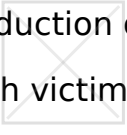


Chapter 8

Jack Sawyer is reluctantly drawn back into action after two phone calls disrupt his secluded life in Norway Valley. The first call comes from his friend Henry, who informs him about the abduction of a child named Tyler Marshall from Maxton's, marking the Fisherman's fourth victim.  Henry urges Jack to step in, arguing that his involvement could calm the panicked community. Despite Jack's initial resistance, the second call from Dale Gilbertson, the local police chief, reinforces the urgency. Dale reveals that Tyler's father, Fred Marshall, is desperate to speak with Jack, as his wife Judy has suffered a mental breakdown due to their son's disappearance.

Jack's decision to head to the police station is also influenced by a private, unacknowledged anxiety. He has been experiencing unsettling waking dreams and irrational fears, such as avoiding opening drawers or the refrigerator, fearing he might find robins' eggs—a symbol of his unresolved trauma. Though he dismisses these fears as temporary and irrational, they underscore his internal struggle. Jack rationalizes his trip as a mere formality, intending to offer Fred Marshall comforting platitudes before returning to his retirement. He resents the pressure from Henry and Dale, feeling his obligation is overstated.

As Jack drives to French Landing, he reflects on his reluctance to fully engage with the case. He plans to fulfill a superficial role, offering sympathy to Fred Marshall without committing to a deeper investigation. Jack's sarcastic musings about punishing Henry with bad music reveal his defensive attitude. Yet, his lingering unease is evident when he fixates on the ashtray in his truck, a trivial object that nonetheless symbolizes his suppressed fears. This small moment hints at the psychological toll of his past work and his unresolved connection to the Fisherman case.

The chapter captures Jack's conflicted state—torn between his desire for isolation and the pull of responsibility. His journey to the police station is framed as a reluctant

concession, but the underlying tension suggests he may not escape the case so easily. The narrative sets the stage for his inevitable deeper involvement, blending external pressure with his internal turmoil. Jack's attempts to downplay his fears and obligations only highlight their significance, foreshadowing his eventual confrontation with the Fisherman's horrors.

