

Two for the Dough Study Guide

Two for the Dough by Janet Evanovich

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Plot Summary

In the sequel to Evanovich's *One for the Money*, Stephanie Plum returns as an inexperienced bounty hunter. She has been assigned to track down Kenny Mancuso, wanted for shooting his friend, Moogey, in the knee. As a first time offender, Kenny is assumed an easy catch. It is soon clear, however, that this case will be anything but easy.

Caskets missing from Stiva's funeral home are connected with ammo that Kenny is suspected of stealing from the army. As Kenny gets more desperate to make his ammo deal, he begins taunting Spiro Stiva by cutting body parts off his corpses. Often, he leaves the body parts for Stephanie to find.

The plot escalates until Stephanie's Grandma Mazur is first stabbed, then kidnapped. In anger, Stephanie tracks down Kenny and Stiva, and a fight ensues. Grandma, shooting at Stiva, sets off a chain of explosions from the stolen ammo nearby. Cop and friend, Joe Morelli, helps Stephanie apprehend Kenny Mancuso, who is locked up for a long time.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In the sequel to Evanovich's *One for the Money*, Stephanie Plum returns as an inexperienced bounty hunter. She has been assigned to track down Kenny Mancuso, wanted for shooting his friend, Moogey, in the knee. As a first time offender, Kenny is assumed an easy catch. It is soon clear, however, that this case will be anything but easy

Two for the Dough opens with Stephanie Plum, the protagonist, and Ranger on a stake out for Kenny Mancuso. Stephanie and Ranger, as bond enforcement agents, wait for Kenny, who missed his court date, to appear at Julia Cenetta's house. Kenny faces charges for accidentally shooting his friend, Moogey Bues, in the knee. He was considered an easy catch, being a first offender. Easy catches are the only kind that Vincent Plum, Stephanie's cousin and employer, allows Stephanie to pursue. Stephanie lied to Julia about Kenny's faithfulness to gain the tip that he would show up tonight. Considering Kenny's character, however, Stephanie justifies the dishonesty.

A man enters Julia's house, and Ranger and Stephanie approach to investigate. Surprisingly, however, Joe Morelli, Trenton Police Officer opens the door. Ranger quickly leaves the scene, leaving Stephanie and Morelli to discuss the possibility of working together to apprehend Kenny. Stephanie alludes to a complicated past with Morelli, however, and she does not trust him to equally share information, partly because of their past, and partly because Kenny is Morelli's cousin.

With Morelli and Ranger gone, Stephanie stakes out Julia's house alone in her Jeep Wrangler. When Julia enters a car and drives away, Stephanie follows. The car parks in an empty lot and an intimate exchange follows. Morelli appears outside the Wrangler, surprising Stephanie. The smaller car quickly begins to leave, and Morelli instructs Stephanie to follow. Due to low visibility in the darkened parking lot, Stephanie hangs the Jeep on a curb, and the smaller car gets away. Stephanie blames Morelli.

After having one of Ranger's men fix her car, Stephanie makes her way home with a pint of ice cream. Upon entering her apartment, she greets her hamster, Rex and checks her messages, consisting of dinner invitations from her mother.

The next morning Stephanie rises at 7 am to a rainy day. She gets a tip from a friend in the police department, Eddie Gazarra. There has been a second shooting involving Kenny's victim, Moogey Bues. Stephanie quickly dresses and heads to the scene of the crime, grabbing doughnuts along the way. When she arrives at the gas station where Moogey worked as the attendant, she meets Morelli, who describes the crime to her. Moogey, fatally shot this time, is transported to the morgue. The car involved in the shooting belonged to Morelli's cousin, Leo. Stephanie and Morelli pay Leo and visit, learning that Leo loaned the car to Kenny.



In an attempt to gain more information about Kenny's whereabouts, they again visit Julia. After admitting that she met Kenny the previous night, Julia says that "people" are after him. She offers little useful information. Upon leaving, Stephanie and Morelli decide that Julia is not trustworthy. Morelli and Stephanie discuss their plan of action. Stephanie admits to possession of a list of Kenny's friends that she obtained from his address book in his apartment. Morelli also points out that she illegally carries firearms. Nothing more is said about these actions, however, and Morelli leaves.

Stephanie tracks down the people from Kenny's address book, but comes up with no new leads. She returns to his apartment, using the key she swiped on her last visit. Nothing new turns up in the apartment, but, after a long moral dilemma, she steals Kenny's mail. With the stolen mail in her purse, she quickly drives home.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 sets the tone for much of the novel. The reader is quickly exposed to the humorous and wry speech of the Stephanie Plum novels. The quick pace and vivid descriptions quickly pull the reader into the action. Fitting for a mystery novel, the action moves along quickly, chasing after bad guys, Stephanie, and crazy leads.

Stephanie speaks frankly about her sexual feelings toward Ranger and Morelli. Her life is complicated greatly by the attractive men by whom she is surrounded. Not only does more of her history with these men, particularly Morelli, come out as the novel progresses, but also the relationships between the characters change and develop.

The novel takes place in Trenton, New Jersey. Most of the action happens in a part of town Stephanie calls the 'Burg, where blue collar families, many of them Italian, know everyone's business and look out for one another. All of the characters, Stephanie included, simultaneously rely on the connections to their past and are burdened by them. Mrs. Plum does not think much of any Morelli man, which causes her automatically to look down on Joe Morelli when he visits. On the other hand, Stephanie uses high school friends and neighborhood acquaintances to gain access to many clues. Growing up in Trenton seems to be a blessing and a curse.

Interweaved into this close-knit community are many families. As already mentioned, they stick together. Even though he is a cop, Joe Morelli appears to be looking out for Kenny simply because they are related. Family is also important to Stephanie. She remains close to her family, both emotionally and geographically.

Lastly, one cannot read a single chapter without encountering the situational ethics that many of the characters, Stephanie included, operate by. In the opening scene, Stephanie justifies lying to Julia about her boyfriend because Kenny is a "scumbag." Later, she justifies stealing Kenny's mail in order to bring him to justice. Ranger knowingly lives outside the law, but Morelli never questions him, and, in fact, seeks his advice. Morelli also allows Stephanie to break the law by carrying a concealed handgun. Lastly, Morelli parks illegally when going to question Julia at work. The "good guy"

characters clearly operate under the assumption that the laws only exist to punish the "bad guys." Most of the time, this assumption works to their advantage.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

No time passes between the close of chapter 1 and the opening of chapter 2. Stephanie fights traffic on her way home from Kenny's apartment, with his mail in her purse. She makes her way to dinner at her parent's house, where her mom expresses worry over Stephanie's safety on the job. She suggests other, less dangerous means of employment.

Grandma Mazur appears for the first time as Stephanie's aged and slightly crazy grandmother. Grandma Mazur expresses impatience to leave for the funeral home, where she frequently attends viewings of the lately deceased of the 'burg. When Grandma offers to help Stephanie gain information about her latest case, Mrs. Plum badmouths the Morelli and Mancuso families, reminding Stephanie why she does not respect them. Grandma praises Stephanie's career and admits that she, too, carries a gun, much to everyone's dismay. It comes as a shock to the whole family when Mrs. Plum admits she would love to be a nurse. Grandma Mazur, of course, would choose to be a movie star.

Stephanie and Grandma Mazur attend the viewing of Danny Gunzer at Stiva's Funeral Home. Grandma confesses that she wishes to be laid out at Stiva's when her time comes. Stephanie and the elaborately dressed Grandma enter Stiva's to find a crowd of drunken K of C brethren. Upon entering, they first speak with Spiro, Stiva's stepson and understudy in the mortuary business.

At the funeral home, Grandma visits Danny in the hated green room while Stephanie works the crowd, hunting for gossip. While admiring Danny, Grandma trips and dumps an urn of flowers onto the corpse. She then insults Danny's widow, provoking Mrs. Gunzer to malign Stephanie's job. Spiro quickly steps in to break up the spectacle. As he leads Grandma Mazur and Stephanie away from the crowd, he makes Stephanie a proposition. Spiro offers a generous reward if Stephanie can recover 24 caskets that are missing.

At home, Morelli waits for Stephanie to return. They discuss the lack of progress on Kenny's case. After Stephanie shows Morelli the stolen mail, he instructs her in damaging the letter so they can read it and return it without suspicion, under the premise that it was damaged in the mail. They find a phone bill, showing calls to Mexico and Salvador. After some discussion, Morelli leaves, taking the phone bill without Stephanie's permission. After some indignation about the stolen bill, Stephanie thinks about the stolen caskets before heading to bed.

After a grudging, early morning run, Stephanie meets Ranger and Morelli for breakfast. They discuss the various leads in Kenny's case. After breakfast, Stephanie visits the scene of the second accident, the gas station. She interviews Cubby, Moogey's



coworker. After obtaining Moogey's address, she visits Moogey's apartment in a rundown section of Trenton. She learns little and answers a call from Connie at the bail bond office.

Connie gives Stephanie a heads up on an apparently easy FTA or Failure to Appear. Stephanie drives to the train station, where a bag lady who frequents a bench there failed to make a court appearance for petty theft. Eula, the bag lady, refuses to leave her belongings in the open to go with Stephanie. While Stephanie is stuffing them into lockers in the train station, however, Eula catches a cab and leaves alone. When Eula returns, Stephanie refuses to hand over the keys to the storage lockers unless Eula accompanies her downtown. Stephanie gets a body receipt for Eula and meets Morelli. After discussing the Kenny case, Stephanie suspects that Morelli is withholding information.

Chapter 2 Analysis

For the Plum family, insanity seems to be in the eye of the beholder. Though Grandma Mazur does many wacky things, the family sees her actions as a part of her personality. Though they indulge Grandma Mazur on many occasions, they also protect her from herself, many times with added supervision.

An interesting contrast lies between Grandma Mazur and Eula. Though they are of similar age and share many peccadilloes, Eula suffers from poverty and homelessness. In turn, she survives by stealing and running from the law. Grandma may be in a similar situation, but for the loving family that takes her in. Though both aged and quirky, neither woman can be seen as feeble or weak-minded. Both, after all, manage to outsmart the younger Stephanie.

