to the office. A few minutes later Joyce appears. Joyce is angry about the lack of profitable jobs Connie has been giving her. Connie gives Joyce the Lonnie Johnson file to appease her, despite the fact that Meri has just discovered that Lonnie recently applied for a car loan. Stephanie has the address, but it is not going to do her any good since Joyce has the case now. Stephanie turns her attention to another skip, Charles Chin, a white collar criminal. Stephanie and Meri approach the house and hear a thump on the other side of the door and realize the man is drunk. Stephanie finds a key and opens the door, finding the man passed out.

After work, Stephanie returns to her apartment where she receives a call from Scrog. Scrog lets Stephanie talk to Julie after she insists she needs to make sure the child is okay. Then Scrog hangs up, promising to call again. Between calls, Stephanie calls Morelli and asks him to do a check on stolen campers since she believes that Scrog must be keeping Julie somewhere mobile. When Scrog calls back, he tells Stephanie to dress in some bounty hunter clothes and begin driving around at midnight. Scrog promises to call her then with more instructions.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Scrog is getting closer to Stephanie, first calling her home phone and then sending her flowers at the office. Scrog is letting her know that he knows where she is and that he wants to make her a part of his life. Stephanie plays along under Ranger's guidance, hoping that Scrog will come after her so that she can save Julie. When Scrog calls her again late that afternoon, she insists on speaking to Julie. Julie is alive and well, but the experience upsets Stephanie. Scrog calls again and gives Stephanie instructions on how to meet him, telling both Ranger, Stephanie, and the reader that the time has come for Scrog to make his play, a play illustrated in the next few chapters.

Stephanie thinks Scrog is keeping Julie in a camper in order to stay mobile, so she has Morelli run a check. If they can find the camper, perhaps Stephanie will not have to approach Scrog. However, this does not seem a likely scenario. Finally, also important



in this chapter is the fact Joyce has taken over the file for Lonnie Johnson so close to Meri having found an address on him. Lonnie has entered the narration many times before and this mention suggests to the reader that she will appear again as the plot continues to develop.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

Stephanie has dinner at her parents' house with Morelli. Toward the end of dinner Sally and Lula arrive, having arranged to practice with Grandma Mazur. Grandma and Lula go upstairs to change into their costumes. When they come down they are wearing leather pants and cone shaped bras. The music begins and they start to dance. The scene is so comical that Morelli and Stephanie are bursting at the seams. When it is all over, Stephanie's mother makes her promise that Grandma will never wear that outfit again.

Stephanie and Morelli go for a walk and Morelli does his best to help Stephanie with her nerves. Back at her apartment, Ranger has clothes for Stephanie that are leather and unattractive. However, they are exactly what Scrog will expect. Then Ranger gives Stephanie both her cell phone, one of his own, and the panic button. Stephanie begins to drive around like she has been told. Scrog directs her to a parking lot where she is to change cars. Scrog makes her put down both phones and drive to a parking garage from which she is to walk to a building. Then Stephanie is directed to the garage of the building where she meets Scrog. Scrog wants Stephanie to change her clothes and when she refuses, he stuns her again.

When Stephanie wakes, she is in the trunk of a car in different clothes and missing the panic button she had hidden in her clothing. Scrog opens the trunk and lets her out. They are on a deserted dirt road in front of a small travel trailer. Stephanie notes that the camper is not one that was on Morelli's list of stolen campers. Inside, Scrog takes Stephanie into the small bedroom where Julie is. Julie is okay, in fact she appears to be completely untouched. Scrog shackles Stephanie to the bed and when she tries to kick him, he stuns her again.

Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Stephanie and Morelli have dinner at Stephanie's parents where a comedy show breaks out when Grandma Mazur rehearses with Lula's band. The author presents this as a sort of comedy relief before the tension of the novel resumes in the following chapter. In this chapter, Stephanie is given instructions on how to meet up with Scrog without Ranger and his men following her. Stephanie meets up with Scrog and is stunned again. When Stephanie wakes, she is without all the safety measures Ranger gave her, including the panic button she had hidden in her clothing. This situation leaves Stephanie completely on her own and Ranger without any way of finding her.

Stephanie is taken to a travel trailer, not one of the stolen trailers Ranger and Morelli are aware of, lessening the chances they will find her. The only good news in this situation is that Julie is alive and well, apparently unharmed. Stephanie takes in all of this in a

few moments and knows she needs to incapacitate Scrog. However, when Stephanie tries, Scrog stun guns her again. Now Stephanie is unconscious and chained to a bed. The situation builds tension for the reader, leaving them anxious to read the next chapter in which this situation begins to be resolved.



Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary

When Stephanie wakes, she talks to Julie and learns that Scrog's plan is to kill Ranger to more effectively take over his life. The next morning Scrog brings the girls some food he stole from a convenience store. Julie tells Stephanie that Scrog always steals their food and Scrog says it is because he has no money. Scrog tells Stephanie that he needs to score a large amount of money so they can go to California then fly to Australia to start a bail bonds business. Stephanie first suggests that they go to Mexico instead since Ranger's people and the FBI will be after them until Julie is found and then she suggests they go after Lonnie Johnson since his capture would mean at least five thousand dollars. Scrog agrees, but he makes Stephanie put back on her bounty hunter clothes and strap a bomb to her stomach. The bomb is just in case Stephanie tries to escape.

When Scrog and Stephanie go to get into the car, Scrog tries to make Stephanie get into the trunk again but she throws a fit. After a short time, Scrog agrees to let Stephanie ride in the passenger seat as long as she closes her eyes. Stephanie does as she is told, but still manages to see enough of the road to have a good idea where the trailer is. Scrog and Stephanie get to the building where Lonnie is reported to live and begin searching for his apartment. When they find the right apartment, they find it empty. Scrog and Stephanie go back out onto the street and find Lonnie approaching on foot. Stephanie calls out to Johnson and Scrog attempts to persuade Johnson into the building, but Johnson recognizes Scrog from the press coverage on Julie's kidnapping. Before either Scrog or Johnson can do anything, Joyce runs up. Joyce is angry because Johnson is her skip and she thinks Stephanie is trying to steal the credit and reward. Joyce begins to argue with Scrog, distracting him enough that Stephanie is able to pull the bomb off. At the same time, Johnson tries to leave in his SUV. However, Johnson runs over the bomb Stephanie has just thrown in the street.

Scrog turns on Stephanie and they begin to fight. Stephanie has the better of Scrog until he pulls his stun gun and shoots her once again. When Stephanie wakes, Morelli is with her. They quickly rush to where Scrog was holding Julie, but they are too late. It appears that Scrog had a car hidden in the woods and made his escape seconds before the police arrived. The feds are there investigating and Stephanie is surprised to see Meri among them, but Morelli is not. Everyone assumes Scrog is on his way out of the country, so Stephanie decides to go to her parents' house for some well deserved sleep.

Chapters 21-22 Analysis

Julie is okay, but she has news that Stephanie is unhappy to hear. Scrog intends to kill Ranger in order to more fully take over his identity. This is hardly a surprise to the reader since Scrog has been slowly taking over small parts of Ranger's life all



throughout the novel, illustrating the theme of identity theft. Not only this, but it also gives the plot a possible direction over the next couple of chapters. Stephanie acts cool despite the fact that this news is disturbing to her, making Scrog believe she accepts being with him. This act makes it possible for Stephanie to manipulate Scrog to a small degree, enough to allow her to sit in the front seat of the car and see where the trailer is located.

Stephanie convinces Scrog to take her on a skip with the promise that the apprehension of the skip will result in at least five thousand dollars, money Scrog needs in order to pursue his plan of leaving the country and starting a bonds business of his own. However, Scrog does not know Joyce is already on the case Stephanie suggests, Lonnie Johnson. Stephanie knows this, so she does not seem surprised when Joyce shows up and begins to argue with Scrog. This argument provides Stephanie the distraction she needs to get the bomb off her chest and try to escape, or perhaps disable Scrog in order to take him in. The plan seems to work until Scrog uses his stun gun on Stephanie a third time.

Stephanie wakes with Morelli over her. Stephanie tells him all she knows and they rush to rescue Julie, but they are too late. Scrog has already taken off and is presumed to be on his way out of the country. Stephanie is exhausted and decides to go to her parents' house for some rest, but not before learning that Meri, the bounty hunter from her office, is really a federal agent and Morelli knew it. This explains Meri's unnatural interest in Ranger and everyone's feeling that there was something not right about Meri.



Chapters 23-24

Chapters 23-24 Summary

Stephanie goes to her parents' house, has a bite to eat, and then takes a long nap. Later, one of Ranger's men brings Stephanie her car and her cell phone which was left in the parking lot Scrog instructed her to drive to. Stephanie then calls Morelli and then Ranger, telling them both everything that happened the night before, about Scrog's plan to go to Mexico, and his need to kill Ranger. Then Stephanie tells both to move out of her apartment so she can go back to life as normal. Stephanie returns to her apartment and is stunned upon walking in. Scrog has come to her apartment in hopes of using her as bait to get Ranger there.

