



## The Watchman

*Robert Crais*

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## **The Watchman** Robert Crais

To pay back an old debt, Pike is coerced into protecting Larkin Barkley, a hard-partying young heiress whose life is in danger after a "wrong place wrong time" encounter that quickly escalates and spins out of control. The enemy is shadowy, violent and relentless—but the fierce, focused Pike, one of the strongest characters in modern crime fiction, is equal to the challenge. The breathless pace and rich styling are sure to appeal to readers of hard-boiled fiction in general, but since up to now Pike has mostly remained in the background, some fans of the Elvis Cole series (The Forgotten Man, etc.) may find the explicit picture that emerges of Pike at odds with the image they've constructed for themselves.

## **The Watchman Details**

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Author : Robert Crais

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Genre : Mystery, Thriller, Fiction, Crime, Mystery Thriller, Detective, Suspense, Action, Adventure,  
Audiobook

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## From Reader Review The Watchman for online ebook

### Sean Peters says

A wild-living young heiress slams into trouble in the L.A. night—the kind of trouble even her money can't shut down. After her Aston Martin collides with a mysterious car, Larkin Conner Barkley attempts to help the accident victims—and becomes the sole witness in a federal investigation. Whisking her out of her Beverly Hills world is Joe Pike—ex-cop, ex-Marine, ex-mercenary—hired to shield Larkin from a relentless team of killers. But when a chain of lies and betrayals tightens around them, Pike drops off the grid and follows his own rules for survival: strike fast, hit hard, hunt down the hunters. . . .

Author Robert Crais introduced one of the funniest and emotionally complex private detectives to come along in years in Elvis Cole, but he also crafted one of the hardest heroes to see print in decades. Joe Pike is the king of cool, the master of the understatement, and a man haunted by personal demons he'll never talk about, Pike seems a bit more human, a bit more flawed.

But to me an important part of this book is also the humour supplied by the great personality of Elvis Cole, and Robert Crais could not have created two such different characters, and to me that is the strongest part of the book, alongside young Larkin Barklay.

What the book lacked a little to me, and the reason why I return to authors like Simon Kernick, Tom Wood and David Baldacci, is the tension, speed, the twists and turns, like I have been on a rollercoaster ride after reading the last few chapters of a book. Here this book lacked that tension.

Okay four stars, just for the strength in the main characters, but lacking that killer pace.

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### Mark Baker says

When a favor is called in, Joe Pike finds himself as the bodyguard for Larkin Conner Barkley, a spoiled rich young woman who has become a witness in a Federal investigation thanks to a traffic accident. But when people come for them twice within just a few hours, Pike must go to extreme measures to protect them both. The bigger question becomes, what is really going on?

From a mystery standpoint, this book is outstanding, which several wonderful twists and surprises. I had a hard time putting the book down. Since this book focuses on Pike, it is interesting to get some more perspective on this character, although I did feel some flashbacks slowed the book down. Don't worry, we do get Elvis Cole as well. My biggest beef with the book was two characters who I found super annoying. We were supposed to find them comedic, but I wanted to slap both of them. Additionally, some characters can't seem to remember when events they just lived through took place.

Read my full review at Carstairs Considers.

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## Nate says

NOTE: I originally posted this under *The Sentry* for some unknowable reason. Don't do drugs, kids!

Really, really great thriller action in this one. Joe Pike is a badass for the ages, an unstoppable heat-seeking missile with years of experience from the Marines and LAPD as well as unquestionably awesome red arrows tattooed on his deltoids (signifying his no-retreat, all-advance outlook on life.) I admit I kinda cheated with this one as I read the first Elvis Cole novel and then, seeing that Pike stars in his own books, went right to them. Cole is a very likable PI but there's something about the cut-and-dry, no bullshit hardened killing machine thriller protagonist that I really like--which is why I've consumed so many of Child's formulaic Reacher books. Pike and Reacher are a lot alike, but Reacher's almost sociopathic superhuman quality isn't as rewarding in a lot of ways as Pike's persona, because as steel-hard as Pike is he remains completely human.

