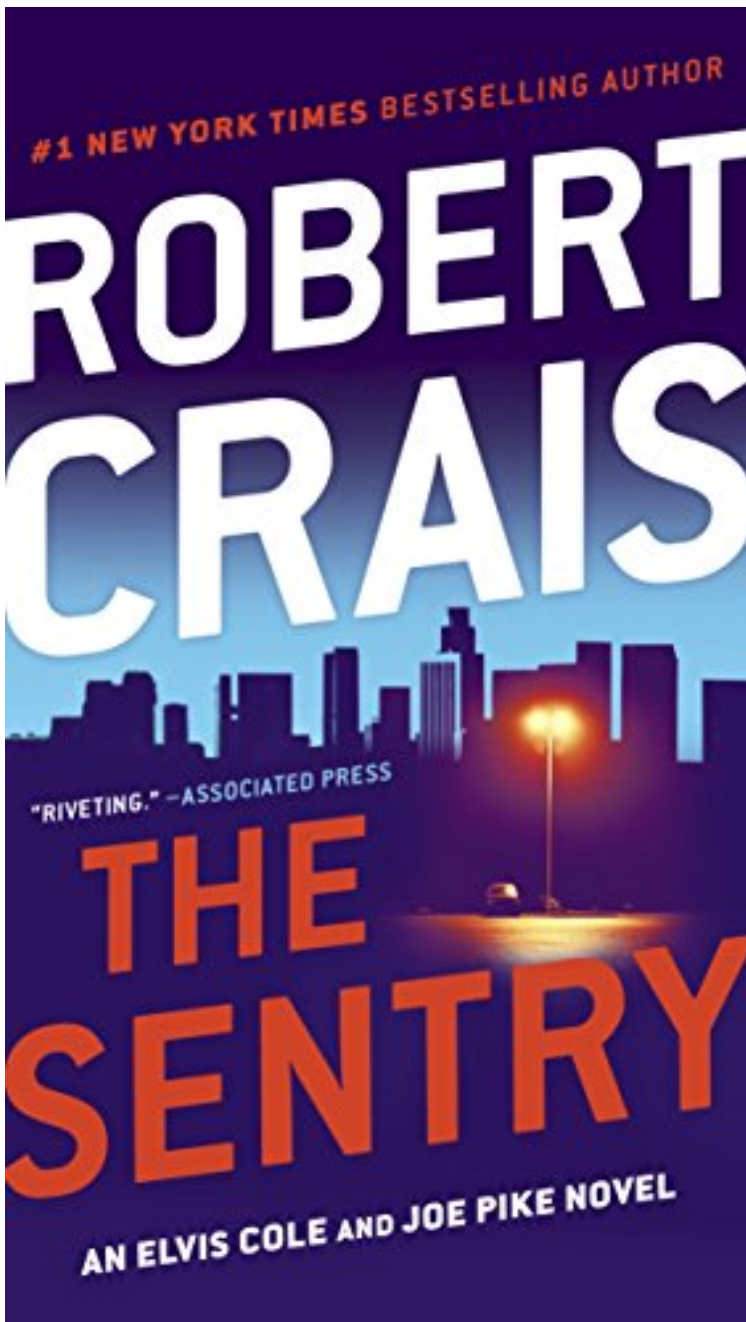


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The Sentry



Par Robert Crais
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurPrivate investigators Joe Pike and Elvis Cole get double-crossed in this twisty, grippingNew York Times bestseller that will have readers on the edge of their seats.When gangbangers shake down the modest owner of a Los Angeles eatery, Joe Pike intervenes. For all intents and purposes, Pike saved Wilson Smith's life. But for reasons of their own, Smith and his lovely niece, Dru, are curiously

resentful. It's only when Pike's feelings for the woman deepen that he and his partner, Elvis Cole, discover that Dru and her uncle are not at all who they seem, and everything Pike has learned about them is a lie. But it's much more than a deception. It's a trap. And with every new twist it's proving to be a killer.