Stephanie wakes tied to a chair. Julie is there too, sleeping off the effects of a drug Scrog gave her. Stephanie tries to tell Scrog that Ranger most likely will not be coming to her apartment that night, but he is so angry with her he does not care. Not only this, but he threatens to kill her when Ranger arrives. Soon, they hear the door open. Scrog tells Stephanie if she cries out, he will shoot Julie. Stephanie keeps quiet, scared for whoever is walking through her door. Stephanie does not know if it is Ranger or Morelli, but she is scared for both. Ranger appears around the corner. Scrog opens fire. Julie, who has been awake and faking the drug's effect, rushes Scrog, knocking the gun from his hand. Julie grabs the gun and shoots Scrog. Moments later the room is flooded with police.

Ranger has on a bullet proof vest, but one of the bullets penetrates it. Stephanie is hysterical in her fear for him. Morelli takes her to the hospital. On the way, Stephanie tells him she thought it might be him who had come to the apartment and her fears for him made her realize she loved him. However, Stephanie does not tell him that she realized she was in love with Ranger as well. Morelli tells her that Tank discovered Scrog's car a few blocks from Stephanie's apartment and Ranger had gone in aware that he would be shot. Everything turns out alright, however. Julie is reunited with her parents and Ranger recovers from his wounds. Stephanie, however, remains in love with two men and unsure of what to do about it.

Chapters 23-24 Analysis

Stephanie is looking forward to going back to a normal life even though she is still sure Scrog intends to go after Ranger. However, Ranger is no longer wanted by the police so she sees no reason for him or Morelli to live with her any longer. Stephanie returns home, intent on putting her apartment back to rights and throwing both men out. When Stephanie arrives, she finds Scrog and Julie already there. Scrog has come to her apartment with the hopes of killing Ranger and finishing his task of taking over Ranger's life, completing the theme of identity theft. Stephanie tries to talk him out of it, but after

she nearly got the better of him outside Lonnie Johnson's apartment building, Scrog is not in the mood to listen to Stephanie.



Characters

Stephanie Plum

Stephanie Plum is a bounty hunter who is not very good at her job. Stephanie spends her days trying to find the easiest way to take in a skip without getting herself or her partner hurt. Stephanie lives alone, but she has a boyfriend who owns a house and would be more than happy to have Stephanie move in. Stephanie loves her boyfriend, but she is also in love with a fellow bounty hunter, Ranger. Stephanie's problem is that one man wants to marry her but the other does not. Stephanie cannot decide which man she wants to be with.

Stephanie learns a woman is looking for her at her job and her parent's house. Stephanie confronts this woman and learns she is the wife of Ranger. Stephanie cannot believe Ranger could have a wife because he is such a commitment-phobe and because he would have told her. Stephanie questions this woman, only causing the woman to become angry and take shots at her. A few days later, the woman turns up dead. At the same time, Stephanie learns Ranger has been accused of kidnapping his daughter. Stephanie begins to think someone else is doing these things in Ranger's name.

Ranger turns up at Stephanie's apartment and confirms what she has already figured out. Together they begin to track this Ranger-want-to-be. However, the close quarters cause Stephanie to begin to rethink her commitment to Morelli, her boyfriend. When they stumble on the identity of the fake Ranger and allow him to kidnap Stephanie, she finds herself in a position where she might have to witness the murder of one of the men she loves. Stephanie realizes she loves them both and cannot make a clear choice between them.

Joe Morelli

Morelli is a homicide cop. Morelli used to be a wild man, living his life on the edge and with no thought of settling down. However, now Morelli owns a house, a toaster, and a dog. Morelli wants to settle down and he wants Stephanie to be a part of his life. Stephanie loves Morelli, but she cannot commit to him because she is also in love with Ranger. Morelli knows about Stephanie's feelings for Ranger and, although he does not like Ranger, he is patient. Morelli has confidence Stephanie will eventually chose him.

Morelli is assigned the Carmen Manoso murder, so he is also a part of the investigation into the kidnapping of Ranger's daughter. Although Morelli does not believe Ranger took his daughter, he is sworn to uphold the law, so Stephanie is forced to lie to him about Ranger staying in her apartment. However, Morelli is smart and he figures out what is going on. Morelli decides to move into Stephanie's apartment so she and Ranger are



not there alone. This causes Stephanie to move out of her own home. Later, when Stephanie is kidnapped, Morelli and Ranger are forced to work together to find her.

