



Chasing Darkness

Robert Crais

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Private Investigator Elvis Cole learns that LA fires bring more than heat, they bring his old friend Joe Pike and the past. Cole's fight to clear his name brings murder and corruption terrifyingly close to home.

It's fire season, and the hills of Los Angeles are burning. When police and fire department personnel rush door to door in a frenzied evacuation effort, they discover the week-old corpse of an apparent suicide. But the gunshot victim is less gruesome than what they find in his lap: a photo album of seven brutally murdered young women—one per year, for seven years. And when the suicide victim is identified as a former suspect in one of the murders, the news turns Elvis Cole's world upside down.

Three years earlier Lionel Byrd was brought to trial for the murder of a female prostitute named Yvonne Bennett. A taped confession coerced by the police inspired a prominent defense attorney to take Byrd's case, and Elvis Cole was hired to investigate. It was Cole's eleventh-hour discovery of an exculpatory videotape that allowed Lionel Byrd to walk free. Elvis was hailed as a hero.

But the discovery of the death album in Byrd's lap now brands Elvis as an unwitting accomplice to murder. Captured in photographs that could only have been taken by the murderer, Yvonne Bennett was the fifth of the seven victims—two more young women were murdered after Lionel Byrd walked free. So Elvis can't help but wonder—did he, Elvis Cole, cost two more young women their lives?

Shut out of the investigation by a special LAPD task force determined to close the case, Elvis Cole and Joe Pike desperately fight to uncover the truth about Lionel Byrd and his nightmare album of death—a truth hidden by lies, politics, and corruption in a world where nothing is what it seems to be.

Chasing Darkness is a blistering thriller from the bestselling author who sets the standard for intense, powerful crime writing.

Chasing Darkness Details

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From Reader Review Chasing Darkness for online ebook

Joe says

Elvis Cole returns front and center in this volume, with Joe Pike and Carol Starkey in strong supporting roles. In Chasing Darkness Elvis is faced with an honor-bound detective's nightmare. In the midst of a wild-fire and the associated evacuation a man, soon identified as a former murder suspect Cole helped exonerate, is found dead in his home, apparently of a suicide. Unfortunately for Elvis, there is strong evidence found during the preliminary investigation that the dead man was in fact the murderer he was accused of being. To compound the issue, said deceased suspect claimed two more victims after Elvis' investigation assisted in freeing him three years earlier.

After a few moments of self-doubt, our honor-bound hero – and the “World’s Best Detective” – rehashes his old investigation and starts a new one to justify his past actions and solve the current mystery. And very quickly, Elvis – with Pike and Starkey along for the ride – finds himself embroiled in a tangled web of murder and police/political corruption. Chasing Darkness is a very fast-paced, engaging gumshoe mystery with Elvis uncovering one clue after another. There are also enough interesting characters, twists and turns – including the conclusion - to keep the reader guessing and turning the pages.

The one fault I found with this book is Elvis’ use of connections when he’s stymied and needs valuable information. All of our favorite fictional PIs know somebody on the “inside”, but Elvis/Crais relies on this “technique” a little too often here, making repeated calls – the DMV, tax-assessor office, Hollywood agents, etc. – when “stuck”. Granted these “quick answers” keep the story moving, but after the sixth or seventh time, it does strain credibility.

That said, Chasing Darkness is very engaging/entertaining and I enjoyed the read.

Mike says

2nd reading - Three years earlier, Elvis had helped a top-notch attorney prove Lionel Byrd hadn't murdered a prostitute. Now, Byrd is found dead from a suicide, and a memory book of photos may prove he killed the pro - and six other girls, too.

Cole embarks on a conscience-provoking tour of that case. If he was wrong, two other women were killed after it. During his attempts at the truth, he is met with resistance from the top echelon of a crime task force created when the album was found.

I enjoyed the procedural here, with Pike, Poitras, John Chen and Starkey helping our hero put things right.

1st reading - Good Elvis/Joe story with the customary twists, not as much action as usual.

Tim says

Apparently, my expectations were much too high going into this story. "Chasing Sorrow and Misery," might be more appropriate. 1 of 10 stars

Nadine says

I've enjoyed watching the Elvis Cole character evolve through the many books Robert Crais has written. Like many other private eye types, Elvis has a personal code of honor, a faithful side kick, and a solid footing in a specific geographic place: Los Angeles.

This Elvis outing was more plot than character driven, but was a good read during a rainy New England weekend. There's a depth of history to the players in this series by this point, but I prefer it when Mr. Crais develops the back stories of his characters more.

