Buried Prey

In *Buried Prey*, **Lucas Davenport** confronts a chilling ghost from his past when the bodies of two missing girls—**Kate Jones and Martha Johnson**—are unearthed after 25 years. Originally dismissed as a cold case from Davenport's early days as a Minneapolis cop, the discovery reopens old wounds and exposes a web of lies, corruption, and a killer who's been hiding in plain sight.

As Davenport revisits the original investigation, he uncovers shocking police incompetence and suppressed evidence that could have saved lives. Now, with modern forensic tools and his razor-sharp instincts, he's determined to deliver justice—no matter how many careers it ruins.

Sandford delivers a masterclass in procedural suspense, blending present-day detective work with flashbacks to Davenport's rookie years, revealing how far both he and forensic science have come.

Chapter 1

The chapter opens with the demolition of a city block, where heavy machinery uncovers a long-buried bundle of plastic sheeting containing the mummified remains of two young girls. The discovery halts construction as police, including cold-case investigator Hote and homicide chief Marcy Sherrill, gather at the scene. Hote examines the bodies through the aged plastic, noting signs of hanging and possible restraints, while speculating about preserved forensic evidence like DNA or hair. The eerie preservation of the bodies suggests they were sealed in the plastic shortly after death, freeze-dried over time.

Lucas Davenport, a high-ranking state investigator, arrives and identifies the girls as Nancy and Mary, recalling specific details like Nancy’s heart-patterned blouse—a clue from his early career. His presence sparks discussion among retired cops who remember the original case. Davenport disputes the long-held belief that Terry Scrape, a suspect killed years earlier, was the murderer, suggesting a smarter, more elusive killer framed Scrape. This revelation unsettles Sherrill, who vows to re-examine the case files.

The scene is steeped in nostalgia as retired cops reflect on the pre-digital era of policing, contrasting it with modern forensic capabilities. Sherrill’s authority and reputation as a tough, respected cop underscore her determination to solve the cold case. The chapter highlights the intersection of past and present, as the discovery forces old wounds open and reignites a decades-old hunt for justice.

The narrative builds tension around the unresolved mystery, emphasizing Davenport’s personal connection to the case and his lingering doubts about the original investigation. The girls’ grim fate and the killer’s evasion of capture loom large, setting the stage for a deeper probe into the shadows of the past. The chapter ends with a sense of urgency, as the team prepares to leverage modern technology to finally uncover the truth.

Chapter 2

The chapter opens with a tense confrontation in a bar, where Lucas Davenport and his partner confront Carlos O’Hearn, a violent criminal from a notorious family. O’Hearn, a former Golden Gloves fighter, attacks Lucas with a beer bottle, but Lucas dodges and counters with a weighted punch, leading to a brutal scuffle. Despite taking a few hits to his ribs, Lucas and his partner subdue O’Hearn, who is later arrested. The scene highlights Lucas’s physical prowess and the chaotic nature of police work, as well as the O’Hearn family’s reputation for crime and violence.

The narrative shifts to Lucas waking up the next morning with sore ribs from the fight. He rouses his lover, DeeDee McAllister, a divorce attorney, who is reluctant to get up for her appointment. Their banter reveals a casual, playful relationship, with Lucas teasing her about his physique and DeeDee mocking his vanity. The dialogue underscores their chemistry and Lucas’s self-assured, sometimes arrogant demeanor. The scene also hints at DeeDee’s complicated personal life, including her marriage to a volatile man named Mark.

As Lucas prepares for the day, the chapter delves into his physical appearance and routine. He admires himself in the mirror, noting his athletic build from years of hockey, and engages in lighthearted debate with DeeDee about his physique. The description of his apartment—a modest space with hockey gear and a cluttered wardrobe—adds depth to his character, portraying him as both confident and somewhat vain. The interplay between Lucas and DeeDee continues, blending humor with underlying tension about their illicit relationship.

The chapter concludes with DeeDee dressing for work, reflecting on her conflicted feelings about her marriage and affair with Lucas. She jokes about the social stigma of dating a cop but admits the excitement it brings. Lucas, ever the provocateur, eggs her on, showcasing their dynamic of mutual attraction and teasing. The scene leaves

their relationship unresolved, hinting at deeper emotional and professional complexities yet to be explored. The chapter balances action, character development, and wit, setting the stage for further intrigue.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, detectives Lucas and Sloan spend a late night canvassing a neighborhood, searching for leads in a case involving missing girls. The streets are unusually quiet due to the heavy police presence, which has temporarily driven away the usual criminal activity. Their conversation shifts to the impact of crack cocaine on the local underworld, noting how it has disrupted traditional hierarchies, such as pimps losing control over sex workers. Sloan, a seasoned and methodical investigator, shares his insights on the changing dynamics of crime, while Lucas, younger and more impulsive, reflects on the rapid rise of crack and its societal consequences. Their banter reveals their contrasting personalities but also their mutual respect.

As they continue door-to-door inquiries, Sloan and Lucas discuss the transition from patrol to plainclothes work, comparing it to the difference between football and chess. Their exchange turns humorous as Sloan ranks athletes' intelligence by sport, teasing Lucas about hockey players. Despite the grim nature of their task, their camaraderie provides moments of levity. The detectives approach a rundown house, where a reluctant witness claims no knowledge of the missing girls but hints at a potential suspect—a "crazy guy" with a history of sexual offenses. This vague lead becomes their first tangible clue, though the witness provides little concrete information.