Carlos 'Ranger' Manoso

Ranger is a bounty hunter and a security expert. Ranger has worked with Stephanie on many fugitive recoveries and they are good friends. Ranger is also attracted to Stephanie and loves her in his own way. Ranger would like to have a relationship with her, but Stephanie wants a commitment and Ranger cannot offer that. Ranger continues to try to pursue her anyway.

Ranger's identity is stolen by a man named Edward Scrog. Ranger finds out about it and travels to Miami to find this man, but Scrog kidnaps his daughter before he can find him. Ranger returns to Jersey and goes to Stephanie for help. Ranger is wanted by the FBI since they believe he is the one who kidnapped the girl. Ranger uses Stephanie to do the foot work he cannot do and he also stays close to her so he can protect her. Ranger believes Scrog will want to approach Stephanie as well since she is an important part of Ranger's life. Scrog does approach Stephanie and Ranger tries to protect her, but Scrog is one step ahead and manages to ruin Ranger's plans. However, when Ranger is given the opportunity, he uses himself as a target in order to save Stephanie.

Lula

Lula is an ex-prostitute who works with Stephanie in the bonds office. Lula is a unique woman who enjoys her sexuality. Lula has joined a band and comes to the office every day with a new costume to show the girls, each one more sexually explicit than the one before. Lula is also Stephanie's partner when she attempts to apprehend skips. Lula helps Stephanie and occasionally gets her into trouble. At one point the ladies go to an adult toy shop to apprehend the clerk and Lula manages to talk Stephanie into buying some products that only cause her embarrassment.

Lula talks Grandma Mazur into joining her band. Grandma wears one of Lula's outfits and dances to the music, nearly throwing out her back. The episode causes Grandma to decide she is not into that type of music but that she might be good as a lounge singer. Lula also manages to involve herself with Tank, one of Ranger's men. Tank is a silent man who refuses to be polite to anyone, often intimidating even the people who know him. However, Lula manages to break through his defenses in one date.

Julie Martini

Julie Martini is Ranger's daughter. Julie is the product of a short-lived marriage between Ranger and her mother. Soon after divorcing Ranger, Julie's mother remarried and her husband adopts Julie, giving her his last name. Ranger provides financial support to his daughter, but has little else to do with her. However, Julie is a great deal like Ranger.



When Stephanie is kidnapped and taken to where Julie is, she finds a precocious child who is still full of fight even after being held captive for more than a week.

When Scrog takes Julie to Stephanie's apartment and holds them both hostage in order to lure Ranger out into the open, Julie is drugged. However, the drug begins to wear off and Julie hides this from her captor in order to get the upper hand on him. When Ranger walks in and Scrog begins to shoot him at close range, Julie knocks him over, steals his gun, and shoots him. Later, Julie refuses to leave Ranger's side until she is sure he will be okay. Julie is a strong child, every bit like her father despite his disinterest in her life.

Carmen Manoso

Carmen Manoso is a woman who claims to be Ranger's wife. Carmen claims she and Ranger had a business in Virginia and that he stole all their money and ran off. Carmen thinks Ranger and Stephanie are lovers, so she has come to Jersey in order to find him. Carmen stalks Stephanie, following her around in a black SUV in the hopes that Ranger will show his face. Carmen follows Stephanie to work and home for twenty-four hours. When Carmen suddenly becomes silent even after being parked outside the bonds office for several days, Stephanie goes over to investigate. Stephanie does not see Carmen, but she sees blood. Stephanie calls Morelli who discovers that Carmen has been shot and her body hidden under a tarp in the back of the SUV. Later, when Stephanie finds out that Carmen's body has been taken to a funeral home in the Burg, she arranges a viewing to lure the fake Ranger out into the open. It works, but he manages to get away.

Edward Scrog

Edward Scrog is a record store clerk who wants to be a cop. When Scrog sees Ranger make an arrest in his store, he changes his mind and decides he wants to be Ranger. Scrog begins to stalk Ranger, studying his life, his mannerisms, and his clothing. Soon Scrog begins to think he should be Ranger and takes on his persona. Scrog marries Carmen using Ranger's name, only to leave her when he decides it is time to really become Ranger. Scrog kidnaps Ranger's daughter, Julie, and then goes to Jersey to get Stephanie. Scrog believes he and Stephanie will open their own bonds business and raise Julie together. However, Stephanie is not quite the woman he believes her to be.

