



Free Fall

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Private detective Elvis Cole takes Jennifer Sheridan's case, which involves her decorated Los Angeles-cop boyfriend in some mysterious trouble, and Cole and his partner Pike are soon plunged in police corruption, gangs, and the depiction of themselves as armed killers.

Free Fall Details

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From Reader Review Free Fall for online ebook

Carol. says

[
(hide spoiler)]

Leon Aldrich says

Crais does it again. He is unstoppable. I wouldn't want it otherwise. Thanks Robert for another yarn well done...

Mike says

Elvis is hired by an in-love girlfriend of a L.A. area special group policeman. She thinks he may be involved in some shady endeavors against his will. His fee - \$40 down and \$40 a month. Along with partner Joe, Cole runs into gang-bangers and maybe some crooked cops.

Dorothy says

A dame walks into a PI's office and gives him forty dollars and a promise of weekly payments to find out what kind of trouble her fiance, an LA cop, is in. And maybe get him out of it.

Elvis Cole is just the kind of quirky private investigator who can't say no to a beautiful woman and so he takes the case. It turns out that the fiance is in a lot more trouble than his client or Elvis could possibly have imagined, and the result is another fast-paced tale that just dares the reader to be able to put it down.

Within the confines of a typical violence-ridden Robert Crais plot, the author manages to tackle and address a number of controversial issues in *Free Fall*. He gives us a look at life in South Central LA with its gangs and, in some instances, an unspoken complicity between the gangs and the police. We see police brutality at its sickening worst and the cover-ups that are all too often the police's knee-jerk reaction to such brutality. Dirty cops and ruthless gangs are at the center of the engaging tale that Crais weaves and he constantly surprises us with the unexpected twists and turns which his plot takes.

As Elvis begins his preliminary investigation, he realizes pretty quickly that this case may be a bit much for him to handle on his own and he calls in his big guns, aka Joe Pike, his partner and gun shop owner. From that point on, the body count rises precipitously as it tends to do whenever Pike is on the scene.

Somehow though, no matter how the dead bodies pile up, Cole and Pike always come out smelling like a veritable rose garden. Achieving this requires a lot of help from their contacts on the police force and in the DA's office, but those contacts know that these are two righteous dudes who are always on the side of the angels and so they give their help unstintingly.

Moreover, Cole and Pike seem to have this knack for running into like-minded people in their community,

people who will help them achieve their high-minded aims. People such as the former marine drill sergeant, now martial arts teacher in South Central who is appalled by the violence wracking his community and itching to get into the fight to clean it up.

This is the fourth in Robert Crais' Elvis Cole series and it has been a fun read so far. This book was no exception. It worked perfectly well for light summer reading, in spite of the dark story that it tells. In the end, the angels prevail and justice - well, a very rough justice - is served.

Steve says

I don't think I read this one the first time...if I did I forgot and I don't think I'd've forgotten this one. Great novel in the series. The friendship between these two men is amazing. I also love cat...Elvis's cat that never seems to have a name, but seems to love Elvis and Pike...if no one else! Great story as always.

Jerry says

Elvis Cole and Joe Pike take on the Eight-Deuce Gangster boys of South Central and a Rogue team of LAPD Robbery Homicide Officers who got themselves in a bad position and are trying to strong-arm their way out. Crais once again captures the gritty feel of Los Angeles, this time in the graffiti tagged inner-city. The story takes place just after the Rodney King arrest and before OJ.. of note, one of the main Cops name is Mark Thurman.. coincidence? For an inside look at South Central Gang life, you might want to read *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member* by Sanyika Shaku. written by a member of the Eight Tray Crips. I think Crais did a great job with this one. Strongly recommend for fans of crime and gang affiliated fiction.

Kemper says

I have to think that Robert Crais got a little freaked out during the O.J. Simpson murder trial when the allegations of racism against detective Mark Fuhrman came up because just a few years earlier he had written this book that had some corrupt LAPD cops including an officer named Mark Thurman.

“Life this is Art. Art, meet my good friend Life. Try not to imitate each other too much if you can help it.”