The seedier part of town, as Stephanie explains, developed as trade on the nearby Delaware River dwindled, therefore hurting Trenton's economy. Stephanie shows no real fear upon entering the seedier part of town, but she does acknowledge the sad circumstances that produce such conditions.

As shown by Grandma Mazur, to the citizens of the 'burg, death has become entertainment. More than once, significant action takes place at a funeral home. The citizens carefully inspect the dead, and judge much of the deceased's life by their funeral arrangements. This society exposes what many people attempt to conceal, mainly the artificial nature of many and the prejudices that many carry. The gossip mill of the 'burg illustrates the petty side of many cultures.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Once again, in the opening of Chapter 3, Stephanie reveals details of her past with Morelli. She reviews all aspects of work, from Kenny to Spiro, but decides to take a break. As she enters her apartment, she finds a threatening letter slipped under the door. It is, of course, unsigned.

Stephanie receives a call from Grandma Mazur to attend Moogey's viewing, which Stephanie agrees to attend. She also receives a call from Ranger, who has learned nothing about Kenny. She next calls Eddie Gazarra at the police station to beg for information about Morelli's current case. Eddie knows nothing, but promise to listen to the gossip mills. After she picks up Grandma, the two women argue about the necessity of a closed casket funeral for Moogey, who was last shot in the head.

Immediately upon seeing the closed casket, Grandma wants to open it. Morelli and Ranger both attend the viewing as well. Stephanie makes Grandma promise to behave while she goes to talk to Ranger. Of course, Grandma Mazur goes directly to the casket and tries to open it. This causes quite a stir, but produces no results, as the casket is sealed. Grandma pleads her innocence, claiming she only tripped.

Stephanie meets with Spiro, attempting to gain more clues into the missing caskets. Spiro gives Stephanie a picture of cheap, surplus caskets and the key to a, now empty, storage locker.

While pondering the market for stolen caskets, Stephanie meets up with Morelli. He confesses that Leo's car has been recovered, abandoned in the mall parking lot, all doors locked save the driver's door. Stephanie argues that this signals foul play, as Kenny would have remembered to lock all the doors.

As Stephanie and Grandma Mazur move to return to Stephanie's parents, Grandma invites Morelli home for homemade chocolate pudding. Grandma admires Morelli, though Mrs. Plum thinks very poorly of him. Hospitality being what it is in the 'burg, however, Morelli is invited in. Mr. Plum, ignorant of Morelli's childhood attempts to look up Stephanie's skirt, ignores the whole exchange.

After pudding, Morelli and Stephanie leave together and talk business until Mrs. Plum yells out the door that they are not keeping up clean appearances for the neighbors.

Back at her apartment, Stephanie listens to a message from Eddie Gazarra, who has learned nothing about Morelli. Stephanie calls Morelli directly for the information about his current cases, but she gains nothing.



Chapter 3 Analysis

For all of the women in the novel, selective attention seems to be a way of coping with life. Grandma ignores much of what people tell her, choosing instead to do what she pleases. Such coping mechanisms commonly appear among people of Grandma Mazur's age bracket. Mrs. Plum, too, ignores conversations that may be unpleasant. She lives by a philosophy of things that are not acknowledged do not exist.

Along with this, however, Grandma Mazur acts out in a way that many people often think about. Though her actions seem outlandish, she lives the unrestrained life of someone not burdened by the views of society. Completely opposite of this is Mrs. Plum, who constantly worries about what the neighbors think of her bounty hunter daughter.

The societal order of the 'burg is revealed in the Plum household. Mrs. Plum runs the household very efficiently, with little or no involvement from her husband. In fact, Mr. Plum rarely voices an opinion or lodges a complaint, no matter how crazy the situation becomes in the household. However, Mrs. Plum seems genuinely amazed that she produced such a strong willed, independent daughter. It makes sense, though, that Stephanie is not much different from her domestic mother.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

After a rough night of sleep, Stephanie rises at 7 am. She looks over the information on the stolen caskets, but wonders why Spiro would buy such cheap models. Everyone in the neighborhood puts away thousands for a proper burial. Once she has fed Rex, she leaves for the storage locker.

Morelli follows Stephanie to the storage lockers, and Stephanie explains what she is looking for. Morelli suggests filing a police report and recognizes that the caskets are too cheap for any 'burg customers. The two investigators question Roberta, the co-owner and "R" in R & J Storage. Roberta leaves to check all the units.

Stephanie and Morelli leave, discussing the Sandman, who attended Moogey's viewing. Morelli suggests staying clear, but Stephanie decides to pay him a visit anyway.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Yet again, the reader gains insight into Stephanie's feelings toward Morelli. Though he shows questionable morals, both past and present, in Stephanie's opinion, she admires the life he made for himself. She sees him as a successful and talented cop, though she reminds herself to avoid emotional entanglements with Morelli.

Stephanie lists two important occurrences in the 'burg: marriage and death. Both involve the family ties that are so important to the residents of the 'burg. Both are also occasions for which everyone sets aside a great deal of money. Even the elderly woman next to the Plums, who saves money on everything else, sets aside a great sum for her final arrangements. There are a number of funeral homes in the 'burg, catering to the deceased and their large and extended families.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Stephanie confesses that she is suspicious of Sandeman, also known as the Sandman. After her own investigation, along with the info about him from Morelli and Ranger, Stephanie thinks he is involved and up to no good.

Stopping by the bond office, Stephanie finds a harried Connie, the office manager. Due to sexual harassment on Vinnie's part, the newest file clerk quit. Stephanie calls a friend at the DMV to obtain Sandeman's address and leaves to visit his apartment.

At Sandman's apartment, a neighbor mistakes her for a cop. To set him straight, she leaves her business card, ask for information on Sandman, but gains nothing. She peeps at the apartment from the fire escape, but learns little about Sandeman and nothing about his possible involvement in Kenny's case.

Back at home, Stephanie fixes herself up and takes a call from her mother, who invites her to dinner. After telling Rex about her decision, Stephanie heads to her parent's house for dinner. Once there, Grandma fills Stephanie in on the latest salon gossip, though nothing pertains to her current cases. It is also revealed that Grandma Mazur invited Spiro to dinner, as a matchmaking attempt for Stephanie.

After an uncomfortable dinner with Spiro, who confesses that he is looking for a wife, Stephanie reveals to Grandma Mazur that she plans to attend viewing at all the area funeral homes, though she does not let on that the purpose of the visits is to spot one of the missing caskets. Grandma jumps at the chance to tag along, and Stephanie helps Grandma into her voluptuous, blue overcoat.

At the first funeral home, Stephanie pretends to be pricing caskets for her aging Grandma. True to 'burg standards, the cheapest casket available does not come close to those lost by Spiro.

The last visit of the night is to the House of Eternal Slumber, outside of the 'burg, in a run down part of town. While they quickly peak inside, Stephanie's Jeep is stolen. She calls Morelli for assistance, and he comes to pick them up. After dropping Grandma at home, Morelli returns Stephanie to her apartment. They discuss Sandeman, who Morelli thinks is very dangerous.

Stephanie invites Morelli up for some cake, only to discover, as they arrive, that her apartment has been broken in to and vandalized. The neighbor's cat has even been trapped in Rex's cage. After some moments of sorrow and hysteria on Stephanie's part, the cat is released and Rex emerges from his soup can home. Morelli offers to spend the night, which Stephanie declines, thinking such a move to be dangerous and unwise to her personally. She rigs the door by propping glasses against the bottom to signal an entry during the night and goes to bed.



In the final section of chapter 5, Stephanie hears the crash of breaking glass from her front door.

Chapter 5 Analysis

One of the first things to appear in Chapter 5 is the sexual harassment of Vinnie Plum, Stephanie's boss and cousin. The women appear quite blasé about the occurrence, though, from the previous novel, the reader learns that this behavior is common with Vinnie. No charges are brought up; the woman offended simply quits her job. Connie does, however, offer to execute a punishment on Vinnie herself, though it is not clear whether this is due to the offense or leaving Connie shorthanded.

Throughout the series, Mrs. Plum frequently wishes Stephanie would marry. Now, even Grandma Mazur gets involved. Her attempts to match Stephanie up reveal the importance of marriage to the older generations. However, Stephanie fears losing her independence, as is evidenced by her caution regarding the opposite sex, but both Mrs. Plum and Grandma desire that she find someone with whom to grow old. Both women more closely know the fear of growing old alone.

Stephanie, though, sees plenty of time for marriage later. After a short and unsuccessful first marriage, she guards her heart very closely. When Morelli offers to spend the night, Stephanie clearly feels attracted to both the man and the idea. She resists, however, preserving her current lifestyle. She fears both the relationship and the heartbreak after. Many times, Stephanie exhibits the classic fear of commitment usually attributed to men.

Despite all this, or perhaps because of it, Stephanie does very well living alone. She spends the night in her recently vandalized apartment, with no lock on the door, even after receiving the threatening letter. Though she feels attracted to men, she does not require one for companionship. In fact, she seems, at times, closer to Rex the hamster than many of her friend and family. Rex represents a seemingly ideal mate, in that he listens and neither judges nor makes demands. However, he proves vulnerable and unable to protect both Stephanie and himself.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The crashing glass is thanks to Morelli entering Stephanie's apartment. Since she did not go to sleep until nearly dawn, Stephanie overslept so soundly that she did not hear him knock. She gets Morelli a broom and dustpan and changes out of her pajamas, calling her appearance "frightening."

Morelli takes the time to point out all the negative occurrences in Stephanie's life so far, including the apartment vandalizing and the car theft. He presents her with the auto theft report, which she signs, for which she thanks him for handling. She decides not to file a report on the apartment and calls the building superintendent for a new lock and fresh paint.

While they wait, Morelli brings up his top-secret case. After Stephanie swears she will not tell anyone, he details a shooting three months prior in Philadelphia. A police officer was killed with Kevlar piercing bullets, which are illegal on the street. More recently, a car in Newark was hit with a LAW or light anti-tank weapon. A trace of the weapons revealed mission munitions from Fort Braddock. All of the events occurred after Kenny Mancuso received his discharge from the military. His last point of duty was at Fort Braddock.