Scrog needs money. Stephanie talks him into taking down a skip with a high bond. However, things backfire when another bounty hunter confronts them. Stephanie gets the better of Scrog and nearly stops him, but Scrog stuns her. Scrog gets away and takes Julie again. They go to Stephanie's apartment where Scrog uses Stephanie as bait to get Ranger. When Ranger comes into the apartment, Scrog shoots him. However, Julie gets the better of Scrog and shoots him, effectively ending the whole ordeal.



Grandma Mazur and Mom and Dad Plum

Grandma Mazur lives with Stephanie's parents. Grandma is a little on the crazy side, often acting like a child who needs to have her own way, like being allowed to open the casket at a viewing. Stephanie indulges this behavior because she finds it amusing. However, Mom does not find it amusing and often encourages Stephanie to take more responsibility for Grandma. Stephanie's father dislikes Grandma and spends a great deal of his time trying to avoid her. This creates a humorous family dynamic, and adds some lightness to the tension of the plot.

Melvin Pickle

Melvin Pickle is a skip who Stephanie attempts to bring back in. When she approaches Melvin, he runs off and ends up attempting to kill himself by jumping off a six story balcony. Stephanie has to talk him down, but her heart is really not in it. Stephanie cares very little what happens to Melvin, at least that is what she makes him think. However, Stephanie ends up offering Melvin a job at the bond office if he will come in quietly. Melvin proves to be a good employee and he makes a real difference at the bond office, organizing files that have not been organized for a long time. When it comes time to go to court, Stephanie goes with Melvin and is overjoyed when all he gets is some community service.

Joyce Barnhardt

Joyce Barnhardt is another bounty hunter. Stephanie has known Joyce since she was a little girl and she does not like her. They are mortal enemies and their relationship is clearly a strain. They get into a fight during the novel that ends with Joyce pouring spaghetti over Stephanie's head and Lula stun gunning Joyce. In order to get Joyce off their backs, Connie gives her some difficult cases to work on. One of these is Lonnie Johnson. Connie finds him and is staking him out when Stephanie shows up with Scrog. Connie attacks Scrog to keep him from getting her collar, giving Stephanie the distraction she needs to get the bomb off her belly. Stephanie then attacks Scrog, but does not get away because he stun guns her. However, Scrog has had his fill of Stephanie and leaves her lying unconscious on the ground.



Objects/Places

Bond Office

Stephanie is a bounty hunter who works for her cousin. One of Ranger's men gets shot outside the bond office when he responds to a report of a break-in.

Stephanie's Apartment

Stephanie has a small one bedroom apartment. Ranger moves in with Stephanie while he is on the run from the police and looking for his daughter.

Morelli's House

Morelli owns a house similar to the house where Stephanie grew up. Morelli is ready to settle down and marry Stephanie but she is struggling with feelings for Ranger.

Black SUV

Carmen stakes out the bond office in her black SUV. After Stephanie fails to see her for a few days she checks the SUV and finds blood.

RangeMan

RangeMan is the name of Ranger's security and bounty hunting company.

Black Clothing

Ranger is known for wearing all black. Edward Scrog imitates Ranger by wearing all black and when he kidnaps Stephanie he insists she wears the same.

Bullet Proof Vest

Ranger's men wear bullet proof vests while working and this habit saves one of Ranger's men when he is shot by Scrog. A vest also saves Ranger's life when Scrog shoots him at point blank range in Stephanie's apartment.



Stun Gun

Scrog carries a stun gun and he shoots Stephanie with it a number of times in order to keep her under control.

Pepper Spray

Part of Stephanie's equipment as a bounty hunter is pepper spray.

The Burg

The Burg is a working-class neighborhood just outside Trenton. Stephanie's parents live in the Burg and she and Morelli grew up there.

Funeral Home

There are two funeral homes in the Burg and one of them has recently gotten new owners. When Carmen's body is taken there, Stephanie has Ranger arrange a viewing in order to lure Scrog out into the open.

Mini Cooper

Stephanie drives a Mini Cooper despite the fact that it is too small to transport fugitives. Carmen puts a ding in the bumper when she shoots at Stephanie.

Pleasure Treasures

Pleasure Treasures is a business where one of the fugitives works. Pleasure Treasures sells a selection of adult toys and videos. Lula talks Stephanie into purchasing a few toys while they are there.



Themes

Identity Theft

Identity theft is the taking of someone else's identity and making it your own. Edward Scrog wants to be a cop until he sees Ranger make an arrest in the record store Scrog works. Scrog becomes obsessed with Ranger, following him around and imitating his mode of dressing. Scrog even takes on Ranger's name, marrying Carmen and convincing her that he is Ranger. This marriage is how Stephanie learns that Scrog exists. Carmen finds out Ranger and Stephanie have a romantic relationship and comes to Jersey to confront Stephanie. Stephanie knows Ranger well enough to know he would not get married, so she begins to think something is wrong with this situation. Her hunch proves to be true.