ExtraitNew Orleans2005 Monday, 4:28 a.m., the narrow French Quarter room was smoky with cheap candles that smelled of honey. Daniel stared through broken shutters and shivering glass up the length of the alley, catching a thin slice of Jackson Square through curtains of gale-force rain that swirled through New Orleans like mad bats riding the storm. Daniel had never seen rain fall up before. Daniel loved these damned hurricanes. He folded back the shutters, then opened the window. Rain hit him good. It tasted of salt and smelled of dead fish and weeds. The cat-five wind clawed through New Orleans at better than a hundred miles an hour, but back here in the alley in a cheap one-room apartment over a po'boy shop the wind was no stronger than an arrogant breeze. The power in this part of the Quarter had gone out almost an hour ago; hence, the candles Daniel found in the manager's office. Emergency lighting fed by battery packs lit a few nearby buildings, giving a creepy blue glow to the shimmering walls. Most everyone in the surrounding buildings had gone. Not everyone, but most. The stubborn, the helpless, and the stupid had stayed. Like Daniel's friend, Tolley. Tolley had stayed. Stupid. And now here they were in an empty building surrounded by empty buildings in an outrageous storm that had forced more than a million people out of the city, but Daniel kinda dug it. All this noise and all this emptiness, no one to hear Tolley scream. Daniel turned from the window, arching his eyebrows. "You smell that? That's what zombies smell like, brought up from the death with an unnatural life. You get to see a zombie?" Tolley was between answers right now, being tied to the bed with thirty feet of nylon cord. His head just kinda hung there, all swollen and broken, though he was still breathing. Every once in a while he would lurch and shiver. Daniel didn't let Tolley's lack of responsiveness stop him. Daniel sauntered over to the bed. Cleo and Tobey shuffled out of the way, letting him pass. Daniel had a syringe pack in his bag, along with some poppers, meth, and other choice pharmaceuticals. He took out the kit, shot up Tolley with some crystal, then waited for it to take effect. Outside, something exploded with a muffled whump that wasn't quite lost in the wind. Power transformer, probably, giving up the ghost, or maybe a wall falling over. Tolley's eyes flickered amid a sudden fury of blinks, then dialed into focus. He tried to pull away when he saw Daniel, but, really, where could he go? Daniel said, all serious, "I asked you, you seen a zombie? They got'm here in this place, I know for a fact." Tolley shook his head, which kinda pissed Daniel off. On his way to New Orleans six days earlier, having been sent to find Tolley based upon an absolutely spot-on lead, Daniel decided this was his one pure and good chance to see a zombie. Daniel could not abide a zombie, and found their existence offensive. The dead should stay dead, and not rise to walk again, all shamblin' and vile and slack. He didn't care for vampires, either, but zombies just rubbed him the wrong way. Daniel had it on good authority that New Orleans held quite a few zombies, and maybe a vampire or two. "Don't be like that, Tolliver. New Orleans is supposed to have zombies, don't it, what with all this hoodoo and shit you got here, them zombies from Haiti? You musta seen something Tolley's eyes were bright with meth, the one eye, the left, a glossy red ball what with the burst veins. Daniel wiped the rain from his face, and felt all tired. "Where is she?" "I swear I doan know." "You kill her? That what you been tryin' to say?" "No!" "She tell you where they goin'?" "I don't know nuthin' about" Daniel hammered his fist straight down on Tolley's chest, and scooped up the Asp. The Asp was a collapsible steel rod almost two feet long. Daniel brought it down hard, lashing Tolley's chest, belly, thighs, and shins with a furious beating. Tolley screamed and jerked at his binds, but no one was left to hear. Daniel let him have it for a long time, then tossed aside the Asp and returned to the window. Tobey and Cleo scrambled out of his way. "I wanna see a goddamned zombie. A zombie, vampire, something to make this fuckin' trip worthwhile." The rain blew in hard, hot and salty as blood. Daniel didn't care. Here he was, come all this way, and not a zombie to be found. Anything was good, Daniel missed out. A life of miserable disappointments. He looked at Tobey and Cleo. They were difficult to see in the flickery light, all blurry and smudged, but he could make them out well enough. "Bet I could kill me a zombie, one on one, straight up, and I'd like to try. You think I could kill me a zombie?" Neither Tobey nor Cleo answered. "I ain't shittin', I could take me a zombie. Take me a vampire, too, only here we are and I gotta waste my time with this lame shit. I'd rather be huntin' zombies." He pointed at Tolley. "Hey, boy." Daniel returned to the bed and shook Tolley awake. "You think I could take me a zombie, head up, one on one?" The red eye rolled, and blood leaked from the shattered mouth. A mushy hiss escaped, so Daniel leaned closer. Sounded like the fucker was finally openin' up. "Say what?" Tolley's mouth worked as he tried to speak. Daniel smiled encouragingly. "You hear that wind? I was a bat, I'd spread my wings and ride that sumbitch for all she was