The investigation gains momentum when another resident mentions a man named John, who frequents a local bar and has speculated about the "crazy guy" being responsible. John's description and his connection to sex workers at a nearby massage parlor add layers to the case. Lucas presses for details, sensing urgency, but Sloan follows protocol by calling for backup. When senior detectives Cherry and McGuire arrive, they take over the lead, frustrating Lucas, who believes they should pursue John immediately. The tension highlights Lucas's impatience with bureaucratic hurdles and his desire for swift action.

The chapter ends with Lucas and Sloan continuing their door-knocking, though Lucas grows increasingly irritated at being sidelined from the most promising lead. Sloan, more pragmatic, accepts the hierarchical nature of police work, advising Lucas that experience will bring greater autonomy. Lucas, however, resents the delay and withholds information about the massage parlor, opting to let the senior detectives figure it out themselves. Their dynamic underscores the challenges of teamwork in law enforcement, balancing individual initiative with procedural constraints. The chapter leaves the investigation unresolved, emphasizing the tedious yet critical nature of detective work.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, patrolman Lucas Davenport faces a dilemma: whether to report his findings to the Homicide department or pursue the investigation independently. Temporarily in plainclothes, he fears losing control of the case if he involves more experienced detectives. Deciding to act alone, Lucas drives to the Mississippi River to search for a homeless man described by a mailman as living in makeshift refrigerator boxes under an oak tree. The urgency of the missing children case propels him forward, despite the risk of being reassigned or reverting to uniformed duty.

Lucas arrives at an affluent neighborhood near the river and parks illegally, identifying himself as a cop to a resident named Art Prose. Prose informs him that the homeless man was evicted weeks earlier but directs Lucas to the site under the oak tree. Lucas examines the area, finding a hidden trail leading to the boxes covered by plastic sheeting. The makeshift shelter is littered with trash, suggesting recent habitation. Determined to uncover clues, Lucas crawls inside the cramped, foul-smelling box, where he discovers a hidden compartment.

While inspecting the compartment, Lucas finds a stash of pornographic images, including one depicting a young girl in an explicit act. The discovery shocks him, confirming his suspicions about the homeless man’s potential involvement in the missing children case. Energized by the breakthrough, Lucas rushes back to Prose’s house to call his superior, Lieutenant Daniel, and report the findings. He emphasizes the disturbing nature of the material, urging immediate action.

Daniel orders Lucas to secure the site and await his arrival. The chapter ends with Lucas poised to escalate the investigation, having proven his instincts correct. The discovery not only advances the case but also solidifies Lucas’s determination to pursue justice, despite his unofficial role. The tension between his autonomy and the constraints of his position adds depth to his character and the unfolding mystery.

Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, the police bring Scrape, a mentally unstable suspect, in for questioning regarding the disappearance of several girls. Scrape appears genuinely confused and denies any involvement, claiming he doesn't read news or watch TV and is unaware of the case. He admits to having mental health issues but insists he would never harm girls, though his erratic behavior and disjointed statements make him a suspect. The detectives, Sloan and Hanson, employ contrasting interrogation tactics—Sloan is patient and empathetic, while Hanson is aggressive—but Scrape maintains his innocence, even as his stories about his past and interactions with celebrities like Harrison Ford reveal his delusions.

The interrogation takes a turn when Scrape denies ownership of the pornographic materials found in his makeshift riverside home, arguing that his fingerprints wouldn't be on them. This logical point raises doubts about his guilt. Despite his mental instability, Scrape's consistent denial of knowing the girls or possessing the porn seems credible. His confusion about locations and timeframes further complicates the interrogation, as he alternates between acknowledging he's in Minneapolis and insisting he was recently in Los Angeles. The detectives struggle to reconcile his incoherent statements with the possibility that he might have committed the crimes and forgotten them.

After hours of questioning, the team concludes they have no solid evidence against Scrape. Sloan and Hanson dismantle most of his claims but find no proof linking him to the girls' disappearances. The lack of physical evidence at his camp and his plausible argument about the porn materials weaken the case. Captain Daniel decides to release Scrape but orders surveillance, fearing he might flee or slip up if guilty. The team agrees to monitor his movements closely, particularly if he attempts to leave town, while keeping the arrest out of the media to avoid tipping him off.

The chapter ends with the detectives at an impasse, unsure of Scrape’s involvement but unwilling to let him go entirely. Lucas is sent home to rest, while the others prepare to track Scrape’s movements. The interrogation highlights the challenges of dealing with a mentally ill suspect—Scrape’s mix of lucidity and delusion leaves the team grappling with doubt. The chapter underscores the tension between suspicion and the lack of concrete evidence, setting the stage for further investigation.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, detectives Lucas and Del investigate the disappearance of two girls by canvassing houses near the murder site of a young black man. They interview residents who recall seeing the girls walking through an alley but not in recent days. One couple mentions spotting a discarded flip-flop near the crime scene, sparking interest. The detectives methodically work their way through the neighborhood, gathering fragmented leads while maintaining a cautious optimism about their progress. The chapter highlights their collaborative yet competitive dynamic, with Del wary of premature conclusions.