Edward Scrog follows Ranger to Miami and learns he has a daughter, something most people in Ranger's life do not know. Scrog decides he wants to take the girl and Stephanie and make a family, Ranger's family. Then they will go to Australia and begin their own bounty hunter business. However, Scrog does not count on Stephanie being such a nuisance or the fact that he really is not attracted to her the way Ranger is. When Stephanie gets away, Scrog decides he does not need her except to lure Ranger to him. Scrog wants to kill Ranger so that he can more fully take over his life.

Ranger is aware of Scrog before he arrives in Miami. Ranger does not realize how good Scrog is, however, and is unable to apprehend him before he steals Julie. Ranger returns to Jersey when Stephanie lets him know that Scrog has killed Carmen. Ranger moves in with Stephanie so that the two of them can find Julie together and so Ranger can keep an eye on Stephanie should Scrog come after her. When Scrog does make an attempt to grab Stephanie, Ranger sends her to him with a tracking device on her person and his men following her. However, Scrog plans for this and manages to steal Stephanie from under their noses. To save her, Ranger makes himself a target and is shot multiple times. Ranger survives, thanks to the quick thinking of his daughter.

Love Versus Infatuation

Stephanie is in love with two men. Joe Morelli has been a fixture in Stephanie's life since they were children. They both grew up in the same neighborhood and dated off and on since high school. Now Morelli is a cop. Morelli has a house and a dog and he is ready to settle down to a committed relationship. Stephanie knows this and she is happy when she is with Morelli. Stephanie even invites him home to dinner so often that she feels as though they are already married. However, there is another man in Stephanie's life and she cannot decide which man she wants to be with.

Ranger is a man of mystery. Ranger is a bounty hunter and owns his own security firm. Ranger is also a man who shares very little about himself even with those closest to



him. Ranger and Stephanie have worked together for several years and at one time they were intimate. However, Ranger is not the kind of man to buy a house, own a dog, or make a commitment to a woman. In fact, Ranger was married once and produced a child, but it was a marriage of responsibility and a fact Ranger shares with few people.

While Edward Scrog is on the loose and the police think Ranger has kidnapped his own daughter, he has to hide out and Stephanie's is the safest place he can think of. However, Ranger does not like sleeping on the couch or the floor, so he insists on sharing Stephanie's bed with her. Ranger makes no attempt to hide the fact that he is attracted to Stephanie, cares about her, and wants to be intimate with her. However, Stephanie wants to be faithful to Morelli. It is a situation Stephanie finds difficult to deal with. When Scrog holds a gun to Julie's head and waits for the man in Stephanie's life to walk into the apartment, Stephanie is tense because she does not know if it will be Morelli or Ranger who will walk in and most likely be shot at close range. As she waits to see who it is, Stephanie realizes she is in love with both men, making her choice even harder. However, in the end she remains with Morelli because he is the one who is offering a commitment.

Second Chances

Stephanie's work is all about bringing criminals to justice. Usually this means court appearances and jail time. In this book, for a few of Stephanie's fugitives, it means a second chance. For the woman who stabbed her husband in the butt for saying she looked fat, this means not only facing the music, but learning how to better deal with her menopausal symptoms thanks to Stephanie's donut therapy. For the arsonist, it means learning not to trust pretty women. For Melvin Pickle, it means a job and a second chance.

Melvin Pickle is arrested for indecency and feels it is the culmination of his life as a loser. Melvin tries to kill himself when Stephanie comes to take him to jail because he is afraid that if he goes to court and is sentenced to a prison term he will be hurt by the other inmates. Stephanie promises him that her company will post bond for him again and that he can have a job working in the bond office. Melvin accepts this deal and arrives at work every day, proving to be a productive member of the office staff. However, his court day is coming closer and closer. Melvin is still worried. Stephanie goes to court with him and supports him in his appearance before the judge. Melvin is thrilled when he gets community service and is allowed to continue working at the bond office. Not only this, but Lula promises to help him find an apartment so he can move out of his mother's house. This is an important step toward ending his loser persona and Melvin could not be happier with his second chance.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. Stephanie Plum, the heroine, is the narrator and the entire novel is seen through her eyes. Stephanie describes the actions around her with a touch of humor, giving everything that takes place a sense of levity. Even when something serious is taking place, such as her own kidnapping or being forced to tape a bomb to her belly, Stephanie describes it in such a way that the reader wants to laugh out loud while reading her descriptions. This makes the novel more humorous than dramatic and makes a dangerous world less intimidating for the reader.

