

Chapter 18

The chapter opens with widespread media coverage of the chaotic events outside the French Landing police station, particularly the footage of Officer Arnold Hrabowski striking reporter Wendell Green with a flashlight. This incident captivates viewers across Wisconsin, especially in French Landing and nearby towns. Jack Sawyer watches the news on a portable TV, reflecting on the fallout: he hopes Hrabowski's suspension won't be revoked and that Green will face consequences, though he doubts either outcome. Jack also dwells on Andy Railsback's account of a suspicious old man at the Nelson Hotel, potentially linked to the Fisherman case, and considers Maxton's Elder Care as a possible hideout for the suspect.

Wendell Green, nursing a head injury, watches the same footage in his hotel room, seething with anger and humiliation. Despite his self-justification—claiming his aggressive reporting is necessary—he fears professional repercussions. Green plans to appease his editor by emphasizing his exclusive coverage of the Fisherman case and then pursue a lead from Fred Marshall, a Goltz's salesman. Meanwhile, Officer Hrabowski, now a hero to his wife, contemplates appealing his suspension, while Police Chief Dale Gilbertson admires Hrabowski's decisive action and considers reinstating him.

The narrative shifts to Wanda Kinderling, a bitter and isolated woman who blames Jack Sawyer for her husband Thorny's wrongful imprisonment. She listens to the radio, having sacrificed cable TV for alcohol, and seethes with hatred for Sawyer and the media. Wanda believes the Fisherman's crimes are retribution against the community she despises, and she fantasizes about further violence. Her venomous thoughts reveal her deep resentment and conspiracy theories, including the idea that Sawyer framed Thorny for crimes he couldn't have committed.

The chapter concludes with brief mentions of other characters: Gorg, who remains detached in Faraway, and Charles Burnside, who dreams ominously at Maxton's. These glimpses hint at broader supernatural and malevolent forces at play, tying into the overarching mystery of the Fisherman. The chapter weaves together media frenzy, personal vendettas, and dark undercurrents, setting the stage for further conflict and investigation in French Landing.

