Chapter 16

The chapter opens with French Landing enveloped in an uneasy quiet, hinting at impending chaos. At Maxton’s nursing home, Chipper enjoys a sensual moment with Rebecca Vilas while the elderly residents are engrossed in *The Sound of Music*, except for Burny, who is absent and under the control of a sinister force. Meanwhile, Jack Sawyer arrives at Henry Leyden’s house to discuss music and resume reading *Bleak House*. The town’s tension is palpable, with Fred Marshall grieving at home and the Crow Gorg whispering poison to Tansy Freneau at the trailer park.

Dale Gilbertson, the local police chief, receives a call from Debbi Anderson about a breakthrough in the case. The discovery of disturbing Polaroids in George Potter’s closet shocks Andy Railsback and Morty Fine, who report their findings to Dale. Despite the grim situation, Dale remains composed, relying on Jack as his safety net. The chapter underscores the growing dread in French Landing as the investigation intensifies, with Dale coordinating his team to respond to the new evidence.

At the police station, Ernie Therriault and Doc Amberson, a biker with a mysterious past, exchange greetings before entering. Doc and his group, the Five, have been patient but are growing restless. Dale, now focused and decisive, instructs Railsback and Fine to monitor the lobby for Potter’s return, though Fine is reluctant. The chapter highlights the collaboration between law enforcement and the biker group, hinting at an impending confrontation.

The narrative shifts to Dale’s strategic thinking as he prepares to involve Doc Amberson in the investigation, signaling a turning point in the case. The chapter closes with Dale’s determination to apprehend the killer, emphasizing the town’s collective anxiety and the blurred lines between official and unofficial efforts to solve the crime. The stage is set for a dramatic escalation in the hunt for the perpetrator.