This point of view works because it moves the reader inside Stephanie's head from the first sentence and makes a connection between reader and character. This enables the emotional bond a reader needs in order to care what happens to the main character. Stephanie also presents her story in such a way that the reader cannot help but see her dilemma and almost envy her troubles, without feeling too keenly the tension inherent in the story. It is a highly entertaining book showcasing Stephanie's almost comical life and her humorous look at herself and the people around her.

Setting

The novel is set in Trenton, New Jersey. This location gives the novel an eastern feel that makes the idea of a female bounty hunter a little easier to accept. If it were set in the south or the west, it might be more difficult for a reader to buy Stephanie's profession because people often think of women as frail and weak, where women from the east tend to have the reputation as being tougher, more able to take care of themselves. Within Trenton is the Burg, a working-class suburb where Stephanie grew up and where her parents continue to live. This area gives the book a slightly domestic feel, moving the story out of the hustle of city living and slowing things down a little. Here Stephanie takes Grandma Mazur to a viewing at the local funeral home, a night out which might seem unusual until the reader gets to know Grandma.

An important setting in the novel is Stephanie's apartment. Stephanie's apartment is a small, one bedroom apartment, barely big enough for one person. When Ranger moves in, Stephanie finds herself in tight quarters with a man she has been attracted to for a long time and would openly welcome into her bed if it were not for her boyfriend, Morelli. Ranger insists on sharing a bed with Stephanie and she cannot bring herself to throw him out or to move out herself and this causes a great deal of tension as well. The tension between these two characters is highly entertaining and important to the plot as it establishes the complicated relationship between them and Stephanie's struggle to choose between the two men in her life.



Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple English. Most of the dialogue and exposition is written simply, making the novel easy to read. There is little slang in the novel, though there are the occasional abbreviations used in the bounty hunting business that Stephanie drops into from time to time. There is a great deal of humor in the novel, filling the pages with tongue-in-cheek jokes and brutally honest observations. Stephanie rates herself as a bounty hunter, openly telling the reader she is not very good at what she does and further admitting that she does not really like what she does for a living. However, she feels it is a great deal easier that anything else she can think of to do for a living.

The language in this novel works because it makes it easy to read and it is highly entertaining for the reader. The humor is done in such a way that the reader often cannot tell if Stephanie is being serious or if she is trying to pull the wool over the reader's eyes. Stephanie's actions are also filled with humor and she does little to try to explain these actions. Stephanie takes a man to a funeral parlor to have his hair shaved and never once tries to tell the reader that it is a reasonable action because she clearly knows it is insane, but it works for her. This adds to the richness of the language because the author does not hide the character's silly or outlandish behavior behind fancy sentences or long explanations. The language of this novel only adds to the humor and intimacy established between reader and character and thus works well.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-four chapters. Each chapter is at least 10 to 15 pages long and covers many scenes or actions. Each switch in scenery or action is indicated by a paragraph break, making it easier for the reader to anticipate a change. The narration is consistent and stays with the main character, Stephanie Plum. The novel is told in a mixture of dialogue and exposition, with much of the exposition composed either of internal dialogue or action. The novel is well structured and easy to read.

The plot is divided into two main story lines. The first story line revolves around the kidnapping of Ranger's daughter, Julie. A man named Edward Scrog kidnaps Ranger's daughter in an attempt to take over Ranger's identity. Scrog is obsessed with Ranger and believes he is supposed to be Ranger. Scrog decides to take over Ranger's life by stealing his daughter, his girlfriend, and then his life. Stephanie spends a great deal of the novel attempting to find this man and help Ranger recover his daughter. The second plot is Stephanie's struggle to decide between the men in her life. Stephanie has a boyfriend, Morelli, whom she loves and who wants to marry her. However, Stephanie also has feelings for Ranger that are reciprocated but Ranger is not the kind of man to commit to a woman for the long haul. This second plot gets Stephanie in some interesting situations throughout the novel, but remains unresolved by the final pages.



Quotes

"My name is Stephanie Plum, and I work as a bond enforcement agent, also known as a bounty hunter, for my cousin Vinny. It's not a great job, but it has its moments, and if I mooch food off my parents the job almost pays enough to get me through the month. It would pay a lot more but the truth is, I'm not all that good at it." Chapter 1, p. 2.

