

# Chapter 23

In this chapter, Joe arrives at the Wolf and learns that Nate has secured a room. Bartender Kim Miller offers him a beer, hinting she knows about his rough day, though Joe initially fears she's referring to his firing. The conversation shifts to a scandalous article by Billy Bloodworth, which mocks the sheriff's office and features a photo of Joe's daughter, Sheridan, during a raid. The article omits critical context, painting the law enforcement operation as farcical. Joe is furious, especially at the exploitation of his daughter's image, but realizes Bloodworth and Sophie have already left for Denver, evading immediate confrontation.

Joe's anger drives him to retaliate by reporting Bloodworth and Sophie to Colorado authorities for fraud, exploiting his remaining law enforcement connections. Meanwhile, Kim reveals an anonymous call from someone she believes is Steve Pollock, adding another layer of mystery. The call's secrecy suggests Pollock may be avoiding direct contact, raising questions about his motives. Joe's frustration mounts as he grapples with the fallout of the article and the looming threat to his career, feeling powerless yet determined to push forward despite the odds.

Later, Joe updates Marybeth on the day's events, including Nate's theory that Missy, Marybeth's mother, orchestrated the conspiracy against him. Marybeth reacts with uncharacteristic fury, vowing to cut ties with her manipulative mother. The couple discusses their precarious financial situation and Joe's impending termination, though he clings to the slim hope of bureaucratic recourse. Marybeth, pragmatic yet supportive, questions whether continuing the investigation is worth the risk, but Joe resolves to persevere, driven by his sense of duty and stubbornness.

The chapter underscores Joe's resilience in the face of professional and personal crises. His determination to uphold justice, even as his career crumbles, contrasts with the media's sensationalism and political machinations. Marybeth's unwavering support

highlights their partnership, while the unresolved threads—Pollock’s call, Missy’s scheming, and Bloodworth’s escape—set the stage for further conflict. Joe’s internal struggle between duty and survival encapsulates the chapter’s tension, leaving readers anticipating his next move.