The discovery of the flip-flop becomes a pivotal clue. An elderly woman directs them to a trash can containing a damaged flip-flop, which they secure as potential evidence. Lucas and Del debate its significance, considering whether it links to the girls or the murder. Their banter reveals underlying tensions and their differing investigative styles—Lucas is more intuitive, while Del remains skeptical. The chapter underscores the challenges of piecing together anonymous tips and circumstantial evidence, leaving the detectives questioning the credibility of their leads.

Lucas and Del reflect on the improbability of the murder and disappearances being unrelated, given the proximity of the events. They theorize about the kidnapper’s need for a vehicle and the unlikelihood of their primary suspect, Scrape, being capable of such a crime. The dialogue shifts between humor and seriousness as they grapple with contradictions in their theories. The chapter captures their frustration and determination, balancing professional rigor with personal camaraderie.

The chapter concludes with Lucas contemplating his next steps after a long night of investigation. Despite exhaustion, he remains alert, considering socializing or following up with Catherine Brown, a contact at the library. The open-ended finale leaves the reader anticipating the next phase of the investigation, emphasizing the detectives’

relentless pursuit of answers amid uncertainty and fatigue.

Chapter 7

The chapter opens with Lucas, a detective, starting his day exhausted after only five hours of sleep. He meets with his superior, Daniel, who updates him on the ongoing search for a suspect named Scrape. Daniel explains how the police chief spun the situation positively during a press conference, framing their actions as both diligent and civil liberties-conscious. Lucas and his partner, Del, plan to revisit the Smith case from a new angle, exploring whether Smith was a hero, and to investigate a man named Fell. Despite Daniel’s skepticism, he wishes them luck.

Lucas and Del head to a diner for coffee and food, where they engage in banter about relationships and Lucas’s charm with women. Their conversation reveals their camaraderie and contrasting perspectives, with Del teasing Lucas about his sincerity. Lucas offers advice to a fellow officer, Sally, about her romantic dilemma involving a boyfriend who may be involved in drug dealing. The exchange highlights Lucas’s interpersonal skills and Del’s more cynical outlook, adding depth to their dynamic as partners.

During their meal, Del and Lucas discuss their backgrounds and career aspirations. Del shares his experience as a cop, including a brutal winter on patrol, while Lucas contemplates leaving law enforcement for law school or other opportunities, such as writing role-playing games. Del encourages Lucas to leverage his rapport with Daniel to advance his career. Their conversation underscores the challenges and uncertainties of police work, as well as the personal ambitions that drive them.

The chapter concludes with Lucas and Del strategizing their next steps in the Fell investigation. Del suggests a more conversational approach with witnesses to uncover subtle details about Fell’s habits and whereabouts. They contact Anderson, a computer expert, to obtain Fell’s financial records. Visiting a bar where Fell was last seen, they interview the manager, Katz, who confirms Fell’s absence since the night of the

kidnapping. The chapter ends with the partners determined to dig deeper, emphasizing their persistence and teamwork in solving the case.

Chapter 8

In Chapter 8, Lucas and Del discuss their suspicions about John Fell as a potential suspect in the case, comparing him to Scrape, a mentally unstable individual who seems like an easy fall guy. Lucas theorizes that someone may have framed Scrape by planting evidence, but Del dismisses the idea as overly cinematic. Their conversation highlights the complexities of the investigation, with Lucas acknowledging the improbability of such a plot while still considering it plausible. The dialogue underscores the tension between logical deduction and the messy realities of criminal behavior.

Del shares his perspective on the perfect crime, using the murder of a crack dealer as an example of a low-risk, high-reward scenario that often goes unsolved due to lack of interest and evidence. Lucas counters by pointing out the unusual circumstances of their current case, where a black crack dealer was killed in a predominantly white neighborhood. Del concedes that their focus on a crack-related motive might be misguided, suggesting they could be chasing a nonexistent suspect. This exchange reveals the challenges of investigating crimes in marginalized communities where systemic indifference complicates justice.

Later, Lucas receives a call from Karen Frazier, who reports sightings of Scrape near the riverbank. Despite her fear of retaliation, she provides crucial information about Scrape’s possible hiding place in old cave openings. Lucas insists on speaking to her source, Millard, to verify the lead, leveraging Frazier’s concern for the missing girls to gain her cooperation. Their interaction highlights the ethical dilemmas of police work, as Frazier feels like a traitor while Lucas justifies his methods as necessary for the greater good.

The chapter concludes with Lucas locating Millard at a free store, where he attempts to gather more information about Scrape’s whereabouts. The scene sets the stage for a

potential confrontation, emphasizing Lucas’s determination to pursue the case despite its ambiguities. The chapter blends procedural detail with character-driven moments, illustrating the moral and practical challenges faced by law enforcement in solving crimes with no clear answers.

Chapter 9

In Chapter 9, a group of cops, led by Lucas and Sloan, venture into a dark, damp underground tunnel system with sewer workers Chip and Russ. The team navigates through a maze of concrete and natural rock formations, encountering debris, garbage, and the unsettling presence of bats. The environment is oppressive, filled with the stench of decay and sewage, and the tension rises as they discover signs of recent human activity, including plastic bags of clothing and fresh footprints in the sand. The cops remain wary, joking nervously about the dangers of ricocheting bullets and rabid bats, while Sloan sarcastically reflects on the absurdity of the situation.

