

Chapter 22

Joe Pickett and Nate Romanowski drive through snowy terrain toward a vast wind energy project, their journey marked by Nate's deliberate law-breaking as he dismantles a fence to access the area. Joe, still reeling from being fired by Hanlon, is passive and confused, while Nate remains cryptic about their destination. The tension between them is palpable, with Nate hinting at Joe's obliviousness to the political machinations surrounding his dismissal. Their conversation reveals Nate's skepticism about Joe's naivety in government matters, setting the stage for a deeper revelation.

Upon reaching the summit, they witness the sprawling Buckbrush Wind Energy Project, its blinking red lights dominating the landscape. Nate critiques the project as a wasteful, taxpayer-funded endeavor designed to appease distant urban consumers while masking its environmental impact. His disdain for the project is clear, but his real purpose for bringing Joe there remains unexplained. Joe, though amused by Nate's bluntness, is overwhelmed by the scale of the construction and puzzled by Nate's focus on a distant truck below.

Nate's theory begins to unfold as he shifts the conversation to Governor Allen's political backers, suggesting Allen's financial troubles forced him to seek shadowy supporters who now control him. He implies Joe's assignment to Saratoga was a setup to ensure his failure, orchestrated to remove him as a holdover from the previous administration. Joe starts connecting the dots, recalling the suspicious disappearance of Pollock, the stolen case files, and the rushed press conference—all pointing to a deliberate effort to undermine him.

The chapter ends with Joe grappling with the implications of Nate's revelations, realizing his firing was part of a larger political game. Nate's cryptic behavior and the ominous wind energy project symbolize the hidden forces at play, leaving Joe to confront the unsettling truth about his role in the governor's agenda. The scene sets

up a deeper investigation into the corruption and power dynamics shaping Joe's fate.