Stephanie quickly links the events Morelli describes with information she has. She points out the Kenny and Moogey seems to have significant liquid cash flow. Morelli confirms that Kenny had access to the missing weapons, though so did many others. Morelli suggests calling Ranger. Lunch plans for the three are made, and Morelli leaves.

The new lock and paint are quickly taken care of. A call to the auto insurance company reveals that they will wait 30 days before paying out on Stephanie's policy. As she ponders what to do, her mother calls. Mrs. Plum suggests that Stephanie use her late Uncle Sandor's Buick. Stephanie quickly recalls the ancient, behemoth of a car that sits in the Plum's garage. She tries to decline, but her mother admits that her dad is already on his way over with the loaner. Stephanie meets her father outside, still trying to avoid using the car. He will hear nothing of it, claiming she cannot do any damage to an American Classic such as this.

That afternoon, Stephanie, Morelli, and Ranger meet at Big Jim's for lunch. Stephanie parks a significant distance away to avoid being seen in the Buick. Morelli explains the situation again to Ranger, who promises to keep an ear out for information and leaves.

Roberta, from the storage locker facility, beeps Stephanie with a vague tip on a large truck making a pickup around the time the caskets were stolen. Stephanie decides, after lunch, it is time to visit Connie for an easy job.



Stephanie's latest FTA is Eugene, a spousal abuser married to a childhood acquaintance of Stephanie's. During the apprehension, Eugene moons Stephanie, and she decides to try out her stun gun on his bare backside. He quickly drops, and Stephanie enlists his wife's help to get him into her car. She drops Eugene at the police stations and decides to spy on Julia's house again while she eats supper.

Julia takes off with an unknown blond man, which Stephanie takes as a signal that she is no longer with Kenny. Stephanie rents "Ghostbusters" and heads for home, where she finds a message from Spiro seeking progress on the stolen caskets. A second message from Ranger simply asks her to call him back.

Ranger gives Stephanie a lead on a gun sale, where she drives the Buick to meet Ranger. The cops, however, have set up a sting of the sale and the salesman attempts to get away. Stephanie pursues, as does an unmarked police car. The Buick and the unmarked car collide; it turns out Morelli is the officer inside the unmarked car. Though there is no visible damage to the Buick, the bumper has been ripped from Morelli's car. Stephanie assumes the car will not be fixed, as the city is not in the habit of fixing cosmetic flaws on its vehicles. Morelli expresses anger and frustration over the accident, which allowed the perpetrator to get away. He promises, though, not to file a report.

The buyers are apprehended by the police and Stephanie waits outside the police station for hours, waiting for Morelli. When he sees her waiting, he is not pleased, but goes to her car to fill her in. The guns in the transaction are from Fort Braddock. Morelli attempts to trade more information for food. Stephanie offers the buttered popcorn that she purchased with her movie rental.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Stephanie frequently illustrates that it pays to know the right people, and chapter 6 is not different. She gains information from various childhood friends, Ranger, and, most of all, the police. Usually her informant is Morelli, though occasionally Eddie Gazarra gives her info. Because of the interconnected nature of the 'burg, Stephanie gains confidence from people that she has not even known until recently; she evidences this when she elicits help from Eugene's wife.

In finding the needed information, from her friends or anyone else, Stephanie relies on many lucky breaks. Many of the characters fall prey to fate, both for the good and the bad. The gun seller catches a lucky break when Stephanie collides with Morelli. Kenny may or may not be involved in the gun scheme, but he is suspected because he was stationed at Fort Braddock. Morelli frequently comments on Stephanie's good luck in making an apprehension, insinuating that she does not have the needed skill.

Due to the unlucky break of loosing her car, however, Stephanie relies on the Buick. She clearly feels conspicuous in the old car. Frequently, she tries to hide or deny that it is hers. However, it represents a faithful, old companion. It also shows the way in which



families care for one another in the 'burg. Moreover, Stephanie, always practical in the end, uses the Buick and does not slow in her investigation.

Chapter 6 ends with a great deal of sexual tension in the air. Earlier in the chapter, when Stephanie calls Ranger from her apartment, he asks if Morelli is present and if both of them are clothed. At the close of the chapter, Morelli takes Stephanie's plea for information as a double entendre. The chapter ends abruptly, without a clear indication of their plans for the evening.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Morelli follows Stephanie to her apartment. When her neighbor, Mickey, admires the monstrous Buick, Stephanie questions Morelli about the car's apparent appeal to men. He admits that the allure involves the car's size. During the conversation, they approach Stephanie's apartment, which makes her apprehensive. All appears in order, though, as they enter.

After calling Ghostbusters a sissy movie, Morelli divulges the depressing details of the bust. The meeting, he says, was set up by phone, and the van was stolen from the area, thus leaving no clues to follow. A connection between Kenny and the gun sale cannot be established. During the briefing, Stephanie puts out beer and popcorn. She implores Morelli for more cooperation, but remains doubtful that any will be forthcoming. She attempts to renege on the deal for popcorn and a movie. Morelli remains to watch Ghostbusters and Stephanie considers giving him a jolt with the stun gun.

The next morning, Stephanie awakes grumpily. She leaves a message for Eddie Gazarra at the police station. While she waits for him to return her call, she paints her toenails and makes marshmallow bars. When Eddie does call, she has to promise to baby-sit in exchange for information about the previous night's bust. Hanging up with Eddie, she returns her gun to the cookie jar and drives through the 'burg past all of Kenny's contacts, though she uncovers nothing.

Her last stop is the bond enforcement office, and she takes ten minutes to parallel park the Buick, which Connie mentions when she enters the front office. Lula, a former "ho" and contact of Stephanie's on the street, has been hired to file in the office. Stephanie describes Lula as a large, confident Black woman, which Connie points out is perfect to keep Vinnie in check. Lula, having already heard the gossip on the street, gives Stephanie the names of those involved in the bust. Checking her answering machine from the phone in the office, Stephanie gets the same list of names from Eddie, along with the references used by the seller.

By way of checking the references, Stephanie calls Ranger, who confirms that all of the names are bad news. He offers to talk to them for her. As Stephanie leaves the office, a man stops to admire the Buick. Ignoring him, Stephanie heads to Stiva's, wondering about the director, Constantine, in the hospital and off work for the first time in his life.

At Stiva's Stephanie is supposed to give Spiro the bad news, that she has no leads on his caskets and decline his dinner invitation. She wonders if Kenny's case and Spiro's missing caskets could be connected. After sitting across the street for some time, thinking about how creepy the mortuary is during the day, Stephanie chickens out and heads to her parents' house.



Later that night, Stephanie returns to the funeral home with Grandma Mazur for the afternoon viewings. Grandma admits that afternoon viewings do not normally spark her interest, but she will tag along for the sake of the bounty hunting. After trying to guess what Spiro has hired Stephanie to find, Grandma goes to the viewing room, and Stephanie tracks down Spiro give him an update. After finding Spiro in the office, talking to Constantine, Stephanie reflects on how creepy he is. She wishes he would make a move on her, so she would have an excuse to use the stun gun on him.

After Spiro hangs up, Stephanie asks if Constantine is aware of the missing caskets; Spiro, unsurprisingly, reveals that he is not. Spiro explains that he was simply a middleman for the caskets; they were to be sold to another undertaker in Philadelphia. Spiro expresses concern that Kenny is out to get him. He produces a threatening letter much like the one Stephanie received at her apartment.

Stephanie wraps up with Spiro and returns to find Grandma Mazur. While admiring the deceased's ring, Grandma accidentally removes the finger it is on. Spiro publicly claims it was an accident in the preparation, but privately to Stephanie says that Kenny snuck in and cut it off. After gaining information as to how Kenny gained access to the corpse, Stephanie and Grandma leave. In front of the funeral home, Louie Moon, Spiro's dimwitted assistant, watches the tire go flat on the Buick because of a puncture with a screwdriver. Louie claims not to have seen the culprit. Stephanie calls for roadside assistance.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Several times in this chapter, the issue of men and size comes up. The universal appeal of the car to all men, Louie to Morelli and others, fails to impress Stephanie. She continues to see the car as a burden and necessary evil. First, the Buick attracts men, as Morelli explains, because of its unusual size. The men seem to relate their manliness to the size of the car. Even confident, manly men such as Morelli admire the size of the car.

On the other hand, Spiro brings up size issues concerning Kenny, too. He claims a low self-image causes Kenny to behave the way he does. Each of these examples clearly shows the importance men place on their physical appearance, rather like women are known to do. The author uses a very tongue-in-check approach to point out the weaknesses in Kenny's male ego.

Two other stereotypical characters are Lula and Spiro himself. Lula exhibits all of the crass habits and crude language one would expect from a former prostitute. She does not seem ashamed of her past, however; in fact, her contacts from her previous profession are frequently useful to Stephanie. As is often the case in the 'burg, people accept Lula in spite of her previous lifestyle. In many ways, the characters achieve under the assumption that facts that are ignored cease to exist.



Spiro, Stephanie points out, appears to be a stereotypical mortician. His physical description fits that of someone surrounded by death. She observes that, sometimes, he seems to have physical and emotional connections to the corpses. Due to all of this, Stephanie always feels ill at ease around Spiro.

Conversely, Stephanie is not the stereotypical bounty hunter. Obviously, being female is one of the most obvious differences between her and Vinnie's other employees. In addition, she exhibits much discomfort with firearms. Ranger, for instance, wears several weapons with ease. Stephanie, though, only carries her gun when she feels it necessary. At all other times, it is hidden in the cookie jar in her apartment. Showing her growth in her new profession, though, she thinks of using the stun gun more often now that she has had some success with it on her last apprehension.