As they press deeper into the tunnels, the group follows a trail of footprints, which leads them past intersecting shafts and a hole used as a makeshift toilet. Chip points out partial tracks, suggesting their target—Scrape—is likely still ahead. Meanwhile, Scrape hides in a narrow space above a concrete revetment, listening to the approaching cops. Fearful and angry, he believes the police will unjustly blame him for unsolved crimes and subject him to cruel experiments. His paranoia and distrust of law enforcement are palpable as he recalls past arrests and vows to evade capture, convinced the system is rigged against him.

The cops continue their search, stumbling upon a wall of cockroaches and exploring more tunnels, including a cramped crawl space leading to a dry storm sewer. Despite their efforts, they find no conclusive evidence of Scrape’s path. Lucas deduces that Scrape couldn’t have descended into the sewer without leaving tracks, prompting the team to backtrack. Meanwhile, other officers explore a cavernous room filled with rusted pipes and industrial debris, adding to the eerie, labyrinthine atmosphere of the underground chase.

The chapter culminates in a tense standoff, with Scrape hiding in near darkness, his fate uncertain. The cops’ determination to find him contrasts sharply with his

desperation to remain unseen. The underground setting amplifies the claustrophobic tension, as both sides grapple with fear, mistrust, and the looming possibility of confrontation. The chapter leaves readers on edge, wondering whether Scrape will evade capture or if the cops will close in on their elusive target.

Chapter 10

Lucas Davenport, preoccupied with the recent discovery of the Jones girls' remains, shifts between bureaucratic tasks and personal reflections. He directs his researcher to locate the girls' parents and approves crime-related statements for the governor. Meanwhile, he coordinates with Marcy Sherrill to arrange a chaplain’s notification to the grieving family. The weight of the case lingers as Lucas attends a contentious meeting about DNA sampling for arrestees, though he remains detached from the debate. Later, he discusses the case over dinner, sparking a forensic conversation, and ends the evening with social visitors before retiring, only to dream of the Jones girls.

Lucas’s personal life intertwines with his professional concerns as he wakes in the early hours, thinking about his pregnant wife, Weather, and their growing family. Excited about their upcoming daughter, he reflects on his love for his existing children, including his adopted daughter Letty. Despite his contentment, he worries about Weather’s health and sleep struggles due to her pregnancy. As he dozes off again, memories of his old colleague Fred Carter resurface, along with Carter’s grim humor about retirement and terrorism. The Jones girls’ haunting images persist in Lucas’s mind, underscoring the unresolved case.

At dawn, Lucas retrieves newspapers, eager for coverage of the Jones case. The *Star Tribune* features it prominently, while the *Pioneer Press* buries it, highlighting media discrepancies. The article reveals the fractured lives of the Jones parents, deepening Lucas’s somber mood. After reading, he returns to bed briefly, then wakes refreshed and calls his colleague Del to express his desire to join the investigation. Del acknowledges the political hurdles of involving Lucas in a Minneapolis case but agrees they could handle it better than the local team.

The chapter captures Lucas’s dual focus on the haunting cold case and his domestic life. His determination to pursue justice for the Jones girls contrasts with his tender

moments with family, revealing his multifaceted character. The unresolved tension between professional duty and personal fulfillment drives the narrative forward, setting the stage for his deeper involvement in the investigation. The chapter ends with Lucas poised to take action, bridging his past experiences with the present case.

Chapter 11

In Chapter 11, Lucas Davenport and his colleague Del discuss their progress in the investigation of the Jones girls' murders and a potential suspect named Fell. Lucas is confident that Fell is responsible for both the attack on Kelly Barker and the Jones killings, emphasizing that DNA evidence could solidify their case. However, Del cautions that proving guilt becomes harder if the crimes are sporadic or occurred years ago. Despite this, Lucas remains optimistic, believing the case is solvable if they can identify the suspect and secure a DNA match.

The pair face a setback when they learn from Anoka County detective Dave Carson that the DNA evidence from the Jones case was mishandled and lost years ago. Without this critical piece, their case weakens, though Lucas considers bluffing the suspect into believing they still have the DNA. The frustration is palpable as they strategize their next steps, with Lucas glancing out the window at a police van, symbolizing the ongoing but elusive pursuit of justice. The chapter highlights the challenges of cold cases and the reliance on forensic evidence.

To reignite public and investigative interest, Lucas contacts reporter Ruffe Ignace, hoping to leverage media pressure. He suggests Ignace interview an FBI-trained officer, James Hayworth, who might sensationalize the case by implying the killer has more victims. Ignace is skeptical but intrigued, and Lucas assures him the story won’t backfire. The exchange underscores Lucas’s tactical use of the press to advance the investigation, though Del worries about backlash from their boss, Marcy Sherrill. The chapter reveals the delicate balance between law enforcement and media manipulation.

