

Chapter 10

In Chapter 10, "The Disappeared," Joe Pickett reflects on his first impressions of Lance Ramsey, his daughter Sheridan's new romantic interest, during a phone call with his wife, Marybeth. Despite his usual skepticism toward men pursuing his daughters, Joe admits Ramsey—a cowboy who defended Sheridan in a bar—seems respectable. However, his discomfort resurfaces when he witnesses Sheridan kissing Ramsey goodbye outside his hotel. Marybeth reassures him, but Joe struggles with the reality of his grown daughter's independence, juxtaposed with memories of her as a child.

Meanwhile, Joe receives a puzzling call from Casey Scales about the mysterious disappearance of keys to a game warden house in Saratoga. Scales reveals the keys were sent to the governor's office without explanation, leaving Joe suspicious and determined to investigate further. This subplot hints at larger bureaucratic intrigue, adding tension to Joe's already complicated assignment in the area.

Later, Joe reviews the case file of Kate, a missing British woman, focusing on the Youngberg brothers, who had earlier harassed Sheridan. He speculates whether their aggressive behavior could link them to Kate's disappearance. This connection deepens the mystery and underscores Joe's role as both a protective father and a determined investigator.

The chapter closes with Joe noticing a mysterious couple at the bar, dressed in black and speaking in hushed British accents. Their out-of-place appearance and secretive demeanor pique Joe's curiosity, suggesting they may be connected to Kate's case. The bartender's mocking imitation of their accents hints at local skepticism, setting the stage for further confrontation or revelation in the unfolding investigation.