Pike's mission in this one is to protect, uh...whatshername, a rich spoiled chick from wave after wave of hardened killers. We don't really know exactly why these guys are after her, but it certainly has something to do with the car accident she gets into at the start of the book. What follows is pure Leon the Professional/Man on Fire violent thrills, with a man who doesn't give a fuck about anything but the mission of doing his best to protect a more or less useless and weak innocent. I love this kind of story, and the flashbacks set when Pike was still a cop were really, really great. I'd love to read an entire novel set around Pike's time on the force. The conflict between the police protocols and ideals and Pike's "the easiest solution is a bullet to the head" modus operandi seemed like very rich ground.

The expectedly-hyperbolic critical blurb on the back of my edition states that Crais "elevates crime fiction." I don't really think he does, and he doesn't need to. This book was lean, deadly and quick as a cheetah. Crais' prose is, again, nothing to write home about but it maintains a steady momentum and doesn't get bogged down in pointless minutiae or overwriting like some other writers in this genre. It was also refreshingly kind of understated in terms of grit and gore. Everyone that reads my shit probably knows I do enjoy violent and dark books but Crais managed to include a feeling of real danger and violence without ridiculous amounts of cursing, racism, brains spattering, etc. Violent shit happens, but it's never really reveled in or overdone. It all leads to a quick and satisfying read that I can recommend comfortably to readers of crime/mystery thrillers. (less)

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## Carol. says

*The Watchman* is the first book in the Elvis Cole series that switches focus to Elvis' best friend and agency co-owner, Joe Pike. It's a solid thriller, though for me, less impressive than other books in the series.

The plot of is classic bodyguard

subtypes Reluctant-Body, Financial-Mismatch, and Sexual-Tension. If you think you've seen this before, it's because you probably have. It's obvious from the first that there's an insider leak jeopardizing the client, so Joe decides to play it solo. Except, of course, for a little help from his friends Elvis Cole and forensics analyst John Chen.

Though there are any number of reviews fangirling over Pike (male and female alike; using the word 'fangirl' in its non-literal sense), the Strong Silent Type to the exponential degree. I don't necessarily mind this trope, but I feel Crais often overplays it. The biggest problem in this case is that Pike doesn't do dialogue, which means the reader is often left with a) a lot of description, or b) witnessing 'the girl's' fruitless attempts to engage him in dialogue. To compensate, Crais has to switch the narrative around, including John Chen, Elvis, and the client, a twenty-something year-old woman with the ridiculous name of Larkin Conner Barkley. Complicating this narrative are some time frame changes, in regards to the current protection gig as well as related to Joe's past with LAPD.

Once you get past the first narrative hijinks and settle into the actual storyline, the plot grabs on and doesn't let go. I'll note that reading this kept me awake during my late afternoon sleepy-time, causing me to miss my old-person nap. I was wise enough to put it down last night after reading the first couple chapters, so I was ready for the thriller pacing today.

Although it was odd, I enjoyed seeing Elvis in the back-up role. Larkin proved to be a perfect foil for Elvis' humor. It was also interesting seeing him actually detect, while Joe continued to do much of the muscle work.

Overall, an enjoyable way to spend a few hours. It was interesting to have the character focus change, the type of story change (even if it was rather a predictable one) and Crais is a solid writer. He has been one of the most reliable modern/long-series detective/thriller writers for me.

Oh, by the way, both Cole and Pike continuously refer to the person they are guarding as 'the girl.' I get that this is meant in an experienced-protective-old-man-way, and not a sexist-ancient-pig-kind-of-way, but it's still annoying. Just how serious are those implications? Though she's actively involved in the story, most reviews on GR don't even mention her name. Half a star off for it.

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### **La Tonya Jordan says**

Suspense, excitement, and thrilling is how I would describe Joe Pike. Joe Pike is an ex-Marine, ex-cop, and ex-mercenary who is hired on contract to protect Larkin Conner Barkley who has been targeted for death for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. So, it seems.