"Sometimes I moonlight for a guy named Ranger who's extremely bad in an incredibly good way. He's a security expert, and a bounty hunter, and he moves like smoke. Ranger is milk chocolate on the outside...a delicious, tempting, forbidden pleasure. And no one knows what's on the inside. Ranger keeps his own counsel." Chapter 1, p. 2.

"Joyce was flesh-eating fungus. She'd been through more husbands than I could count, and each time she chewed them up and spit them out, she got richer. Three months of marriage to Joyce, and a man was willing to bankrupt himself to get free." Chapter 3, p. 50.

"Some communities have country clubs, some have senior centers, some have shopping malls and movie theaters. The Burg has two funeral parlors." Chapter 4, p. 55.

"If a man attended enough pot roast dinners in the presence of a single woman and her family, it was marriage in the eyes of the Burg, if not God. And Morelli was dangerously close to marriage by pot roast." Chapter 6, p. 80.

"I stretched and looked at Ranger. His hand was loose on the wheel. His breathing was even. At first glance, he seemed relaxed. If you looked more closely, the tension around his eyes and the corners of his mouth were visible. I wondered what was really inside him. And at what cost he kept it hidden." Chapter 9, pp. 130-131.

"It was morning. And I was in my own bed, feeling incredibly comfy. I looked down and realized there was a man's arm thrown across my chest, the hand lightly curled around my breast. Ranger." Chapter 10, p. 133.

"Ranger was brooding in the parking lot in front of my condo when I pulled in. He was in a RangeMan SUV, which meant it was new, it was immaculate, it had the big engine, it was black with black tinted windows, and it had the big-bucks chrome wheel covers." Chapter 15, p. 203.

"Even before I opened my eyes I knew what had happened. I felt the familiar tingle and then the feeling getting restored to my fingertips. The noise in my head went from a buzz to a hum and then disappeared, replaced by voices." Chapter 16, p. 215.



"Morelli and I walked Bob in the dark, down sidewalks I knew inch by inch from my childhood. I'd rollerskated on them, drawn chalk pictures on them, biked on them, walked to school on them, spied on boys and skinned my knees on these sidewalks. I knew the people who lived here. I knew their dogs, their secrets, their tragedies, failures, successes, and bedtimes."
Chapter 20, p. 253.

"I settled on a chunk of leftover lasagna. I took it to the table and forked into it cold. It seemed like a lot of effort to nuke it. I could see my mother trying hard not to interfere, but I knew she really wanted to heat the stupid lasagna. I dragged myself out of my chair and slid the lasagna into the microwave. My mother looked enormously relieved. Her daughter wasn't a total loser. She heated her lasagna like a civilized person."
Chapter 23, pp. 289-290.

"'Things are going to be pretty dull around here with only one Ranger,' I said. Ranger forked an icing rose off the cake and fed it to me. 'One Ranger is all you'll ever need.'"
Chapter 24, p. 310.

Topics for Discussion

Why does Stephanie offer Melvin Pickle a job at the bond office? How does she know Melvin will not do something inappropriate in the office? How does this help Melvin? How does it help the office?

Why does Stephanie feel caught between Ranger and Morelli? Why does Stephanie not tell Ranger that she does not want to be with him? Why does Stephanie not tell Morelli about her feelings for Ranger and end their relationship? Do you think Stephanie will ever make a decision between these two men? Who do you think she should end up with?

Who is Carmen? Why does she come after Stephanie? Why does Carmen think Stephanie and Ranger are lovers? Where did Carmen get this idea? Why will Carmen not speak civilly with Stephanie about the situation? Why does Carmen stalk Stephanie? Does her plan work?

Who is Edward Scrog? Why does he become obsessed with Ranger? Why does he kidnap Julie when Ranger himself has little contact with the girl? Why does Scrog go after Stephanie? What is Scrog's plan? How does Stephanie foil his plan? How does Scrog plan to take over Ranger's life?

Discuss Grandma Mazur. Who is she? Why is she a part of the novel? Why does she behave so bizarrely? Why does Grandma Mazur like to open the caskets at viewings? Why does Grandma agree to join Sally's band? Why is Stephanie not embarrassed by these behaviors?

Stephanie says she is not a good bounty hunter. Do you agree? How could she improve her skills? Why does she always try to help these people she arrests? Does this make her a bad bounty hunter? How could Stephanie be better at her job?

Discuss themes. How many themes can you name from this novel? Cite examples. How do the themes enrich the story? Do you think the author uses themes well? Name other literary tools the author has used to write her story. Cite examples.