Elvis has to redeem himself in this book. That's often the underlying story line in many of titles of this series. This episode has him almost doubting his work and self worth by exposing a previously cleared suspect as the most probably murderer. Elvis works hard to find the truth, and a little bit more of himself while he's at it. His best friend Pike is definitely in the background in this outing, and his enigmatic past sometimes adds some spice to these novels.

I would recommend any of these Elvis Cole books, but I would suggest the reader tackle them in order to get the full benefits of the stories told.

Carolyn (in SC) C234D says

I have always enjoyed the stories, characters, and humor in the Elvis Cole series, and this one is no exception, but perhaps not my favorite. Police believe they have found the body of a serial killer, and it's someone Cole cleared in one of the murder cases several years ago. He knows he was right then, and he must now determine the identity of the actual killer. A good read, as usual.

Ed says

I believe this is my second or third P.I. Elvis Cole yarn. Very enjoyable read. Solid detective story, vivid setting, good action scenes. I'll be looking to read deeper into the series.

Mark Baker says

When the body of Lionel Byrd is found in his rental house, the police also find a photo album with pictures of murder victims. One of those victims was someone that Lionel had been arrested for killing three years ago, and Elvis Cole was hired by his defense attorney to help get him off. Elvis did thanks to an ironclad

alibi. Was Elvis wrong then? Or is something else going on now?

This is a compelling case that moves quickly from one plot point to another. I followed Elvis down a couple of blind allies and wrong turns before he figured things out. While we don't get all the answers we might like, the book isn't set up to give them to us. However, the conclusion is still satisfying. The characters we meet here are strong. This is really Elvis' story, so we don't see too much of his partner Joe Pike. Another couple of regulars appear here, and they are definitely the best versions of themselves. Do take the title of the book seriously; some of what we learn along the way is more graphic than I felt it needed to be, and we don't get as much of Elvis' trademark wit here. Still, this was a book well worth reading.

Read my full review at [Carstairs Considers](#).

Kemper says

Elvis Cole was instrumental in clearing Lionel Bird after he was accused of brutally murdering a young woman. Three years later Bird commits suicide and leaves behind a photo album that indicates that not only did he kill the woman that Cole investigated, he also murdered others before and after that.

Oops.

Cole reexamines the evidence he gathered and is still convinced that Bird was innocent of that crime. So where did the pictures of the dead women come from? And why is a LAPD task force led by an ambitious deputy chief declaring the cases now closed but still secretly gathering evidence? Is Cole just grasping at straws to avoid admitting that he screwed up and potentially got some innocent women killed? With the help of his trusty partner Joe Pike, Elvis is determined to get answers and refuses to quit even when confronted with pressure from the cops and angry family members of one of the victims.

This one comes at a point when Elvis and Joe had spent several of the previous books working cases with intensely personal angles to them with severe consequences. The set-up for this seems like it'd be another in that line with Elvis starting out understandably upset that he might have inadvertently helped a murderer go free to kill again, but that angle sort of fades away in the second half of the book. In fact, it's a little odd how this one starts out with Elvis having so much personally invested, but then it turns into what could be considered an almost routine investigation by Cole and Pike's usual standards. It's almost as if Crais started writing this and decided to scale back how much it'd personally impact Cole by the end of it.

There's also some loose ends and things that don't make a lot of sense plot wise. (view spoiler)

It's typically solid work from Crais, but it almost seems like he started one book and then turned it into another that wouldn't put Cole through such a wringer this time out so it never reaches the kind of highs I've seen from this series at its best.

Erin says

Robert Crais is becoming one of my new favorite authors--I'm putting him right up there with Michael Connelly and Lee Child. This was my first Elvis Cole book, and he's a terrific complement to Joe Pike--more emotional where Pike is removed, more verbal where Pike is a brick wall. They work terrifically together and it makes sense they're friends. The plot kept me engaged and was quickly paced--at 270 pages, I zipped through it super fast. Cole makes a connection (for good or bad) to the people he's investigating--he makes them human--which is why he's involved in this story in the first place (about a man he helped acquit as a serial killer 3 years ago being found, an apparent suicide, with pictures of 7 murder victims). You know something is fishy, but not quite what, and I was surprised at the end when the killer was revealed. I thought they spoiled it too soon, but not so!

I've got the first 2 Joe Pike's waiting for me on my dresser (I cleared out my local branch of the Robert Crais books) and I know I'll enjoy them just as much.

Carol. says

Wow, I really am addicted to this series. Although I had the next book in order coming from a library, I stopped at my local branch to see what was in stock and found Elvis Cole #12. It was a fast, interesting read with a couple of unpredictable twists.