Joe Pike is a man of very few words. But, his connections lead to protecting Larkin and revealing secrets many people are trying to hide. I enjoyed all the action packed scenes in this book. I felt like I was at the movies on how well detailed the scenes were described. The book kept you in suspense because you didn't know who to trust until the end. A good read.

#### **Quote:**

"Cut these things off. Bring her back, Pike. We can protect her." Pike opened the door. "You're tied to a steering wheel. You can't even protect yourself." Pike got out with the keys and the badge.

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### **Jane Stewart says**

I love tough smart loner guys like Joe Pike. I had plot problems, but it was still a fun and engaging read.

## STORY BRIEF:

Larkin, a wealthy single woman (think Paris Hilton) witnesses something. Bad guys want her dead. She is in safe houses under federal protection. Three times someone leaks the location to the bad guys who come with guns. So Joe Pike a former marine and police officer is hired to protect her. He keeps her safe. The federal authorities, local police, and her father are angry at Joe because they don't know where Joe is keeping her.

## PLOT PROBLEMS:

Three plot logic problems come to mind. 1: Why are they angry at Joe? He's doing what he was asked to do. He's keeping her safe when no one else could. 2. Larkin does two stupid things which put her life in danger and gives Joe a chance to show how smart and great he is. I loved what Joe did when those things happened. But I wish the author used something different to put her in danger - not her own stupid actions. One of them is in the SPOILER below. 3. Joe and two other competent military types are sneaking up on some bad guys, planning a surprise attack. Another guy (not a military type) insisted on going with them and walked up to the bad guy's front door, ruining the surprise. Of course, again this showed how good Joe was when things went wrong.

I don't mind stupidity if it's the way a normal person does stupid things - like me - for example being tired, misinformed, or emotionally distraught. But here I felt the author was doing it to move the plot. I prefer the bad guys being smart to move the plot, not the good guys being stupid.

## BUT STILL FUN:

I liked that this was 3rd person. The author wrote several Elvis Cole stories in 1st person. I did not enjoy those as much.

Some readers will like the relationship part. Larkin has problems because her daddy doesn't give her the right kind of attention. Joe helps her see things differently. They become close - but no sex. He's older than she. For some reason Joe having a soft heart wasn't done well. He said he loved her (to himself), but I wasn't seeing or feeling it.

The narrator James Daniels was good.

(view spoiler)

## DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Unabridged audiobook length: 7 hrs and 51 mins. Swearing language: strong including religious swear words, but rarely used. Sexual content: none. Setting: current day Los Angeles, California. Book copyright: 2007. Genre: action mystery suspense.

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## Dan Schwent says

While Elvis Cole is on the mend, an associate of Joe Pike's calls in a favor. Joe is tasked with protecting a young heiress from the people trying to kill her. Things go south when there is a leak at the Department of Justice and Pike finds that the only people he can trust are Elvis Cole and himself...

Joe Pike takes the lead in this Robert Crais offering and gets saddled protecting a Paris Hilton type heiress named Larkin Barkley. As with L.A. Requiem, Joe Pike's past is explored as the case unfolds. I loved the

way the relationship between Pike and the spoiled heiress develops as they find they have things in common.

It's a nice change of pace to have Elvis Cole in the supporting role and have Pike take the lead. It's an exciting tale with a much higher body count than most Crais books so far. That should be expected, though, when the enemies are linked to South American drug cartels.

With Pike as the central character, Crais developed the normally silent Pike into a multidimensional character and kept The Watchman from devolving into a mindless action-fest. I don't really have much more to say on that front. It's Pike being Pike with Elvis Cole in tow.

While The Watchman was an enjoyable read and a nice change of pace, I'll be glad when Elvis Cole takes center stage again. 3.5 stars.

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### **Paul E. Morph says**

This is book eleven of the series and the first one to be told from the perspective of Joe Pike. I really enjoyed the change in viewpoint; in fact it would have been enough to make this a five star rating if it weren't for one thing...

Or, rather, one *character*: Larkin 'T'm-not-Paris-Hilton-honest-guv' Barkley.