Chapter 7 shows a moment of foreshadowing as Stephanie wonders about connections between Kenny and Spiro. She mentally probes the thought, but nothing concrete forms. For the first time, also, Grandma Mazur helps Stephanie in the case. Grandma will continue to be an aide in finding Kenny, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

While waiting for her car tire to be fixed, Stephanie snoops around the funeral home. She surmises that it is a nice, quiet place for Kenny to hide. Spiro, though, suggests the Kenny is hiding out with family. Stephanie doubts this, though, and asks about Kenny's dating habits. Spiro claims there have been a number of women in Kenny's life, despite his abusive tendencies.

On the search for leads on Kenny's entrance into the funeral home, Stephanie drives over to Clara's Beauty Salon. She explains that old-fashioned glamour is the norm in the 'burg. Society there has never been men versus women, but the weak versus the strong. In the salon is Joyce Barnhardt, whom the reader learns is the woman that Stephanie's ex-husband cheated on her with. Joyce snidely asks Stephanie about her job and a fight quickly breaks out, stopped when Joyce reveals she carries a bigger gun than the one Stephanie owns and is afraid to carry. It turns out that all the women in the salon carry guns. Depressed by this fact, Stephanie decides on a manicure.

Clara, who does hair for Stiva's corpses, is shocked to hear that Kenny was in the funeral home that morning. She explains some of Kenny's unstable past, including the fact that he cut off his own finger as a child. Once home, a depressed Stephanie calls her best friend, Mary Lou. Sensing Stephanie's dark attitude, Mary Lou suggests shopping therapy. The two women arrange to meet at the mall.

As they try on shoes, Stephanie admits to running into Joyce. Mary Lou suggests that Stephanie either buy or steal the pair of shoes she tries on. As Stephanie argues about this and denies any major thefts in her past, she runs right into Kenny. He threatens her, and she attempts to pursue him, but cannot keep up in the heels. Instead, she collides with Joyce in the makeup department. Kenny escapes; Mary Lou kicks Joyce. A name-calling fight breaks out between Stephanie and Joyce.

Stephanie buys the purple heels and returns home. She receives a cryptic call from Kenny, claiming to have left her a message in her jacket pocket. Stephanie inspects her pocket and pulls out a dead person's finger. She immediately calls Morelli. Once he arrives, Stephanie must tell the whole story twice before he appears to believe it. He admires the shoes she purchased. Morelli returns the finger to Stephanie, as she suspects it belongs to Spiro's corpse and the loss is never reported to the police. Morelli places it in her freezer and leaves. The next morning he calls, waiting for her in the parking lot.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Beauty plays an important role for the female characters of the novel. Stephanie explains that beauty does not represent oppression for the women of the 'burg.



Stephanie gets a manicure as a type of therapy. The beauty salon also serves as a great place to gain information. The women gossip as they wait for their appointments. The exchange in Clara's Beauty Parlor demonstrates the strength of the 'burg women. All of them proudly display their firearms. They freely chat about the shady past of their neighbors. They are not intimidated easily.

Joyce Barnhardt appears for the first time in this novel in Chapter 8. Stephanie in no way hides her feelings about Joyce. She vividly describes the affair between Joyce and her ex-husband. It appears that Joyce possesses no redeeming qualities, according to Stephanie in her encounters with Joyce. Though she is not directly involved in the plot, she clearly holds the role of Stephanie's nemesis in life.

There is a slight peak in the rising action of the plot in chapter 8 when Stephanie discovers the finger. Until now, the chase for Kenny has been largely uneventful. However, the reader gains further insight into Kenny's character. The story takes a darker turn, as the body parts start appearing.

In time of crisis and uncertainty, Stephanie trusts in Morelli. Though she remains wary of him in her personal life, she instinctively reaches out to him for professional help. The line between their personal and professional relationships blurs as the case becomes more dangerous and more complicated. It appears that Morelli cares more for Stephanie as well; he worries about her safety and exhibits this by waiting for her outside her apartment the morning after her run-in with Kenny. When she does not appear early enough, he calls out of concern.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Morelli asks Stephanie to wait until he returns from meetings at the Police Department before she goes to see Spiro with the finger. Finally, at 9:30, Stephanie drives the finger to Stiva's, with Morelli behind her. She straps the pepper spray and stun gun to her belt, in case she runs into Kenny again. On the way to the funeral parlor, she passes the funeral of the corpse that is missing his finger. She follows the procession, as Morelli warns her not to make a scene.

At the graveside, Stephanie tells Spiro that she has the finger and insists that the finger be put in the coffin with the rest of the body. Spiro tries for a compromise, but Stephanie threatens to make a scene, and he relents. Stephanie describes the funeral as typical for the 'burg, continuing from the graveside to the grieving widow's house, where the widow will attempt to drown her sorrows before being left alone for the first time in her adult life.

Stephanie reflects, also, on Spiro's character. She compares him to Kenny, citing that they are both creepy. Spiro asks Stephanie for a date, which she adamantly refuses. After leaving the funeral, Morelli tells Stephanie of an abandoned building where a pile of what appears to be caskets was burned. Morelli is glad for Spiro's loss. At the scene of the fire, Stephanie takes a metal hinge from one of the caskets so that Spiro can identify it.

She then makes her way to her parents for lunch, but tries to refuse to let Morelli come along. She claims that will escalate their relationship in her mother's eyes, which Stephanie does not want. Morelli follows anyway, and Mrs. Plum invites him in for soup. Stephanie tries to compare the piece she found to the picture that Spiro had given her. Grandma Mazur catches a glimpse of the caskets and recognizes them as military surplus. Morelli and Stephanie immediately begin connecting clues; Morelli makes a phone call, claiming it is a dental emergency.

Morelli and Stephanie share the theory that the guns from Fort Braddock were smuggled out in the caskets. They finish lunch at the Plum residence with Stephanie wondering at Morelli's fit body despite his large appetite. Mrs. Plum invites Morelli to dinner the following night, showing her desperation to find Stephanie a husband.

Morelli receives a call back from the station, confirming that Spiro bought the caskets from Fort Braddock. They go to the funeral home to give Spiro the news about the burned caskets. In a panic, Spiro leaves Stephanie in charge of the afternoon viewings to see the remains of the caskets for himself. When someone complains of the heat in the viewing room, Stephanie seeks Louie Moon to fix the thermostat.



Spiro returns, and Morelli appears, under the guise of questioning Spiro about the caskets. Spiro claims he is interested in franchising the funeral home; the caskets were purchased for a different market. Louie appears and announces that another corpse has been disfigured: Looney's penis is missing. Apparently, it went missing while Louie was fixing the thermostat. Kenny calls, confirms the vandalism was his doing and threatens Spiro.

After leaving the funeral home, Stephanie and Morelli meet up at the gas station where Sandeman works. Morelli shares that another cop was killed with the missing ammo. He expresses great desire to track it down. After Morelli warns Stephanie, he decides to return to question Louie Moon. Stephanie claims to be going shopping, but heads to Vinnie's office to gain some information.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Though Stephanie, and many others in the 'burg, practice practical situational ethics, there are a few things Stephanie feels passionately about. She adamantly insists that George, the man missing the finger, be buried whole. Risking public humiliation, she threatens to make a scene until Spiro relents. The ideals that the residents of the 'burg hold sacred are clearly things they feel are worth fighting for.

Stephanie has now survived multiple close calls. In some ways, she seems very lucky. She has not been seriously hurt, only scared. On the other hand, she has missed Kenny multiple times, despite being in the same location that he is. Put together, this illustrates that much of Stephanie's professional success stems from luck. Morelli not only comments on this trend, but counts on it and begins following Stephanie in order to seize Kenny.

Once again, Grandma Mazur proves useful in chapter 9. Grandma often possesses knowledge that no one else does. Due to her avid television viewing, she recognizes the caskets from a new program. After this and other unexpected tips from Grandma Mazur, Stephanie begins to seek her aid on purpose.

As Stephanie mentioned in chapter 8, gender roles are clearly defined in the 'burg and not challenged. The women do not see themselves as weak, however. Still, some sexism does exist. When Kenny comments to Spiro about Stephanie's annoyances, Spiro blames her period. Less overtly, Morelli seems instinctively protect of Stephanie, not only because he is attracted to her, but also because she is a woman.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

When Stephanie enters the bond office, Lula and Connie are arguing about who has the best pizza in town. They seek Stephanie as a tiebreaker, but she disagrees with them both. Stephanie looks up Louie and Spiro's addresses. Lula offers to ride along as her assistant, and Stephanie accepts. Lula admires the Buick; she says it resembles that of a pimp she once knew.

The first stop is Louie Moon's house, which appears quiet and modest, with holiday decorations that are up all year. They move on to Spiro's apartment. The women cannot gain any information from peering in the windows. Despite admonishments from Stephanie, Lula breaks the window and climbs in. She reasons that once she is in, Stephanie might as well have a look around. The rationale works for Stephanie, and she begins snooping.

Leaving Lula as a lookout, Stephanie methodically searches the apartment, finding only a few handguns. She jots down the information on them. Looking through mountains of papers on the desk, she also jots down the numbers from Spiro's phone bill.

At home again, Stephanie calls the numbers from Spiro's apartment, looking for Kenny. One number belongs to a cheap motel, which prompts a drive. The night clerk identifies Kenny as the occupant of an efficiency room. In the comfort of the spacious Buick, Stephanie waits for Kenny. With no luck, she returns home for some sleep, only to drive back to the hotel early the next morning.

Morelli shows up at the motel after another officer tells him the Buick has been spotted there. After flashing his badge, he obtains a key to the room, and they snoop around. They find nothing. Stephanie realizes that Kenny must have spotted the Buick and avoided the room. She runs a few errands and returns home for more sleep.

Morelli arrives at her apartment that evening, ready for dinner at her parent's house. On the way out, she picks up a package from the building superintendent that came in the day's mail. Realizing they are running late, she insists Morelli hurry to her parent's house.

As they enter the house, Stephanie opens the package and out falls Loosey's penis. Mrs. Plum again voices her desire for Stephanie to have a different job. Grandma Mazur inspects the penis with interest. Stephanie and Morelli quickly leave to make a police statement.