worth. Where'd they go, boy? I know she tol' ya. You tell me where they went so I can get outta here. Just say it. You're almost there. Give me a hand, and I'm out your hair." Tolley's lips worked, and Daniel knew he was about to give it, but then what little air he had left hissed out. "You say west? They was headed west? Over to Texas?" Tolley was dead. Daniel stared at the body for a moment, then drew his gun and put five bullets into Tolliver James's chest. Nasty explosions that anyone staying behind would have heard even with the lion wind. Daniel didn't give a damn. If someone came running, Daniel figured to shoot them, too, but nobody cameno police, no neighbors, no nobody. Everyone with two squirts of brain juice was hunkered down tight, trying to survive. Daniel reloaded, tucked away his gun, then took out the satellite phone. The cell stations were out all over the city, but the sat phone worked great. He checked the time, hit the speed dial, then waited for a link. It always took a few seconds. In that time, he stood taller, straightened himself, and resumed his normal manner. When the connection was made, Daniel reported. "Tolliver James is dead. He didn't provide anything useful." Daniel listened for a moment before responding. "No, sir, they're gone. That much is confirmed. James was a good bet, but I don't believe she told him anything." He listened again, this time for quite a while. "No, sir, that is not altogether true. There are three or four people here I'd still like to talk to, but the storm has turned this place to shit. They've almost certainly evacuated. I just don't know. It will take me a while to locate them." More chatter from the other side, but then they were finished. "Yes, sir, I understand. You get yours, I get mine. I won't let you down." A last word from the master. "Yes, sir. Thank you. I'll keep you informed." Daniel shut the phone and put it away. "Asshole." He returned to the window, and let the rain lash him. Everything was wet now: shirt, pants, shoes, hair, all the way down to his bones. He leaned out, better to see the Square. A fifty-five-gallon oil drum tumbled past the alley's mouth, end over end, followed by a bicycle, swept along on its side, and then a shattered sheet of plywood flipping and soaring like a playing card tossed out like trash. Daniel shouted into the wind as loud as he could. "C'mon and get me, you fuckin' zombies! Show your true and unnatural colors." Daniel threw back his head and howled. He barked like a dog, then howled again before turning back to the room to pack up his gear. Tobey and Cleo were gone. Tolliver had hidden eight thousand dollars under the mattress, still vacu-packed in plastic, which Daniel found when he first searched the room. Probably a gift from the girl. Daniel stashed the money in his bag, checked to make sure Tolliver had no pulse, then went to the little bathroom where he'd left Tolliver's lady friend after he strangled her, nice and neat in the tub. A little black stream of ants had already found her, not even a day. Cleo said, "Gotta get going, Daniel. Stop fuckin' around." Tobey said, "Go where, a storm like this? Makes sense to stay." Daniel decided Tobey was right. Tobey was the smart one, and usually right, even if Daniel couldn't always see him. "Okay, I guess I should wait till the worst is over." Tobey said, "Wait." Cleo said, "Wait, wait." Like echoes fading away. Daniel returned to the window. He leaned out into the rain again, watching the mouth of the alley in case a zombie rattled past. "C'mon, goddamnit, lemme see one. One freaky-ass zombie is all I ask." If a zombie appeared, Daniel planned to jump out the window after it and rip its putrid, unnatural flesh to pieces with his teeth. He was, after all, a werewolf, which was why he was such a good hunter and killer. Werewolves feared nothing. Daniel tipped back his head and howled to match the wind, then doused the candles and sat with the bodies, waiting for the storm to pass. When it ended, Daniel would find their trail, and track them, and he would not quit until they were his. No matter how long it took or how far they ran. This was why the men down south used him for these jobs and paid him so well. Werewolves caught their prey.