JAYZUS, WHAT AN ANNOYING CHARACTER! Pike and Cole's reactions to her were, if anything, even more annoying... I was actually rooting for her to die horribly, which was probably not the author's intention.

Anyway, other than her, a really good book.

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### **Mona Bliss says**

I enjoyed every second of this book. I love the entire Elvis Cole series and I thought it was great that he decided to swap the character focus in this one to Joe Pike. You can't help but wish that life was different for Joe but if it was he wouldn't be Joe Pike...and I'd miss Joe Pike.

This is a good read as are all the Elvis Cole books.

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### **Kemper says**

It's probably a good thing that Robert Crais has a strict policy against selling the film rights to his Elvis Cole and Joe Pike characters because I can see how this could go horribly off the rails in the wrong hands. The bad Hollywood pitch for this movie:

*"There's this rich girl, like a Paris Hilton type, right? And she gets into a car accident, but the people in the car flee the scene even though they're injured. She identifies one of them as this big time money launderer that the Feds want, but she is attacked by a small army of hit men. That's where Joe Pike comes in. See, he's this real bad ass. He's been a soldier and a cop and a mercenary, and now he sometimes partners up with*

*this guy named Elvis in a detective agency. The Elvis guy would make for a funny supporting character. Maybe we could get someone like Seth Green to play him?*

*Anyhow, this Pike is a real intense dude. Wears sunglasses all the time and has these red arrows tattooed on his arms. Kids these days love tattoos so that'll make him relatable. And of course, he and the rich girl don't get along at all. He's trying to protect her, and she's being a real pain in the balls.*

*Funny? Well, the book isn't really that funny because of all the killing. But we could downplay that and punch up the interactions between Pike and the girl. Maybe get more of a romance going between them. And since this girl is like Paris Hilton, why not see if the real Paris Hilton is interested? For Pike maybe... Vin Diesel? He'd be good, but I don't think we got the budget ....I got it! Steven Seagal would be perfect.*

That's the tricky part about this. This story could have turned out like a typical Hollywood set-up, but as usual Crais has the skill and ability to take an action movie scenario and add just enough depth and heart to it to make it about more than a bad ass racking up a body count. I thought Joe Pike seemed like a stereotypical cartoon in the early Cole books, but through the course of this series Crais has established that Pike doesn't wear his sunglasses at night and rarely speaks because he's trying to be cool. Pike behaves like that because he's an emotional cripple who has genuine problems interacting with people. That makes him both tragic and scarier than just a tough guy playing at being stoic.

This also adds another wrinkle to the Elvis Cole series because we aren't getting his first person viewpoint as the lead character, we're seeing Elvis from an outside vantage point and that adds another dimension to him, too. (This reveals several plot resolutions from previous Elvis books so anyone interested in the series should read them in the published order to avoid spoilers.)

Crais was named a Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America last week, and with books like this, it's easy to see why.

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## **Harry says**

Ok, a few rambling thoughts on Robert Crais. Who is this guy, where'd he come from, how'd he get so popular? Well the first thing to know is that Crais is not from California at all. He is a native of Louisiana, grew up in a blue collar family, and read his first crime novel *The Little Sister* when he was 15. And that's all it took. Chandler gave him his love for writing. Other authors that have inspired him were Hammett, Hemingway (seems like that's true of all the crime writers), Parker, and Steinbeck (huh?).

How'd he get so popular? In short: television and L.A. Requim. Robert Crais has a very impressive resume as a screenwriter for such television series as *Hill Street Blues*, *Miami Vice* (damn, I loved that show too!), *Cagney & Lacey*. But what hits home the most with Crais himself is his work on the 4 hour mini series *Cross of Fire* which is about the Ku Klux Klan and is probably more relevant to his home state of Louisiana than it is to Hollywood. Following a growing dissatisfaction of a screen writer's constraints, Crais began writing novels. *L.A. Requim*, which is the 8th Elvis Cole novel, is what landed him as an author that defied all genres and in it outsurpassed even the legendary Ross Macdonald.