Chapter 10 Analysis

Commonly, the other bounty hunters, such as Ranger, employ assistants. Stephanie, however, takes her help as it comes. She uses Grandma Mazur, Morelli, and now Lula. Though none of them seem to have apprehension agent qualifications, they all prove useful when the time comes. Lula has no qualms about living outside of the law, as was her habit in her prior career. Though she frequently goes her own way, she does so with the best of intentions, again exhibiting the situational ethics that run as a theme through the whole novel.

Stephanie reflects on the similarities of the women in her family. She sees them as small, defiant women. Traits from their ancestry play out in their stature and facial features. Stephanie admits that she shares a very defiant nature with them, but lacks the dainty frame.

As the action of the plot increases, the body parts that appear are larger and more grotesque. Whereas the finger disturbed Stephanie, the penis causes uproar. It shows that Kenny is hitting harder, being more invasive. It could symbolize many things, such as the castigating attitude that Kenny has about Spiro. The feeling between the two men is reciprocal.

One device that Evanovich frequently employs is humor. Kenny's attacks on the deceased, though very morbid, could be much darker. In using more absurd body parts, though, much comic relief is available. Certain characters frequently provide comic relief, such as Grandma Mazur. A great example of her comic relief is her reaction to the penis, which is purely curiosity.

Another literary device that appears more as the action escalates is foreshadowing. Stephanie's fear and paranoia about Kenny warns the reader of future events.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

As the two leave the Plum's house, Morelli expresses his anger towards Kenny. He instructs Stephanie to call Spiro. Stephanie shares the information she gained at Spiro's apartment, including the serial numbers from the guns. She hopes Spiro will assume that Kenny broke in.

At the police station, Morelli instructs Stephanie to wait in his truck while he files the report about the penis. Stephanie quickly tires of waiting and takes the truck to Stiva's, leaving Morelli a note in the parking lot.

Spiro does assume the break-in was by Kenny and tells Stephanie so. However, he does not want to involve the police. He hires Stephanie to be his bodyguard, claiming that a women guard is better for his image, as everyone will assume that they are dating. Stephanie accepts the job only as a way to get close to Kenny. Spiro's talk of his personal life and Kenny's past relationships disturbs her.

Morelli tracks Stephanie to the funeral home before her meeting with Spiro is over. As they return to Stephanie's house, she shares her new assignment of guarding Spiro. Morelli suspects Spiro's honesty and motives.

At home, Stephanie has messages from her mother, imploring her to seek a different job, and Vinnie, who wants a progress report on Kenny's case. Stephanie ignores both calls, and she and Morelli sit down to watch a hockey game. Kenny calls during the game to ask how she liked the package. He threatens Grandma Mazur, insinuating cruelty to the elderly from his past. After the call, Morelli observes that Kenny is getting more restless.

Shortly after Kenny's call, Louie Moon calls to say Spiro was attacked and is at the hospital. Stephanie and Morelli follow to the hospital. Stephanie, as a decoy to draw Kenny out, takes Spiro home. Morelli follows at a distance. The next morning, they repeat the process to return Spiro to work.

Later in the morning, Stephanie calls to check on Grandma Mazur, only to learn that she is out with a friend. During the call, Grandma returns with her hand bandaged. Kenny ambushed her on the sidewalk and stabbed her with an ice pick. The incident shakes up Stephanie and her mother. Stephanie calls Morelli. She wishes for a break in the case.

As she asks around at the funeral home, she meets a federal agent, Andy Roche, who has Spiro under surveillance. He hangs out at the funeral home under the guise of grieving for his brother. His work is connected with Morelli's case.



Chapter 11 Analysis

Continuing the theme of situational ethics, Stephanie sells out when she agrees to guard Spiro. Though she admits that it provides a chance to catch Kenny, she also points out that she could use the money it provides. Morelli continues the theme as well, looking away from Stephanie's illegal entrance into Spiro's apartment in order to gain information.

Chapter 11 brings the first mention of religion. When Kenny attacks Spiro, Stephanie crosses herself, not able to remember the last time she went to mass. Morelli gives her a quick hug, assuring her of God's love regardless.

Little about the appearance of the treasury agent's appearance is explained. Assumedly, he is investigating because the caskets came from a government agency. He exhibits many stereotypical federal agent qualities, such as a stoic nature. The qualities are so obvious that Stephanie guesses quickly who has stationed him in the funeral home.

Stephanie feels pain for the danger of her family. She assumes responsibility for Grandma Mazur's safety. Though she ignores the pleas, she feels sad and frustrated by her mother's disappointment in her career choice. In Chapter 11, the quest to find Kenny becomes personal, after he attacks Grandma. Stephanie seeks Morelli's help, not to gain her fee, but to exact revenge.

The emotional connection between Stephanie and Morelli grows evermore as the plot thickens. Stephanie claims that the increase of meals together at her parent's raises untrue assumptions about their relationship. However, the relationship deepens either in spite of or because of these and other encounters.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Stephanie voices her strong desire for revenge in the opening of chapter 12 by quickly forgiving Morelli for keeping the truth about Andy Roche from her. The way to justice no longer matters to her, as long as Kenny is stopped.

Stephanie gathers up clothes and Rex and moves in with her parents. At first, Mrs. Plum assumes this means Stephanie has quit her job and hopes for a long stay. Stephanie sets the record straight as she settles into her old room. She is around only to keep an eye on Grandma.

After this conversation, Grandma Mazur enters after a nap, looking unusually ruffled. She complains of a throbbing hand and takes more, strong pain pills. Stephanie reflects that her room has remained unchanged since high school. Though her mom likes the new arrangement, Stephanie quickly goes a little crazy, exhibited by an eye twitch.

That evening, as Stephanie goes to accompany Spiro home, she lies to her mother by telling her that she has a part time job cleaning up at the funeral home. Her mother appears pleased by this. At the funeral home, Roche is still present. She insists that Spiro take her to check the basement, which, though creepy, is clear.

Spiro insists that Stephanie drive him home, and, on the way, Stephanie spots a van matching the description of the one the owner of the storage locker spotted there. Stephanie, hoping to bait Spiro, points it out to him, voicing some of her theory about its part in stealing the caskets. Spiro claims that Moogey was involved in moving the caskets, but too dumb to pull off a double cross.

Stephanie returns to her parents after seeing Spiro home, and Morelli follows. Stephanie fills him in on the conversation concerning the van. When Mrs. Plum spots Stephanie with Morelli, she expresses her approval, which surprises Stephanie, considering her past with Morelli.

The first morning under her parent's roof, Stephanie wakes up late, and a line has already formed for the bathroom. Her mom criticizes her Doc Marten shoes, questioning Stephanie's sexual orientation. The eye twitch returns. Grandma is anxious to be seen in public with her bandage and tags along with Stephanie.

At the funeral home, Spiro also criticizes Stephanie's boots. He has become suspicious of the van, as Stephanie hoped. She and Morelli visit Cubby, the owner of the gas station where they spotted it. After discussing the matter of the van with Morelli, they both come to suspect Sandeman, an employee of the gas station.



Chapter 12 Analysis

The old-fashioned ways of the 'burg, as previously mentioned concerning fashion and gender roles, also apply to Stephanie's bedroom at her parent's house. The room symbolizes the way her mother treats her, as an irresponsible child. Such behavior quickly grates on Stephanie's nerves. She stays, however, out of duty to her family, especially Grandma.

Stephanie has, on numerous occasions, alluded to her past with Morelli. One instance includes him playing choo choo and sneaking peeks up her skirt. Her mother is aware of this incident, though not her father. Her mother's recent approval of Morelli, despite this knowledge, is evidence of her mom's desperation for Stephanie to marry. Stephanie tries to hang onto her doubts about Morelli, but she is starting to show feelings for him. She expects him to protect her and help in protecting Grandma Mazur.

The jobs that Stephanie takes on in this novel are vast and varied. First, she is an unexpected bounty hunter. She also becomes a detective and bodyguard. She briefly watches the funeral home for Morelli. She seems to be willing to do any work in order to make ends meet in her lifestyle.

In only a passing comment, sexual orientation comes up in this chapter. Mrs. Plum clearly disapproves of the idea of her daughter being a lesbian. Stephanie's mom relies on stereotypes to prove her orientation. Stephanie, though, does not agree with the assumptions. She seems to be more modern in her thinking on this subject.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Grandma, in an effort to show off her wound, goes to Clara's to get her hair dyed and set. She enters with grey hair and emerges with a red coif. Stephanie then goes to the bond office, hoping Grandma's presence will be a help, since she has no good news for Vinnie. In fact, after Vinnie threatens to remove her from the case, Grandma argues and threatens to tell Vinnie's Grandma Bela. Appropriately frightened, Vinnie relents.

After some shopping, during which Grandma buys clothes like Stephanie's, including Doc Martens, they return home. Stephanie's mom asks for her help in the kitchen, which is a code word for a serious talk. While Mrs. Plum prepares dinner, she implores Stephanie to catch Kenny, recalling his violent childhood. Morelli appears in time for dinner.

Morelli later shares with Stephanie that the van at the gas station is linked to Moogey and Sandeman. They drive over to escort Spiro home. Spiro reports that, due to the gossip about the missing penis, Loosey had record attendance at his funeral. Claiming that he no longer fears Kenny, Spiro lets Stephanie know she is no longer needed to guard him.

Morelli and Stephanie instead go to Sandeman's house. When they establish that no one is home, Morelli points out he has no legal cause to enter, but Stephanie can, if she believes that Kenny may be inside. She ventures onto the decrepit fire escape and, as she tries to raise the window, the fire escape collapses.

Though Stephanie has no physical damage, she lands in a large pile of dog feces. She gets very hysterical. Morelli packs her into the borrowed van he is driving and takes her to her apartment. Once there, she decides she needs a beer before a shower. In her fridge, she finds a severed foot. The shock and stress are too much; she faints.

When she revives, Morelli sends her to the shower with a beer. She comes out later, cleaner, to find the crime scene crew finishing up in the kitchen. Many neighbors gather in the hallway, wondering about the cooler the cops carry out. Morelli claims they are just friends of his, carrying beer.