A fire is spreading through Laurel Canyon, so two cops are going door to door to alert people to the danger. A woman notes that a man with a bad foot hasn't left his place in days. When they break in, they discover him dead, gunshot wound to the head and a book with seven photographs of brutally murdered women in his lap. Detectives soon pay Elvis Cole a visit, blaming him for finding the alibi that set the man free after murder number five. Elvis is racked with guilt and tries to find out what he can about the murdered man and his album. Unfortunately, a LAPD chief has the investigation wrapped within a week. Elvis continues to dig, weaseling information in any way possible, from bribes to families to a little B&E.

This is one of the first times I've deliberately jumped around a series instead of reading each book as it came out or going back to read in order. It's interesting; the things that I enjoyed about book three are still here, but there's been a shift. Elvis is not quite as much of a charmer as he is in the earlier books, and seems uncharacteristically moody and affected by guilt. There are still moments where he is compassionate and gentle, but are fewer, as is the humor. I'll miss it if that's the case for subsequent books.

Plotting was interesting. Initially I felt as if Elvis' involvement hung on the thinnest of pretexts, but I ended up appreciating the various methods Elvis uses to remain involved, always a challenge when one's lead is a private detective. Crais had a couple of fat red herrings, one of which I fell for. I especially enjoyed being surprised because it felt reasonably plausible.

There were also some moments of solid atmospheric writing. I definitely had the feel of the dry heat and the L.A. landscape.

"Our office was a good place to be that morning. There was only the tocking of the Pinocchio clock, the scratch of my pen, and the hiss of the air conditioner fighting a terrible heat. Fire season had arrived, when fires erupted across the Southland like pimples on adolescent skin."

"The canyon behind my house was pleasant during the midday hours, with a slight breeze that brought out the hawks to search for rabbits and mice. Somewhere below, a power saw whined in the trees, punctuated by the faint tapping of a nail gun. Someone was always building something, and the sounds of it were encouraging. They sounded like life."

Another solid entry into a series with above average writing. Sadly, though this one did involve both a serial killer and a cat, Crais is smart enough to keep the focus on the mystery and the character interplay, not reliving each murder. Very enjoyable because of the plot twists and solid writing.

Rounding up from 3.5 stars because it deserves it on the *P.I. Detective Scale*

Alex says

CHASING DARKNESS (Pub. 2008) by Robert Crais was my first read by this author, and is Crais' 15th novel. It was a good read in the fairly classic P.I. who-done-it style. I picked this story up at the recommendation of several Goodreads folks, as well as my favorite author.

Crais' writing style is strong, the prose and the story flow easily. It mostly held my interest all the way through, admittedly with a couple slower spots, but not enough to call it boggy.

The story opens in California, with a fire blazing in Laurel Canyon, and two cops going door to door to make sure all the residents have evacuated. They come to an unkempt home and have reason to believe the resident is still inside, so they go in. They find the man, shot through the head in an apparent suicide move, with a picture album full of viciously murdered women laying at the dead man's feet.

Elvis Cole, the P.I. in the story, gets pulled in because the suicide victim turns out to be a guy he helped get off of a murder charge years ago, along with the city's leading defense attorney. But the suicide and the photos in the murder book don't ring true to Elvis, so he sets out to get to the bottom of it.

The story has some interesting twists, a couple red herrings and a surprise who-done-it twist at the end. The climax has a good amount of tension, action and what's-gonna-happen, along with a satisfying, although somewhat sad, ending. I like the Elvis Cole character, all though he doesn't have any distinguishing features or character traits, IMO, and his sidekick, Pike, is only vaguely in the picture on/off.

All in all, it was a good read, but not a great read. I base my 5-star ratings on whether I would gladly read a book again, and CHASING DARKNESS doesn't quite get there for me. I don't regret the time spent reading it, but nothing about it will live in my memory, there were no unique snatches of dialogue or insightful thoughts, no major or vivid action. But it's a good story told in the standard P.I. vein, and worth reading at least once.

Jen says

Lionel Byrd is found dead in his home, apparently of suicide, when Los Angeles' law enforcement officers are evacuating people due to fires in the area. The death in and of itself wouldn't be alarm-setting, but the

photo album full of pictures of dead women is a problem.

Lionel had been accused of murdering one of the women, Yvonne Bennett, in the book a few years earlier. Elvis Cole found evidence that set him free. Now the Los Angeles police department is saying that Elvis got two more women killed by helping to set Lionel free in the first place - the two women murdered after Yvonne.

Elvis is SURE that the evidence he found three years ago was legitimate, and something hinky is going on. When more oddities start popping up, Elvis sets out to prove what actually happened once and for all.

Crais is back in true form with Chasing Darkness. The best statement I ever heard made about Robert Crais was, "Crais on a bad day is better than most writers on their best days." Let me assure you that Chasing Darkness WASN'T a bad day!