Enough about Crais, the guy's good. So, what about Elvis Cole? Naming someone Elvis had to have been a fairly deliberate decision. To me the name seems iconic, Warholish, Disneylandish, a bit theatrical if not cynical. In fact his novels and trinkets therein are suffused with cultural icons: Spider Man mug, Jiminy

Cricket (latent fantasy of wanting to be Peter Pan?), and his yellow Corvette. Even his slogan seems hamstrung with Hollywood's obsession with icons: Elvis Cole is *The world's Greatest Detective!* But in reality there's nothing ridiculous about Cole: he's tough, honest, ponders morality and ambiguity and hypocrasies while staring out the balcony window in his office. Yes, he's cynical, a smart ass, a comic relief in many ways...but behind the seeming humor lies a Dan Wesson .38, the Vietnam War, martial arts and his biggest gun of all: Joe Pike.

Joe Pike, the avenging angel, is a tool used sparingly by Crais. Use him too much and you wonder why he isn't the main character (we know Crais has struggled with this as he produced 4 separate novels featuring Pike as the hero); use him too little and you start wondering why the big guns aren't being pulled out by Elvis. What you want to do is increase the anxiety level of the reader towards the hero, not get the reader frustrated with him. Crais handles this expertly...and uses Pike to increase the anticipation in readers.

The Elvis Cole novels should be considered hard boiled detectives primarily in that Crais deviates from the traditional Romantic tradition found in detective stories and crime fiction by introducing Cole as a detective with a decidedly cynical attitude towards the emotions (i.e. apprehension, horror, terror, and awe such as are found in other crime and thriller stories). And yet, we find sprinkled throughout the books insightful observations of the world as seen through Elvis's eyes. In the following passage, Elvis observes the effects of dry brush fires raging through L.A.:

*Picture the detective at work in his office, fourth floor, Hollywood, as the Devil's Wind freight-trains down from the desert. Though dry and brutally harsh, the desert wind is clean. It pushes the smog south to the sea and scrubs the sky to a crystalline blue. The air, jittery from the heat, rises in swaying tendrils like kelp from the seabed, making the city shimmer. We are never more beautiful than when we are burning.*

Like I said, it really came together following the publication of his 8th Elvis Cole novel. Pike his side kick, Lou Poitras (Cole's detective friend) gruffy as ever, shifting view points, a relaxation of Cole's zany character...it all came together following L.A. Requim. So, believe me. All in all, you will not be disappointed with the Elvis Cole series. There are a lot of these novels so sit back and enjoy! I most certainly did.

As with all series reviews, this one covers all the Elvis Cole books. So if you've read this review of mine than you've read 'em all.

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### **Wendy says**

I really enjoyed this 1st book in his "Joe Pike" series!

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### **Johnny says**

The bad guy is predictable. Well, so what? The good guy is unpredictable. *The Watchman* is presumably a play off the literary conceit that inspired the brilliant *The Watchmen* graphic novel and film, "Who is watching the watchman?" Robert Crais doesn't make any explicit reference to that, but it fits. Joe "I'm not a bodyguard" Pike is roped into performing a very lucrative favor for a person to whom, like *The Godfather* of Mario Puzo fame, he owes a favor. This time, he doesn't owe the favor to a mafia crime lord, but to someone

who has loaned soldiers and logistic support to Pike in an earlier effort. The favor is guarding an often “clueless,” but still full of potential, young heiress to be. It seems her hard-driving, free-spirited method of self-medicating via adrenaline (ie. driving Los Angeles streets in the wee hours at reckless speeds) wasn’t all it was cracked up to be. She saw the wrong person at the wrong time and that will likely be fatal.

So, how is Pike unpredictable? The idealistic patrolman turned mercenary turned private investigator is the kind of personality who doesn’t really let you know what he’s thinking. His dialogue could be written by the same guy who wrote the Sergio Leone script for Eastwood in “The Man with No Name” series. His emotional catharsis may take down a tsunami of bodies or it may be a gentle, if unexpected, word of comfort and self-revelation. Pike isn’t merely interesting because of the number of different weapons he has mastered and the superhero way this ex-Marine sniper/mercenary manages to blend into the landscape when stalking his targets, Pike is interesting because of the way he has transformed his abused childhood and all of its associated psychological traumas into potential strength. Is that authentic strength or merely a perceived one.