Morelli and Stephanie go to leave in the van, but the smell is too bad. They are forced to drive the Buick. During surveillance of Spiro at the funeral home, the environment in the Buick becomes steamy. They engage in a heavy bit of foreplay, during which Morelli admits Roche has planted bugs in the funeral home. Stephanie, in a moment of clarity and suspicion, checks her purse and finds a bug there also. Infuriated, she kicks Morelli out of the car without his clothes and drives back to her parent's.



Chapter 13 Analysis

The matriarchical society of the 'burg causes a very real fear of the older generation of women. Morelli fears his maternal grandmother, as does Vinnie. All of the women stick up for one another as well. A mere threat from Grandma Mazur changes Vinnie's mind.

Likewise, the Plum household is run by Stephanie's mother. Mr. Plum has a cursory role throughout the novel. The household is run from the kitchen, which is where Mrs. Plum takes Stephanie for their serious talk about apprehending Kenny. The talk shows Mrs. Plum confidence in Stephanie's bounty hunting abilities.

Once again, the action escalates, and, once again, the body parts become larger and more grotesque. As Kenny becomes more desperate, he leaves larger and more shocking clues. Morelli and Stephanie, at the same time, conclude that the foot belongs to Sandeman. With Kenny's acquaintances dwindling, they decide to stake out Spiro.

During the stake out, the relationship between Stephanie and Morelli escalates as well. Illustrating Stephanie's fear of commitment, the encounter ends just before release, leaving both parties frustrated. It would appear that, though the relationship was beginning to show promise, Morelli's deceit does much damage.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

That night, Stephanie sneaks into the house, to avoid explanations about her disheveled appearance. Once again, the next morning, she is in line for the bathroom. Downstairs, she discovers Morelli eating breakfast. He asks for his clothes, sparking questions from her mother and grandmother.

After an overly hearty breakfast, prepared by her mother, Stephanie takes Grandma Mazur on a day of surveillance. As they sit in the Buick, watching Stiva's, they are rammed by Kenny in a suburban. Grandma takes a shot at the suburban and encourages Stephanie to pursue Kenny, but he gets away. In the process, Morelli's car is smashed. The Buick suffers only a scratch.

At home, Grandma lies about the injury she received from the kickback of the gun. Morelli appears to inquire about the accident, assuming Stephanie was involved. He also tells her that Sandeman's body surfaced in the river the night before, missing one foot.

Stephanie and Grandma go to Loosey's viewing, fighting a large crowd. Stephanie thinks to swear off funeral homes after this case wraps up. Stephanie drops Grandma at the door and circles the block to find a parking spot. Once inside, she cannot locate Grandma. She quickly becomes frantic, calling Ranger then her mother.

Once she locates Spiro, she threatens him with a stun gun until he takes her to the basement to search for Grandma. Kenny appears in the basement, and Spiro is not shocked to see him there. Spiro begs Kenny to kill Stephanie and Grandma Mazur elsewhere.

Kenny explains that the guns, which are in the funeral home, will be smuggled out in the hearse, where, he, dressed as Louie, will not be suspected. In the process, though, Grandma has spotted him. Stephanie begins to fear for Grandma's life and uses her anger at Kenny to fuel her attack.

Kenny rolls out a refrigerated body drawer, revealing a dead looking Grandma. Grandma begins to fight as Kenny moves to close the drawer once again. She quotes "Dirty Harry," brandishing her gun once again. Grandma misses Kenny, but hits the ammo, causing a chain of explosions. Stephanie begins a fight with Kenny; Morelli appears and delivers a few punches to Kenny, also.



Chapter 14 Analysis

Despite her mother's desire that she find a man, Stephanie exhibits a lot of shame over her relationship with Morelli. None of the previous night's flirtations reappear when they are together again. In Chapter 14, they are all business.

The Buick symbolizes Stephanie in that, though it is odd and inappropriate for its job, it stands up to multiple scrapes. When a more qualified car, such as Morelli's police car, folds, the Buick holds up. Likewise, Stephanie holds up in a career that she does not seem qualified for.

In a bit of irony, Sandeman, "The Sandman," turns up dead. Though he was reputed to kill anyone that crossed him, he cannot survive a crazier bad guy, Kenny.

Stephanie fights hard for her family in this chapter. Though she does many undesirable duties to make a quick buck, in the end, she does not care about the money. Her only concern is saving her grandmother.

In another bit of irony, Grandma Mazur becomes the hero, setting off the explosions and calling attention to the chaos in the basement. Though for most of the novel, Grandma seems crazy and out of touch, she possesses enough ability to come through when necessary. Her quirkiness shines through, though, when she quotes "Dirty Harry" to Kenny before attempting to shoot him.

In this climax of the plot, Morelli comes in to save Stephanie as he promised. He takes a few extra punches as revenge for the anguish Stephanie and her family have been put through.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Rex and Stephanie move back to her apartment. Kenny is locked up. Morelli joins Stephanie at her apartment, filling her in on the details of Kenny's capture. It turns out, Moogey, Kenny and Spiro all had keys to the storage locker. Sandeman overheard Kenny's plot to steal the guns and made a copy of the key. Sandeman then killed Moogey to protect his own plot.

In the chaos at the funeral home, Spiro escaped, and they assume he has gone underground. Morelli points out that a wire in Stephanie's purse would have been helpful in her predicament the previous night at the funeral home. Though they end the novel flirting, Stephanie kicks Morelli out and enjoys her apartment alone. She thinks about using the apprehension money to buy a new fridge, replacing the once the foot was found in.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The resolution of the novel is illustrated by Stephanie's confident return home. She expresses how much she enjoys her apartment and the lifestyle it symbolizes. She realizes the adage about going home again holds true. She admires her building and its tenets.

The entire case concerning Kenny involved three culprits, all brought down by their own paranoia and greed. In making wrong assumptions, they turned on one another.

The resolution of Stephanie's relationship with Morelli, however, is left for the next novel in the series. They seem to be at a fall back point, as they were at the beginning of the novel.



Characters

Stephanie Plum

Stephanie is the protagonist of the novel. She has fallen into the career of bounty hunter, or bond enforcement agent. She works for her cousin, Vinnie Plum. Her family, of Hungarian/Italian descent, lives nearby. They all live in an area of Trenton, New Jersey called the 'burg. Stephanie is 30, divorced and uninterested in a serious relationship.

Like many other characters in the novel, Stephanie practices situational ethics. She breaks the law for the good of society and her apprehensions. She takes jobs that she considers immoral to pay her bills.

Despite this, both her grandmother and mother attempt to fix her up with men. One man, Morelli, with whom she shares a past, appears to have genuine feelings for her. His job as a cop brings them together often. Their relationship goes from holding pattern to casual to physical and back to a holding pattern within the timeline of the novel. She exhibits a fear of real commitment and guards her single lifestyle.

Professionally, Stephanie relies on gut instincts and plain luck. This luck, however, goes both ways. She stumbles into leads just as often as she loses the one she is pursuing. In the end, though, Stephanie always gets her "man."

Stephanie fiercely guards her family. She frequently returns home for meals, remaining close to her parents and grandmother. The guilt dished out by her mother finds its mark frequently. She feels the pressure to have a normal life, even if she does not embrace it.

In this novel, Stephanie receives the job of bringing in FTA or failure to appear client Kenny Mancuso. Kenny, as a first time offender, is considered an easy catch, the only kind Vinnie assigns to Stephanie. She pursues him all over Trenton, believing him to be involved in some missing ammo. When he attacks her Grandmother, Stephanie receives further motivation. As stated, in the end, Stephanie catches Kenny at Stiva's Funeral Parlor.

Joe Morelli

Joe Morelli is a lifelong resident of the 'burg as well. He is 2 years older than Stephanie, having grown up together. Morelli's family, according to Mrs. Plum, is known for their violence and questionable morals. Young Morelli was no exception, sweet-talking his way into looking up Stephanie's dress. Though he used to be a bad boy, Morelli now works with the police department as a detective. Stephanie admits that he has succeeded more than many other members of his family.



Early in the novel, the reader learns that Kenny Mancuso is Morelli's cousin. At first, he claims he looks for Kenny only as a family courtesy. Later, it comes out that he is actually investigating the stolen weapons and ammo. On several occasions, Morelli attempts to cooperate with Stephanie, citing her unbelievable luck at finding clues.

Frequently, however, Morelli fails to uphold his end of the deal. He, too, lives by the situational ethics so popular in the 'burg. He looks the other way when others, like Stephanie, break the law. He justified such actions as for the greater good, such as when Stephanie breaks into first Kenny's apartment, then Spiro's.

Morelli shows feelings for Stephanie throughout the novel, though he often expresses frustration as well. He possesses a chivalry that often borders on chauvinism. Sometimes, he expressed doubts about Stephanie's bounty hunting abilities. He does not hold his feelings in check, making it difficult to distinguish personal exchanges from professional conversation. The best example of this is the make-out session in the Buick in front of Stiva's.

Grandma Mazur

Stephanie's widowed grandmother, Grandma Mazur, lives with Stephanie's parents. Grandma enjoys life. She is flashy and eccentric. No topic is off limits for Grandma. She discusses sex and bounty hunting without qualms. When the opportunity presents itself, she tries to fix Stephanie up with first Spiro, then Morelli. She knows everyone in the 'burg, however. She proves useful to Stephanie on several unexpected occasions.

Grandma enjoys going to funeral viewing. The elder folks of the 'burg frequent the viewings as social events. Stephanie relies on the gossip Grandma gains from the funeral home to aid in her investigations.

In this novel, however, Grandma does more than gain useful information. She is present at Kenny's capture. Using a gun she borrows from a friend, she fires wildly, quoting Clint Eastwood from "Dirty Harry." Through all the drama, Grandma remains calm and practical. She seems pleased to still be useful to her granddaughter.

Vincent Plum

Vincent, Vinnie, Plum runs the bail bond office. He puts up bail so that criminals can be released until their court date. If they fail to appear, however, he loses the money. Therefore, he hires bounty hunters and pays them ten percent of his fee if they apprehend the FTA before the cops do.