Private investigator Elvis Cole is hired by a young woman named Jennifer Sheridan because she's worried that her boyfriend, LAPD officer Mark Fuhrman Thurman, has been behaving oddly and she's convinced that he's gotten involved in something illegal. Elvis and his partner Joe Pike are soon caught up in a nasty mess involving South Central gangs and crooked cops

This one was humming along as an entertaining private detective yarn when Crais threw a huge curve ball in the middle of the story that I did not see coming at all. With that one twist, he spun the plot off into an unexpected direction and raised the stakes enourmously. Very nicely done, Mr. Crais.

I particularly like how Crais portrays the relationship between Elvis and Joe when things get hairy. There are no long speeches or discussion of how they know they can count on each other, but when the shit hits the fan, the two men are perfectly in sync and know the next steps they'll need to take without even discussing it. It's rapidly becoming one of my favorite tough guy partnerships.

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.

Bobbi says

When I started this one, I was thinking, nothing ever really goes bad for these guys. Things generally just work out. Not so in this one. Couldn't put it down.

Dan Schwent says

A woman named Jennifer Sheridan hires Elvis Cole to watch her fiancée and find out what sort of trouble he's in. Only he's in a lot more trouble than Jennifer or Elvis Cole bargained for...

Robert Crais took me for another ride on this one. I thought I had a pretty good handle on things but then Crais jerked the rug out from under me. Cole and Pike take on gang members and possibly dirty cops and wind up on the run. Crais takes on controversial issues like police brutality, cover-ups, dirty cops, and life in South Central LA and manage to weave a very engaging tale. Ray Depente is introduced and much suffering supporting cast member Lou Poitras plays a role. Cole and Pike are Cole and Pike, like always. Tension builds and builds until the violence-gasm at the end.

As I've said before, I almost dismissed Elvis Cole as a Spenser ripoff when I first read The Monkey's Raincoat but now I'm solidly behind him. He's like Spenser but without the Susan Silverman baggage and much discussed code of ethics. Joe Pike's no Hawk but you can't have everything. Free Fall is a quality crime/mystery story and a good way to spend a snowy Sunday.

Garlan 🙌 says

Action. Excitement. Corrupt cops. Murder, execution, vengeance, retribution. Oh, and a nice "feel good" ending. Book #4 down, moving chronologically backwards to #3. Great series!

Col says

Synopsis/blurb....

Elvis Cole is just a detective who can't say no, especially to a girl in a terrible fix. And Jennifer Sheridan qualifies. Her fiancée, Mark Thurman, is a decorated LA cop with an elite plainclothes unit, but Jennifer is sure he's in trouble - the kind of serious trouble that only Cole can get him out of. Five minutes after his new client leaves the office, Cole and his partner, the enigmatic Joe Pike, are hip-deep in a deadly situation as

they plummet into a world of South Central gangs, corrupt cops and conspiracies of silence. And before long, every cop in the LAPD is gunning for a pair of armed and dangerous killers - Cole and Pike.

In this 4th instalment of Crais's series with Elvis Cole and his enigmatic sidekick Joe Pike, the dynamic duo cross swords with an elite unit of the LAPD who have crossed the line. Engaged by Jennifer Sheridan to find out exactly what is troubling her cop boyfriend, the pair come up against a former colleague of Pike from his police days. After ignoring the warnings to drop the case, Cole's digging ties the cop unit to a South Central gang-lord and the death of a black suspect during one of the unit's sting operations in an LA pawn shop.

Violence, gun-play, drugs, gangs, race issues, corrupt cops, broken families, anger management, intimidation and fear all figure in this tale.

Just shy of 300 pages long, I read this in a day over the weekend. I was reminded a bit of Robert B. Parker's creation Spencer. Cole has the same wise-cracking attitude that thankfully stops just short of irritating. I stuck with Spencer for around 20 books before tiring of him. This series if you include the later books that seem to figure Pike as the protagonist runs to around 15 or 16. There's nothing yet to suggest that I won't last the pace. Perhaps if Cole was a little less savvy, a little less understanding, a little less moral and a little more imperfect, I would like him a little more.