And don’t get me wrong about the villain being predictable. The bad guy can be predicted because he is a “type” of bad guy, but you’re only positive toward the end. The “red herrings” of multiple possibilities come at you like the strong flow of a fast-moving river. You be the judge. The bad guy is one of these: the girl’s father, the Feds, Pike’s old partner, the old man’s lawyer, the mercenary “agent” to whom Pike owed the favor, the heiress herself, a murderer who split for Colombia some years back, the leader of a Colombian cartel, or the investor for a drug cartel. There’s no organization-chart to help you navigate the baddies (or potential baddies) and Pike doesn’t exactly follow the rules of a police procedural in order to gain the information he seeks.

Alas, this volume doesn’t support the Elvis Cole as a “dirty old man” (or at least, “dirty old man” wannabe) as I’ve suggested in other reviews. I hate finding contradictory evidence. So, guess I have to put that one in the bin marked “Mostly Unfounded Theories.” Still, this was a fast read on an international flight and it even pulled my wife into it after I finished it. I haven’t seen her devour a novel like that in years. With two thumbs up from my wife and me, I have to give this my highest rating.

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### **The Pirate Ghost (Formerly known as the Curmudgeon) says**

You know that old saying? "Don't mess with the bull or you'll get the horns?" Try this, "The bull better not mess with Joe Pike, or Joe's gonna eat the bull!"

Elvis Cole's BFF gets his own book.

A tragically misunderstood celebrity has an accident on an empty street in Los Angeles. She tries to do the right thing and report it, then, the bad men start coming out of the wood work to kill her. "What gives? Give a Girl a Break will you?" Impotent to save her, the girls father calls in a Private Detective, who in turn calls a private citizen who calls in a favor from Joe Pike. From there, the bullets fly. What's so important about this girl? Joe don't play the passive body guard wait till you get shot thing very well. The best defense is a fist slammed straight up the bullies nose and out the back of his head. If Joe can find out who's behind all this before he and the girl get killed that is. Trust me, this will be done "Joe's way" unless the snotty little rich girl gets her way.

This story had me with chapter one, bullets already flying and a body count of five before the smoke clears

for chapter 2. So it's got a "little" action in it?

Robert Crais wrote a wonderful story where he takes the most obvious cardboard cut out characters, and shows us all how to make them human. Both the rich girl and Joe Pike are so much deeper inside than we all assume from what we see on the surface. Crais peels back the layers of each one anecdote at a time, until we get to see that they might be human after all. By the end of the story everybody gets to grow...assuming they live to the last page--tough assignment.

Great read. Action packed but Craise does take time to develop characters when it counts and gets the most out of them. Good mystery-the characters and action almost overshadow that, but there is a good old fashioned crime and detective story in here, also and a sweet break your heart ending (in a good way.) I'm a fan. I only cried a little bit.

Warning: Adult situations, nudity, sex, lots of violence and also some very emotional and painful memories involving familial abuse. Crais did a lot of good writing to make sure his violence wasn't just senseless, but it is there. If you want to play with cuddly bunnies read Watership Down. If you don't mind violence with a purpose in the story (not gratuitous in anyway) this book works for you.

The quality of the story outweighs the presence of violent acts, but may not be suitable for children and some Nuns. Again it's just part of a really good story. I don't see any better way for Crais to tell it.

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### **Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says**

I'm eternally grateful to Hugh for turning me onto this series. There was a Pike-shaped hole in my life that I didn't even know was there prior to listening to this book. Now, I can't go back to that Pike-free universe. In all seriousness, I really enjoyed this book. I totally loved Pike and Cole. They definitely have a great friendship that allows them the freedom and the support to be themselves. That's definitely a blessing.