The chapter concludes with Lucas and Del pursuing leads at local schools, armed with subpoenas. They uncover two cases of teacher misconduct—one involving an affair and another with a student—but neither aligns with their suspect profile. The mundane

yet methodical nature of their work contrasts with the high-stakes investigation, emphasizing the grind of police work. The chapter ends on a note of persistence, as they continue their search for a breakthrough in the sprawling case.

Chapter 12

The chapter introduces the Jones girls' killer, a physically imposing and deeply discontented man living in a cluttered, overheated home. He spends his time mindlessly watching TV, struggling with chronic fatigue, anxiety, and health issues like obesity and hemorrhoids. His past as a failed electronics worker turned porn site operator highlights his financial struggles and disillusionment. The discovery of the Jones girls' bodies in his former home has reignited his paranoia, as he fears being identified by old neighbors or law enforcement.

The killer's life is marked by instability, both financially and emotionally. He barely scrapes by on income from his declining porn sites and eBay resales of random junk, like silk kimonos. His manic-depressive tendencies worsen as he recalls his history of abducting and murdering young girls across the Midwest. A turning point came in the 1990s when he shifted to sex tourism in Thailand, preferring the anonymity and lack of risk compared to his earlier crimes.

His deteriorating mental state is compounded by physical discomfort, including headaches and the stifling heat of his home. The chapter underscores his isolation and growing desperation, as he prepares for an encounter with an old man—possibly a family member—who arrives in a Cadillac. Their strained interaction hints at a shared history of dysfunction, with the old man’s dismissive attitude mirroring the killer’s own bitterness.

The chapter closes with tension as the killer retrieves antique Indian clubs, possibly a weapon, while awaiting the old man’s arrival. The scene sets the stage for a confrontation, emphasizing the killer’s volatility and the lingering threat he poses. His past crimes and current instability create a sense of impending violence, leaving the reader uneasy about what will unfold next.

Chapter 13

The chapter opens with contrasting perspectives of Lucas Davenport and the Jones killer. While Lucas wakes up comfortably, the killer endures physical agony after a grueling bike ride from Vermilion to the Twin Cities, exacerbating his saddle sores and hemorrhoids. Lucas, meanwhile, feels self-satisfied after his investigation into the Jones case gains media attention, hoping it will spur Minneapolis cops into action. The killer's discomfort underscores his desperation, while Lucas's confidence hints at his determination to close the case.

Lucas revisits his investigation by tracking down three former massage-parlor workers linked to the Jones case. He meets Dorcas Ryan, who has aged well and lives a modest life. She identifies a suspect, John Fell, from a set of composite sketches, confirming Lucas's suspicions. This breakthrough energizes Lucas, marking a pivotal moment in the case. Ryan also provides updates on the other women: Lucy Landry, who struggles with addiction, and Mary Ann Ang, who married into wealth and left her past behind. Ryan warns Lucas against disrupting Ang's life, highlighting the ethical dilemma of reopening old wounds.

Next, Lucas visits Lucy Landry, who lives in a run-down apartment and appears disheveled. Despite her rough state, she corroborates Ryan's identification of Fell, tweaking the sketch to better match her memory. Their conversation reveals Fell's pattern of targeting women over the years, deepening Lucas's resolve to apprehend him. Landry's mention of a TV interview with a survivor, Kelly Barker, reinforces the killer's ongoing threat. Lucas leaves with renewed clarity but decides against contacting Ang, prioritizing her well-being over potential leads.

The chapter closes with the killer incapacitated by muscle spasms, hinting at his physical decline. Meanwhile, Lucas shifts focus to research, confident he has enough evidence to identify Fell. The parallel narratives emphasize the killer's vulnerability

and Lucas’s strategic progress, setting the stage for a confrontation. The chapter balances tension with introspection, exploring the moral weight of Lucas’s pursuit and the killer’s deteriorating state.

Chapter 14

The chapter opens with Letty attending a prejunior-year party hosted by a snobby friend, arriving in a Porsche driven by Weather to fit in with the elite crowd. Meanwhile, Lucas picks up Del in his Lexus SUV, and their banter shifts to Del's contemplation of getting a wiener dog for his toddler. Their lighthearted conversation about pets and socialization contrasts with their eventual task: locating Robert Sherman's house in St. Paul. Despite Lucas's confidence, the duo struggles with the city's confusing street layout, eventually relying on GPS to find the fragmented Iowa Avenue neighborhood.

Upon arriving at Sherman's house, Lucas and Del notice the suburban ambiance—mature trees, older homes, and the sound of piano music from a neighbor's house. Sherman, a heavyset man in casual attire, greets them at the door, immediately suspecting they're investigating him due to his resemblance to a suspect in the Jones girls' murder case. Tensions rise when Sherman denies any involvement, only for a neighbor to provoke him by shouting accusations. This escalates into a physical altercation between Sherman and the neighbor, with their wives joining the fray, hurling insults and nearly coming to blows.

Lucas and Del intervene, separating the combatants and restoring order. The conflict stems from a long-standing feud over Sherman's large garage, which blocks sunlight from the neighbor's tomato garden and disrupts the peace with constant noise. The neighbor admits to tipping off the police about Sherman's resemblance to the suspect, hoping to leverage the investigation against him. The situation highlights the petty grudges and suburban tensions underlying the seemingly mundane setting.