From page one, Crais starts building up a theme of corruption in reality. There are evils destroying the world around Elvis. First the fires are burning his city. Then he receives news that his exterminator has found termites at his house, corrupting the foundation. A ransacking break-in even results in Elvis' Mickey Mouse phone being broken. Crais has to glue him back together, but you can still see the cracks...the damage. And the corruption continues to build up to the ultimate level of law enforcement and the government.

As is the case with any Crais novel, the plot constantly feeds you twists and turns. It is pointless to try to predict the ending to a Crais novel because he'll get you. You are down to the last twenty pages or so and you know he's leading you down the final path...the one to the answers, and you know he's fed you enough information to figure out the "who done it" and then IT TWISTS AGAIN! GOTCHA!!

Crais is a master of the character. Have you ever noticed the theme with my reading preferences? One must have great characters for me to really connect. Crais' characters always manage to take up residence inside my head for days, sometimes weeks, after I've finished reading one of his books. They are so real for me that they become a part of my world in a sense. No matter how many of Crais' books I read, I never tire of hearing about Joe Pike. And something as simple as "[Pike's:] machine picked up with a beep. Pike doesn't have an outgoing message. You just get the beep" says oceans about Joe. He didn't play a very big role in this novel, but when he is present, he fills the room.

Crais never needs a lot of words to build a character. John Chen in all his paranoia, returns in this novel and Crais describes him: "Chen was tall and skinny, and watching him get out of the wagon was like watching a question mark unfold. He studied the surrounding buildings as if he were checking for spies, then hurried to my car." Holy Cow! Who doesn't conjure up a vivid image from a description like that?

I found Crais allusions to The Wizard of Oz very fitting for this theme. They played right into the idea of reality and what one sees and believes. He's another author who doesn't waste a word when he's writing. It all works toward the theme of the book. Is it any wonder I had to finish this book in one day?

Chasing Darkness is another stellar performance from Robert Crais.

John McDermott says

Robert Crais' books are the literary equivalent of Dark Chocolate HobNobs ! Very addictive - once you've

finished one, you want another straight away - and best enjoyed with a nice cup of tea ! Chasing Darkness was no exception and another top notch addition to this excellent series. Highly recommended.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

I admit I am reading these books out of order, but it hasn't hurt. I like Crais' spare writing style, yet how he writes description beautifully, bringing Los Angeles to life for me as I listened. I was a bit disappointed with how quickly it ended, leaving me with some questions about why the killer was operating. The same narrator as The Watchman, and he does the Cole/Pike books perfectly well, so I shall not complain.

I exhaled a dreamy sigh whenever Pike came around. He is utterly lickable. (Did I write that in my review? Pausing to drool...) Back to the review... I am quite fond of Elvis too. I don't feel that I know him as well as Pike, but that's my fault for reading these books out of order.

It was very awesome to see Carol Starkey from Demolition Angel again. She seems a little better adjusted, but smokes like a chimney. I enjoyed the banter between her and Elvis.

This one is a low four because of the sparse detail on the killer and how it wraps up. I think the characters are a strong point for me with this series, and the mystery part is sort of an added bonus, so I can still rate this one well. It's a four because I really liked it for the reasons I mentioned. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it!

Dan Schwent says

A man Elvis Cole cleared for murder years ago turns up dead with a photo album of seven female murder victims in his possession. Did Cole help clear a killer? Why is the task force still working if the case has been closed? And what is the glory-seeking police chief trying to hide? That's what Elvis Cole and Joe Pike are trying to find out...

I have to admit, I had my doubts about this one at first. I should have known Crais had pulled the wool over my eyes yet again when I thought I knew who the killer was about halfway through.

Chasing Darkness continues the saga of Elvis Cole. It's not as weighty as the last three books, more of a run of the mill case. Cole, with help from friends Joe Pike, John Chen, Carol Starkey, and some of the other regulars, works to figure out if he helped clear a serial killer, leaving him free to kill again.

Like I mentioned before, Crais had me off in the wrong direction for a good portion of the book. Still, when the cops are like Marx and Munson, it's easy to assume the worst.

For an Elvis Cole book, Chasing Darkness is surprisingly light on gun play and for the first time in a while, neither Cole nor Pike end up in the hospital. Hell, it doesn't even have the usual Cole and Pike ending of a shoot out with the bad guys. Still, it was quite an engaging read. There were some tense moments when Elvis did some illegal things during the course of the investigation.

Any complaints? Only that I wish Elvis would cut Lucy Chenier out of his life and set up house with either Carol Starkey or Joe Pike. Four stars.