Fast-paced and enjoyable, so I'll be back with the 5th next month.

4 from 5

I bought my copy new many years ago, possibly from the now defunct Murder One bookshop in London, seeing as it was a US paperback.

<https://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2013/0...>

Nate says

This series just gets better and better. In this one Cole finds himself tangling with a group of corrupt cops. He's funny and likable as always and I like the writing enough to not roll my eyes when Pike pulls his ass out of the fire for the hundredth time.

Wendy says

Gotta love Elvis Cole!

Johnny says

Some role-playing games reward players who let the characters they play have certain inherent weaknesses that make the plots/scenarios more interesting. In *The Dresden Files Role-playing Game*, one of these aspects is called, "Sucker for a Pretty Face." One of my friends played a character with this weakness and he occasionally missed out on the excitement because his male gumshoe character was following some "red herring" or "dalliance" brought to his attention by a lovely lady. There were also times when that lovely lady

was precisely the danger for which his character should have been watching. If you're having déjà vu for one of Raymond Chandler's private eyes here, that's the model. The gorgeous woman in the office with the mysterious problem just may become *your* problem.

Elvis Cole definitely deserves the "Sucker for a Pretty Face" aspect. In every Elvis Cole novel I can think of, much of Cole's motivation comes from a desire to help and/or bed these damsels in distress. *Free Fall* is no exception to the general rule, but it plays out differently. This time, the "damsel in distress" is significantly younger than Cole (but will that provide a disincentive?) and the "damsel" is only distressed about what is happening to someone else. In this case, someone else is her undercover cop fiancée who appears to have been lured to the dark side of the police force. Naturally, with Elvis' and Joe Pike's prior interaction with LAPD, it is not a comfortable situation for them to be investigating what is, at best, an out of control "hat squad" (as per Nick Nolte in *Mulholland Falls*) and, at worst, a bunch of cops who have gone completely dirty. And, although I am satisfied with the ending of the novel, it seems like the reader still has to decide whether it's the former, the latter, or something in between. The ambiguity is delicious in the context of a Cole and Pike adventure.

There is a tragic aspect to this novel, however. One is expectant of a certain amount of death in a murder mystery, but some of the sudden death in this novel hits me (as a person who used to work in South Central Los Angeles during my college years) a little too close to home. The victims in this book, in spite of the presumed main characters, seem mostly from the same ethnic group. It is a different ethnic group than Cole's or Pike's and several scenes in the story seem designed to remind us not to make assumptions about people on the basis of culture or race. These scenes aren't heavy-handed. They're actually pretty effective.

There is a rule in literature (and even in script-writing for film and games) that death really only impacts one when the reader/viewer/player has a relationship with the victim. *Free Fall* does a fabulous job of building empathy between the reader and the victim's family, as well as between the reader and the good people (the other victims) in the victim's community. If you're looking for something different than the standard stereotypes of certain cultures or races, I believe that *Free Fall* delivers—even though there is some lamenting of the kinds of behavior that created such stereotypes.

Now, it could be my imagination, but *Free Fall* seemed more cinematic than, for example, *The Monkey's Raincoat*. I visualized certain passages as scenes and that caused me to slip out of my suspension of disbelief on occasion. That's really unusual for me when reading Crais' writing. Is it possible that this novel was squeezed in between some television scripting and some of the style of the more visual medium slipped in? Some of the descriptions read almost like EXT-INT: Cole and his informant are sitting in a car outside an inner city park, performing surveillance on an ice cream truck. You can almost see the long shot showing them in the car across from the park and the camera zooming in or using the dolly to move up on them for close-ups showing them in the car from the exterior of the car.

Still, the action was great, the mystery had enough complexity to be satisfying, and the conclusion was executed with consummate perfection. So, why do I only rate it three stars? I simply felt like there were too many places that caused me to step outside of the story. It could simply be my personal taste and not relevant to others.