The chapter concludes with Lucas diffusing the situation, warning both parties against further escalation while acknowledging their mutual animosity. The chaotic scene underscores the unpredictability of police work, blending humor with the frustrations of dealing with personal vendettas. The chapter balances the mundane—grilling plans

and pet discussions—with the absurdity of the neighborhood feud, all while advancing the broader mystery of the Jones girls’ murder investigation.

Chapter 15

Marcy Sherrill, aware of the growing media frenzy around the Jones case, reflects on Lucas Davenport's relentless approach to the investigation. Davenport, driven by personal stakes, is leveraging the media to pressure the Minneapolis PD into uncovering more about the suspect, John Fell. Despite the department's overall decline in crime rates, Sherrill acknowledges Davenport's tendency to manipulate the press, a tactic he employed even during his time as a Minneapolis cop. She anticipates the chief’s inevitable inquiry about Kelly Barker, whose televised interviews have amplified public attention on the case.

Sherrill and her colleague Buster Hill prepare to interview Barker, primarily for public relations purposes. As they drive to Barker’s Bloomington home, Sherrill muses about Davenport’s charisma and their past brief affair, contrasting it with his unwavering loyalty to his wife, Weather. She also contemplates her current relationship with Rick, an investment advisor, and other potential romantic interests, including an artist and a cowboy-boot-wearing surgeon. These reflections reveal her restlessness and desire for companionship, even as she acknowledges the impracticality of some relationships.

Meanwhile, the killer, a deeply troubled and angry man, stalks Barker’s neighborhood, fueled by rage and a sense of hopelessness. He resents his miserable existence and fixates on Barker as the sole witness who can identify him. After surveilling her house, he devises a plan to attack, disguising himself with a fake beard and arming himself. His internal monologue underscores his desperation and violent intent, setting the stage for a potential confrontation.

The chapter juxtaposes Sherrill’s professional and personal musings with the killer’s escalating menace. While Sherrill navigates the complexities of her relationships and the demands of the case, the killer’s lurking presence adds tension, hinting at an impending clash. The narrative balances introspection with suspense, highlighting the

parallel trajectories of law enforcement and criminal intent.

Chapter 16

The chapter opens with Lucas Davenport speeding through the streets in his Lexus, responding to an urgent call from his colleagues Jenkins and Shrake. With a restrained suspect, Berg, in the backseat and his partner Del Capslock by his side, Lucas is tense and confused about the emergency. The urgency in Jenkins and Shrake’s voices suggests a dire situation, though the specifics remain unclear. Upon arriving at the scene, Lucas learns the devastating news: his close friend and colleague, Marcy Sherrill, has been shot and killed during a violent home invasion at the Barker residence. The shock of her death leaves Lucas momentarily frozen, struggling to process the reality.

Del takes charge, driving Lucas across town to the crime scene while Lucas clings to denial, insisting there must be a mistake. Del, however, believes Jenkins’s report is accurate, given his reliability. The atmosphere is heavy with dread as they navigate through traffic, Lucas’s mind racing with disbelief. Upon arrival, they encounter a chaotic scene with Bloomington police securing the area. Detective John Rimes confirms Marcy’s death and provides grim details: two others, including another officer, were injured in the attack. A blood trail suggests the shooter was wounded but escaped in a white cargo van.

Inside the Barker home, Lucas is confronted with the brutal aftermath. Marcy lies lifeless on the floor, her injuries fatal and instantaneous. The scene is marked by overturned furniture and bloodstains, painting a picture of the violent struggle. Rimes shares witness accounts describing the shooter as a large, bearded man, and assures Lucas that DNA evidence will help track him down. Despite the professional tone of the investigation, Lucas is overwhelmed, stepping outside to compose himself as grief takes hold.

Del, recognizing Lucas’s distress, arranges to take him home, insisting someone else should inform Marcy’s family. Lucas, struggling to speak through his tears, is consumed by sorrow and the weight of the loss. The chapter ends with Del guiding Lucas away from the scene, leaving the investigation in the hands of the responding officers. The emotional toll of Marcy’s death is palpable, setting the stage for Lucas’s determination to seek justice in the chapters to come.

Chapter 17

Lucas Davenport and his colleague Del Capslock head to Fairview Southdale Hospital to meet Kelly Barker, a witness to a violent shooting incident. Barker recounts the chaotic attack by a bearded assailant, believed to be her stalker, which left a police officer dead and others wounded. Lucas emphasizes the importance of identifying the shooter using a blood trail left at the scene. He arranges for an updated composite sketch of the suspect to be distributed to media outlets across the Midwest, hoping to generate leads. Barker, though visibly shaken, agrees to assist with the sketch and media appearances.

At the hospital, Lucas and Del visit Buster Hill, the wounded officer who managed to shoot the attacker. Hill describes the shooter as inexperienced but deadly, wielding a Glock. He recalls firing while injured, likely hitting the assailant in the arm or side. The detectives discuss the thin blood trail, which could provide DNA evidence. Hill expresses grief over the death of his colleague, Marcy, and vows revenge if given the chance. Lucas and Del commend Hill for his bravery, acknowledging his critical role in stopping the shooter.