Vinnie operates by questionable ethics. Early in the novel, a filing clerk at the office quits due to sexual harassment. Vinnie's past appears to be full of such incidents. His grandma, Bela, also easily intimidates him. Grandma Mazur uses this fact to keep Stephanie on the Mancuso case.



Ranger

An accomplished employee of Vinnie's, Ranger, or Ricardo Carlos Manoso, teaches Stephanie the tricks of bounty hunting. He appears more frequently in the beginning of the novel, though Stephanie frequently calls him in the second half.

Ranger seems to live outside of the law. He employs men of his own to help with apprehension and other, unknown activities. Though he does not admit to any illegal activities, he is well connected with the darker side of society.

Andy Roche

Andy Roche is an agent of the Department of the Treasury that has been assigned to do surveillance at Stiva's. His exact purpose is unexplained, though it is connected with Morelli's case of the missing ammo. Roche hangs around the funeral home under the guise of grieving for his brother. He bugs the funeral home and listens from across the street.

Kenny Mancuso

The antagonist, Kenny Mancuso, is wanted for shooting his friend, Moogey Bues, in the knee. For much of the novel, the motive for this crime is unknown. As more of Kenny's past comes out, though, it becomes clear. Kenny has exhibited sadistic qualities since childhood, and they only escalate as the novel progresses.

Three months prior, Kenny is released from the army. At that time, he arranges for his old friend, Spiro, to buy surplus caskets from the military. Kenny hides guns and ammo in the caskets. He then arranges for another friend, Moogey, to pick the caskets up and hide them in a storage locker.

When the caskets come up missing, each man blames the other two, precipitating Kenny's shooting of Moogey. Unknown to all of them, a coworker of Moogey's, Sandeman, overheard their business, and stole the caskets. Sandeman shoots Moogey before his own actions are found out.

Kenny becomes crazier as the novel progresses. He eventually sees Stephanie as an enemy and obstacle to his plan. He strikes out at her family, stabbing Grandma Mazur with an ice pick. Stephanie and Morelli apprehend Kenny in the basement of Stiva's Funeral Home.

Mrs. Plum

Stephanie's mother runs her household ably and thinks nothing of offering Stephanie much unsolicited advice. She often worries about what others in the neighborhood think



of her bounty-hunting daughter. She tries to convince Stephanie to find a more normal job and settle down with a man. After Grandma is stabbed, however, she begins to support Stephanie, hoping Stephanie will catch Kenny quickly.

Spiro Stiva

Spiro's stepfather, Constantine, has run Stiva's Funeral Parlor in the 'burg for more than 30 years. Spiro is an understudy to Con and hopes to one day expand the business. Spiro is interested only in the financial aspect, seeing the grieving families as a necessary annoyance.

Spiro becomes involved with the plot of his childhood friend, Kenny. When the plan goes wrong, he panics and hires Stephanie to help sort it out. In the end, though, he is implicated in the crime as well and disappears.

Julia Cenetta

Julia is Kenny's girlfriend in the beginning of the novel. Stephanie lies to gain a tip about Kenny from Julia. Julia quickly moves on to another man.

Al

Al is an employee of Ranger's and runs Al's Auto Body. He frequently comes to fix Stephanie's Jeep Wrangler, until it is stolen. He also fixes the flat tire on the Buick, no questions asked.

Mrs. Bestler

Mrs. Bestler is Stephanie's insomniac neighbor. She rides the elevator and walks the halls when she cannot sleep.

Moogey Bues

Moogey is a friend of Kenny and Spiro. He works for Cubby at a 'burg gas station. Though he not very smart, he is a faithful employee. First, he is shot in the knee by Kenny. Later, Sandeman delivers a fatal head shot. He has a closed casket funeral at Stiva's, though Grandma Mazur manages to sneak a peek.

Eddie Gazarra

Eddie is also a Trenton cop. He is a childhood friend of Stephanie's. She frequently calls him for information. A few times, she seeks information about Morelli's case, but Eddie



does not always deliver. He is always willing to sell sensitive information in exchange for babysitting.

Leo Morelli

Leo is another cousin of Joe Morelli. He owns a car that Kenny was spotted picking Julia up in. At first, he lies, claiming it was stolen. The car is later recovered in the mall parking lot.

Mickey Boyd

Mickey is another resident of Stephanie's apartment building. His wife insists he smoke outside. One day, when he is outside as Stephanie comes home, he admires the Buick. This sparks a conversation between Stephanie and Morelli about the Buick's appeal to men.

Mr. Plum

Stephanie's father has a minor part in the book. When things get crazy at his house, he tends to ignore them and say little. He delivers the Buick to Stephanie after her Jeep is stolen. At one point, he expresses a wish to be cremated.

Constantine Stiva

Constantine, or Con, owns and runs Stiva's Funeral Parlor. During this novel, however, he has been laid up in the hospital, thus forcing him to take his first day off in 30 years. He is a sincere funeral director, unlike his greedy stepson.

Mrs. Gunzer

Mrs. Gunzer is the widow at one of the first viewings Stephanie and Grandma Mazur attend. When Grandma accidentally knocks an urn onto her late husband, Mrs. Gunzer insults both Grandma and Stephanie.

Cubby Delio

Cubby owns the gas station where Moogey and Sandeman work. He reports that Moogey was an honest, faithful employee. He also asserts that, though Sandeman is a suspicious character, he is a talented mechanic.



Eula Rothridge

Eula is another FTA that Stephanie goes after for some fast cash. Though, as a homeless woman, Eula is supposed to be an easy catch, she evades Stephanie on the first attempt. After some blackmail involving her meager possessions, however, she agrees to go to the police station with Stephanie.

Connie

Connie is Vinnie's secretary. She knows much about the residents of Trenton. Her family is rumored to be former Mafia. When Vinnie scares off the new filing clerk, Connie threatens to take justice into her own hands. Later, Connie hires former prostitute, Lula, to file and is pleasantly surprised when Lula proves qualified.

Mr. Wolesky

Stephanie's neighbor across the hall, Mr. Wolesky is known for his faithful television viewing. He keeps the volume loud enough that Stephanie clearly hears the shows in the hallway.

Perry Sandeman

Stephanie first sees Sandeman at Moogey's funeral. Ranger explains that Perry is called The Sandman because, if crossed, he will make sure the person goes to sleep for a very long time. In the end, it is found out that Sandeman stole the caskets from Spiro. He also shot Moogey, to cover his theft. Kenny kills Sandeman and leaves his foot in Stephanie's refrigerator.

Lula

Lula is a large, loud-mouthed woman who is always faithful to her friends. She is a self-proclaimed former 'ho. In the last novel, Stephanie met Lula while looking for an FTA. Lula provides valuable information from her informants on the streets. She also turns out to be a gifted filing clerk. She assists Stephanie in searching Spiro's house, where she has no qualms about breaking a window to get in.

Louie Moon

Spiro's assistant at Stiva's, Louie is not known to be very intelligent. He drives the hearse and cleans up in the embalming rooms.



Joyce Barnhardt

Stephanie first speaks with Joyce at Clara's Beauty Parlor. Joyce slept with Stephanie's husband, precipitating their divorce. The bad history goes back farther, though. In grade school, Joyce pulled a prank on Stephanie, causing everyone to believe she had wet her pants. Stephanie does not forgive Joyce for either incident. Any meetings between the two of them quickly turns into a shouting match.



Objects/Places

Trenton

Stephanie identifies Trenton as a "pothole." She explains that the lack of traffic on the Delaware River has robbed Trenton of its previous luster.

The 'Burg

The section of Trenton that Stephanie grew up in is known as the 'burg. Most of the action of the story takes place there. The 'burg is a working class neighborhood, where everyone knows everything about their neighbors. Gossip is a common pastime. Little changes in the 'burg, from beliefs to hairstyles.

Stephanie's Apartment

Stephanie lives just outside the 'burg in a square, three story apartment building. Most of the residents are older folks. Stephanie enjoys the freedom of her modest apartment, where her only roommate is her hamster, Rex. She frequently returns to her parent's house, however, for meals.

Jeep Wrangler

In the beginning of the novel, Stephanie drives a used Jeep Wrangler. She sees it as the perfect bounty-hunting car, though it carries a distinct pizza smell. The previous owner was a pizza delivery person.

Rex

Stephanie's pet hamster serves as her faithful friend. She enjoys Rex, as he is easy to get along with. She feeds him a strange mixture of people food and hamster pellets. Rex lives in an aquarium with a soup can for a house.

Stiva's Funeral Parlor

Funerals and viewings are important social events in the 'burg. Much information is gathered there. In addition, Spiro Stiva quickly becomes a suspected accessory in the case of the stolen ammo. In the end, Kenny is apprehended in the basement of Stiva's after he attempts to seize Grandma Mazur.



Uncle Sandor's Buick

When the Jeep is stolen, Mrs. Plum insists that Stephanie borrow the Buick, which is a huge, old car belonging to Grandma's late husband. Since Grandma cannot drive, no one uses the Buick on a regular basis. Stephanie sees the car as a hindrance, especially when it tips Kenny off to her presence outside the motel.

The Buick, however, represents Stephanie in its tenacity. Through many scrapes, the Buick emerges unscathed. Even though it does not seem appropriate as a bounty hunter's car, it does the job.

Stephanie's Bedroom at her Parent's House

When Stephanie lives at home for a while, to protect Grandma Mazur, she moves into her old bedroom. It symbolizes all the ways her life does not change, such as her mother's meddling and her on and off relationship with Morelli.

Stephanie's Cookie Jar

Rather than as a place to keep sweets, Stephanie keeps her gun in her cookie jar. She seems to be the only person, male or female, in Trenton that does not carry her gun in her purse regularly. It remains in the cookie jar unless Stephanie is on what she deems to be a dangerous mission. The jar represents a trait that Stephanie shares with her mother: willful ignorance. She hopes that if she ignores the violence, it will just disappear.

Clara's Beauty Parlor

When Stephanie needs local gossip, she visits Clara's. Grandma also goes there to show off her wound. Clara's provides gossip and therapy. Stephanie gets a manicure from Clara to release some stress. When that does not work, she goes shopping.