### **The Characters:**

First and foremost, as I said, I dug Pike. I love the strong, silent type. I like that Pike is so utterly dangerous, but also very honorable, and really a Boy Scout in the way that he truly will go to HELL and back for something he believes in. He's a real protector, but he spares no sympathy for those who pose a threat to others he feels honor bound to protect. He's very taciturn, yet I felt like I grew to know him in the important ways via flashback and by the way those in his life regard him. A man like him has a way of scaring people, but those who know him well, truly, truly respect him, and his well-chosen words and physicality. Pike has this killer edge, but also this lonely, hurting boy aspect that makes me want to give him a hug, make cookies for him, and tuck him in and read him a bedtime story. I loved the way he handled Larkin. He had a way of getting her to behave, because he saw through her games, and he gave her what she needed. To be seen and to be cared for. I can totally see why she fell for him. I did too, Larkin. Although this wasn't a hugely actiony book, I definitely got the feel that Pike was a formidable guy. He doesn't play. And I tell you, that's what I want in an action hero. Although you are scary Pike, I might call you in real life (and I don't say that to most of the guys on my dangerous hero list).

Elvis Cole has a great sense of humor. And I am a sucker for a guy with a sense of humor. In the book world, my book boyfriends are the dangerous, scary types, the truly honorable men, and the guys who make me

laugh (out of that list, the last two make a guy very appealing to me in real life). So, although Pike is definitely in my dangerous hero book boyfriend list, I could see me liking a guy like Cole in real life a little more. He's also very smart and perceptive. I liked the way he handled Larkin. Her ATTITUDE didn't faze him in the slightest. And although he doesn't always get Pike, he has Pike's back for sure! He's a great friend. And I can't wait to read his books.

Larkin should have annoyed the crap out of me. She reminds me of a real heiress that I really don't think much of. God tells me I shouldn't judge, and this book helped me to deal with that, because I really don't know what it's like for the heiress girls who act crazy and are famous for being rich debs. I don't walk in their shoes. This book helped me to see what life was like for a girl like Larkin. I felt for her. I could see that she was wearing armor and that armor made her prickly and compelled her to act 'stupid.' I never would have thought she'd be a good match for a guy like Pike, but she is. I have to say I'm pretty fond of Larkin. Hope to see more of her.

#### **Storyline:**

Yeah, I like bodyguard stories. Especially with a hero like Pike. I liked that there was a heavy suspense element moreso than action. It wasn't just about Pike keeping Larkin safe from the bad guys, but him trying to figure out why they were trying to kill her. I think some of the plot was a bit thin in places, but I still enjoyed it, and I felt it was well-done overall. The pieces came together, and I didn't feel like I predicted what was going on. The story progression took me to a conclusion that made sense to me. I liked that although Pike has the loner vibe, he really does use his connections and rely on people he trusts to get the job done.

#### **Crais' Writing Style:**

I thought that this book was written in a very visually appealing way. Mr. Crais writes a catchy, stylish story. Not overly noirish, but a contrast between gritty and beauty and naturalism in an unexpected way and in unexpected places. Pike comes off as very iconic. Instead of being described completely, I was given enough to get an image of him in my head. His sunglasses that hide his cold blue eyes. The way his mouth twitches when he expressed the small bit of emotion on his face. His brisk, economical way of speaking. The gentleness he shows Larkin. The violent moments aren't drawn out, but quick, yet no less brutal when needed. Usually an author might over-describe these parts to intensify these moments, but Crais doesn't do that. He writes them speedy, like they happen in real life. I don't think his approach is one of action, but more of suspense, and that comes through.

Los Angeles isn't the most beautiful place to this reader. I don't care much for the city, frankly. But Crais finds the beauty in this place, but also exposes the seamy aspects that I associate with the City of Angels. The place of both exorbitant wealth and extreme poverty. Where starlets and heiresses are just a few block away from brutal gang-bangers and the ugly taint of urban decay. This place comes to life in his capable hands. If I ever miss LA (which is unlikely), I can read his books and get my fix.

I gave this one **4.5 stars** because I felt some of the pivotal aspects wrap up too quickly. I wanted more page time on a few aspects that I didn't get. But overall, this was a fun ride, and Pike is my baby boy now. I want some more!

Recommended!

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