Later, in the car, Lucas reflects on the shooter’s ineptitude despite the lethal outcome. Del warns Lucas about the potential backlash if he takes personal revenge, given his past relationship with Marcy and his reputation. Lucas dismisses the concerns, hinting at his determination to find the killer before Minneapolis police do. The conversation reveals tensions within the department and Lucas’s unwavering focus on justice, even at personal risk.

The chapter underscores the urgency of the manhunt and the emotional toll on those involved. Lucas’s strategic use of media and forensic evidence highlights his investigative prowess, while his personal vendetta adds a layer of complexity. The interactions with Barker and Hill provide critical details about the shooter, setting the

stage for a high-stakes pursuit. The narrative balances procedural rigor with raw emotion, capturing the gravity of the situation.

Chapter 18

The chapter opens with the killer in a state of panic after a violent confrontation at the Barkers' house. Disoriented by the chaos, gunfire, and the sight of an armed cop, he acts on primal instinct, firing wildly before fleeing. He realizes he's been shot under the armpit but initially dismisses the injury as minor. As he drives away, his adrenaline fades, and he notices the severity of his wound, which is bleeding heavily. He stops at a shopping center to assess the damage, using a newspaper as a makeshift bandage, and removes his disguise to avoid detection.

The killer reflects on the series of misfortunes that led to this moment, lamenting the "if only" scenarios that could have prevented the violence. He speculates whether the people in the house were cops or bodyguards and worries about the consequences if he injured or killed any of them. His anxiety grows as he struggles to focus on driving, his pain intensifying. Despite the wound, he remains composed, planning to treat himself with leftover medication once he reaches home.

Upon arriving home, the killer tends to his injury with rudimentary first aid, using gauze, antiseptic, and duct tape to patch himself up. He takes oxycodone and antibiotics to manage the pain and prevent infection, then lies down to rest. His mind races with paranoia about whether the police have identified him, but the lack of immediate action reassures him. Exhausted and drugged, he dozes off, only to wake hours later eager for news coverage of the shooting.

The chapter concludes with the killer watching a news report confirming his worst fears: he shot a police officer and Todd Barker, and the police have collected his blood for DNA analysis. The mention of DNA terrifies him, as it could definitively link him to the crimes. Despite his physical pain and growing dread, he remains detached, focusing on his meal while the news underscores the escalating manhunt. The chapter ends on a tense note, hinting at the inevitable confrontation looming ahead.

Chapter 19

The chapter opens with Lucas Davenport navigating a tense atmosphere at Minneapolis police headquarters as he investigates a cold case linked to the recent murder of his colleague, Marcy Sherrill. Reviewing old academy graduation photos, Lucas narrows down potential suspects to nine officers who fit the physical description of the killer—a heavily built, dark-haired man with fair complexion. He seeks assistance from Deputy Chief Marilyn Barin, who, after consulting the police chief, grants him access to Internal Affairs files to further his investigation.

Lucas meets with Cody Ryan from Internal Affairs, who retrieves records on six of the nine suspects. Most have clean records, but one officer, Willard Packard, stands out due to a past complaint involving sexual misconduct with a dancer. Though the investigation was inconclusive, the allegations align with the killer’s known preference for sex workers. Lucas notes Packard’s resemblance to the Identi-Kit portrait, despite minor discrepancies, and decides to pursue him as a lead.

The chapter highlights Lucas’s methodical approach, cross-referencing old cases with new evidence to uncover a possible police connection to the murders. His theory gains traction as he identifies Packard’s suspicious behavior and suburban police employment post-resignation. The narrative underscores the challenges of relying on decades-old witness accounts and the ethical dilemmas of investigating fellow officers.

As Lucas returns to BCA headquarters, he tasks a researcher with exploring another angle—potential links to teaching colleges—while focusing on Packard’s current whereabouts. The chapter ends with a sense of urgency, as Lucas races against time to confirm his suspicions and bring justice for Marcy Sherrill and the earlier victims. The tension builds around the possibility that the killer may have been hiding in plain sight within law enforcement.

Chapter 20

In Chapter 20, Lucas Davenport sets out to investigate the disappearance of Hanson, a man connected to the cold case of the Jones girls. After obtaining directions from Deputy Sheriff Clark Childress, Lucas drives to Hanson’s cabin near Lake Vermilion, pushing his Porsche to make good time. During the drive, he reflects on the recent murder of his friend Marcy Sherrill, grappling with intense emotions and an overwhelming urge for revenge against Fell, the suspected killer. Despite recognizing the futility of vengeance, Lucas struggles to control his anger and focus on the task at hand.

Upon arriving at Hanson’s cabin, Lucas meets Deputy Childress, who escorts him to the property. The cabin is sealed pending investigation, but Childress grants Lucas access. They examine Hanson’s boat, stored in a garage filled with outdoor equipment, but find no immediate clues. Lucas shares his theory that Hanson’s disappearance might be linked to the Jones case, given the timing—Hanson vanished the day after the girls’ bodies were discovered. Childress acknowledges the coincidence but remains skeptical, agreeing to help Lucas interview Hanson’s fishing buddies, Tony Cole and Bill Kushner.