Beauty holds an important place for the women of the 'burg. The styles, however, do not change with time. The women proudly wear large, old-fashioned hairdos. The women do not see beauty as a sign of weakness. They feel on par with any man.

The Purple Shoes

During Stephanie's therapeutic shopping session, she tries on what she judges to be useless, though sexy purple heels. While admiring them, Kenny approaches her. When she fails to catch him, she largely blames the shoes. However, she buys them and later shows them to Morelli, who admires their sexiness. Throughout the book, the shoes

come to represent a sexy side of Stephanie that remains hidden. She never wears the shoes.



Themes

Situational Ethics

Nearly every character in the novel practices situational ethics, in which the end justifies the means. In the first few pages, Stephanie admits to lying to obtain a tip from Julia. She also justifies stealing Kenny's mail to obtain information about his recent activities. Not only does she apply this ethical code to her case, but all her work. Though she does not like Spiro, she accepts his job offers, because she needs the money.

Morelli, also, looks the other way when Stephanie breaks the law. He feels no guilt about using the information that she obtains through questionable means. Even Grandma is not above breaking the law when it serves her purpose. She carries a concealed weapon for several days after promising to get rid of it. In the end, it proves most useful in capturing Kenny.

As Stephanie learns from Ranger, this ethical code seems to be the norm in bounty hunting. It seems as though to catch the criminal, one must think like the criminal. The code of situational ethics works for the protagonists, but not for the antagonists, making this a novel in which good prevails over evil.

Familial Ties

For many of the characters, family is very important. Morelli starts looking for Kenny at the behest of his family. The families of the 'burg stick up for one another in sticky situations.

Stephanie looks out for her family as well. When Grandma Mazur is in danger, Stephanie gives up the peace and comfort of her single life in her own apartment to move in with Grandma and her parents. Likewise, Grandma sticks up for Stephanie when others malign her career choice.

Family seems to be a double-edged sword for Stephanie. She loves her family very much, and sacrifices her own safety to aid them. However, the guilt they inflict is not something she enjoys. She also dislikes their matchmaking attempts. When she moves home, the stress manifests itself in physical ways, such as the eye twitch. All these are unavoidable for the connection to her loved ones, however. The draw of home cooked food also keeps Stephanie close to home.

Luck

Even Morelli points out that much of Stephanie's bounty hunting skills rely on luck. She seems to often be in the right place at the right time. Morelli begins to follow her, counting on such occurrences. Stephanie also counts on the luck, sometimes just



driving around, hoping for a break. Bad luck also follows Stephanie, as evidenced by her stolen Jeep. Throughout the Plum novels, Stephanie goes through several cars.

Luck also factors in for Kenny and other characters. Kenny makes some of his own luck, by following Stephanie. In addition, he happens by her on a few occasions. In the end, however, the luck seems to be more like Karma, in that good comes to the good people and bad to bad people. Some cosmic force seems to know the intentions of people and visit upon them the appropriate actions.

Death

Much of the novel takes place at the funeral home. The characters discuss their wishes for their final arrangements. Corpses appear in various ways. Death is pictured as certain. Also, the death of others provides a great deal of entertainment for the residents of the 'burg. Due to the ever present gossip mill, the more scandalous the death, the bigger the attendance. When it becomes public knowledge that Loosey's penis arrived in Stephanie's mail, he has the largest viewing in Stiva's history.

Death for the aged is not a negative for much of the novel. The friends of the deceased appear as though at a party. They celebrate a life well lived. Another type of death that does not require mourning is that of a criminal or other low class citizen. For example, no one appears upset that Sandeman was killed.

Death affects all tiers of society, however. Even the House of Eternal Slumber, in the low class end of town, does great business. People that seem to have very little material wealth put aside considerable sums for their final arrangements. Death is certain, and funeral plans are important to the people of the 'burg, in order to keep up appearances.



Style

Point of View

Stephanie Plum tells this novel in the first person point of view. It reads in a conversational way, with a diary-like quality. She shares many of her own thoughts and opinions. The reader realizes that many descriptions of other characters are colored by Stephanie's feelings about them. The readers get a unique view of her motivations. Though she often wonders about the thoughts of other characters, they are usually not revealed.

The diary-like qualities of the novel gives the reader a voyeuristic feeling. One gains access to Stephanie's character that no other character in the story receives. When Morelli is kicked out of the apartment, Stephanie confesses to the reader that she feels physically attracted to Morelli. Her desires are spelled out on the page, though she strives to keep them hidden from those around her.

The tone is sarcastic and wry, using much humor. Stephanie assumes that the reader agrees with her on most things. Certain details are omitted with the assumption that the reader read the first book in the series. Sometimes, however, the previous volume is alluded to and the circumstances are explained. The reader who is familiar with both has a greater understanding of many nuances, however.

Setting

The story takes place in Trenton, New Jersey. Stephanie describes Trenton as a pothole. She explains that the city thrived from traffic on the Delaware River in the past. Now, however, most of this has faded, leaving only empty buildings to testify of better days.

Most of the action happens in a blue-collar section of town called the 'burg. In the past, the 'burg was home to some infamous characters, including members of the Mafia. Though the power of the Mafia has dwindled in the 'burg, some remnants remain, such as Connie's family. People, like Morelli, who come from families with shady backgrounds, have turned to the right side of the law.

It is fall in the 'burg during this novel, beginning in a cool, clear October. Stephanie frequently suffers from the cold while on stakeouts of places like Stiva's and Kenny's hotel room. The length of time during which the novel takes place is not clear. Though Lula and Stephanie first visit Spiro's apartment in November, there is never a mention of Thanksgiving. It would seem the resolution comes before the end of November.



Language and Meaning

The author employs much description in the novel. Sometimes whole pages are filled with Stephanie's observations of the actions of those around her. Not only are places described, their past is often given, along with their place in society. Places such as Clara's Beauty Parlor provide not only grooming services, but also social interaction for the residents.

Humor is frequently used, often making light of a serious situation and keeping the novel from becoming too dark. Grandma Mazur's quirkiness provides quite a few laughs, as she tries to help with everything from Stephanie's personal life to her fugitive apprehension. Stephanie herself lands in many situations that, though serious, have an element of humor. One such situation can be seen when the fire escape collapses. What may have been a deadly accident turns funny when she realizes she has fallen into a pile of dog refuse. The humor also interrupts what might have been an emotional moment with Morelli.

The language might sometimes be considered crude, as the characters discuss very personal things. They are not ashamed of some of the seedier subjects that are honestly a part of everyone's life. Often, characters like Mrs. Plum are more straitlaced, offering contrast to the crazy situation. One such contrast would be the arrival of the penis. Though Grandma admires it almost clinically, Mrs. Plum responds with horror and outrage.

Overall, the language is conversational. No complicated language is used. All of the characters are of average education and intelligence, or even less than average, as in the case of Louie Moon. The dialogue reads easily, and the descriptions flow well with the story line.

Structure

The author uses both dialogue and description. The novel is written in 15 chapters. No time passes between the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next. Each chapter is broken into several sections by extra line breaks. Some time passes between such breaks. Often, the chapters end on a dramatic moment, only to be resolved at the beginning of the next chapter.



Quotes

"I was learning the trade and needed all the help I could get. His participation was in the ballpark of a pity fuck." p. 10.

"The legality of this was a tad grey, but it would only be bothersome if I got caught." p. 28.

"We had warm homemade apple pie for desert...I ate two pieces and almost had an orgasm." p. 33-34.

"Got the name Sandman on account of if you irritate him he'll put you to sleep for a real long time." p. 59.

"'He there now?' Ranger wanted to know.

'Yeah.'

You naked?'

'No.'

'Still early,' Ranger said." p. 110.

"Okay, so it was big and ugly, but hell, it had *cojones*." p. 112.

"When I was eighteen, I'd sort of run over Morelli with a similar car." p. 126.

"'I almost never lie.' Only when it's absolutely necessary. And on those occasions when the truth doesn't seem appropriate." p. 185.

"Everyone stared at the penis in dumbfounded horror. Grandma Mazur spoke first, and when she did it was with a touch of wistfulness. 'Been a long time since I've seen one of those,' she said." p. 205.

"Suddenly I saw the value of guarding Spiro. I'd be right there on the spot if Kenny actually did show up. I'd be in a position to wheedle information. And I could legally search through Spiro's house every night. Okay, so along with all that I was selling out for the money, but hell, it could be worse. I could have sold out for fifty." p. 215.

"All I expected was a goddamn orgasm. And I sure as hell deserved one. I hadn't had a social orgasm since Reagan was president." p. 269.

"'I know what you're thinking,' Grandma said into the silence. ' Do I have any more bullets in this here gun? Well, with all the confusion, what with being licked up in a refrigerator, I plum forgot what was in here to start with. But being that this is a forty-five magnum, the most powerful handgun in existence, and it could blow you head clean off,



you just got to ask yourself on question. Do you feel luck today? Well, do you, punk?" p. 293.

"Later today I'd stop by the office and pick up my recovery fee. Then I'd go shopping. Maybe I'd buy a new refrigerator." p. 298.



Topics for Discussion

During the course of the novel, which character goes through the greatest development? Explain.

Discuss the use of situational ethics. Is there anything wrong with this system? Is it ever appropriate?

How does Stephanie rely on luck? Do you see this as luck or Karma? Explain both.

What do you think the future holds for Stephanie's relationship with Morelli? Do they have a healthy relationship?

Family is very important to Stephanie. In what ways does this help and hinder her career?

Grandma Mazur illustrates the effects of aging. How does this work to her advantage?

In what ways is the 'burg a matriarchy, run mainly by the women? How does this differ from a patriarchy?

Given what little the novel says about Lula, how has her life changed for the better?

Many of the characters are haunted by their past. Which instance is the most dramatic?

In what ways is foreshadowing used in this novel?

Discuss the symbolism of the Buick.

What importance do bounty hunters hold in society? Is it a necessary occupation?

What does the future hold for Stephanie? Will she continue in this career? Should she?