Hanson’s daughter, Sedakis, arrives and expresses shock at the possibility her father was murdered. Lucas explains his suspicion that Hanson may have inadvertently encountered someone connected to the Jones case during his investigation. Sedakis recalls her father’s involvement in the case years earlier, though she was too young to remember details. The conversation underscores the emotional weight of the investigation for both Lucas and Hanson’s family, as they grapple with unresolved grief and unanswered questions.

The chapter concludes with Lucas preparing to interview Hanson’s friends, hoping to uncover any overlooked leads. The deputy’s assistance and Sedakis’s cooperation

highlight the collaborative nature of the investigation. Lucas’s internal conflict—balancing his desire for justice with the need for professionalism—adds depth to his character, as he navigates both the procedural and emotional challenges of the case. The chapter sets the stage for further exploration of Hanson’s disappearance and its potential ties to the Jones murders.

Chapter 21

In Chapter 21, Del, Shrake, and Jenkins arrive at Lucas’s house after Weather summons them urgently. She expresses concern that Lucas, driven by anger over Marcy’s murder, will kill the perpetrator once he identifies him, potentially jeopardizing his career. Weather fears the fallout if Lucas acts impulsively, especially given his past relationship with Marcy, which could fuel speculation and political backlash. She proposes the officers intervene to ensure Lucas isn’t present during the suspect’s capture, suggesting they handle the situation discreetly to protect him from consequences.

The officers reluctantly acknowledge Weather’s concerns, agreeing that Lucas is likely to act recklessly. Weather clarifies she isn’t opposed to the killer being eliminated but insists it shouldn’t be Lucas who does it. She emphasizes the need for plausible deniability, hinting that the suspect should appear armed to justify any lethal action. The conversation ends with Shrake warning against further discussion to avoid conspiracy implications, but the group concedes Weather’s points are valid.

Later, Lucas returns home and interacts with Letty, who probes him about the investigation. Lucas shares his theory that Hanson’s disappearance is linked to Marcy’s killer, suggesting the perpetrator eliminated Hanson to cover their tracks. Letty warns Lucas to be careful, hinting she and Weather are aware of his intentions. The chapter underscores the tension between Lucas’s pursuit of justice and his loved ones’ fears for his future.

The chapter closes with Lucas meeting Quentin Daniel, his former boss, to discuss the case. Daniel, now retired, agrees to talk, hinting at unresolved guilt over past failures. The encounter sets the stage for deeper revelations about the Jones case and Marcy’s murder, leaving Lucas’s next steps uncertain as he balances personal vendetta with professional duty.

Chapter 22

In Chapter 22, Lucas Davenport and his team, including Del, Jenkins, Shrake, and crime-scene techs, search Darrell Hanson’s home for evidence linking him to a series of crimes, including the murder of a police officer. The house appears well-maintained, with fresh food and healthy plants, but initial searches yield no definitive evidence. Schmidt, a computer specialist, accesses Hanson’s devices and finds photos resembling the suspect’s description, though some are inconsistent. When Hanson arrives home in a white van, he reacts violently to the police presence, demanding answers while his attorney advises silence. Lucas observes Hanson closely, convinced he fits the suspect’s profile despite growing doubts from Del about the van’s distinctive rose decals.

Lucas delivers a speech to Hanson and his attorney, outlining the case against him, including the murder of his father and other victims. He emphasizes that a DNA test could exonerate Hanson, but the attorney initially resists. Hanson, confident in his innocence, reveals he has a DNA file from a civilian contractor in Iraq, which he agrees to share. His wife, Carol, arrives distraught, adding to the tension as the search continues. Lucas contacts the DNA lab to verify the file, hoping for a quick resolution. The team’s thorough search of the house yields little, and Hanson’s insistence on his innocence begins to sway Lucas.

The DNA lab director, Gerald Taski, later confirms Hanson’s DNA does not match the suspect’s, clearing him of the crimes. However, Taski reveals a startling twist: the killer is closely related to Hanson, likely sharing a recent common ancestor like a grandfather. This revelation shocks Lucas, who realizes the investigation has taken an unexpected turn. Hanson, relieved but confused, struggles to comprehend the implications, while his attorney scrambles to reassess the situation. The chapter ends with the team facing a new mystery—identifying the unknown relative responsible for

the crimes.

The chapter highlights the tension between Lucas’s instincts and the evidence, as well as the emotional toll on Hanson and his family. The DNA twist introduces a compelling new layer to the investigation, forcing the team to reconsider their approach. The search scene, Hanson’s outbursts, and the lab’s findings create a gripping narrative that balances procedural detail with personal drama. The unresolved familial connection sets the stage for further developments, leaving readers intrigued about the killer’s identity and relationship to Hanson.

Chapter 23

Lucas Davenport, a law enforcement officer, lies awake strategizing how to apprehend Roger Hanson, the suspected killer of a well-liked cop. He anticipates bureaucratic interference once news spreads about their investigation, which could complicate the manhunt. Lucas holds key advantages: he knows Hanson’s identity and can track him via cell phone, but he must construct a plausible trail of evidence to avoid scrutiny over his methods. Darrell Hanson and his wife have implicated Roger, providing a starting point, though more concrete proof is needed to secure a warrant and make an arrest.

To build a case, Lucas plans to retrace his steps from the investigation into Darrell Hanson, verifying details like Roger’s white van and teaching history. He worries Roger might flee abroad but dismisses the idea after noting the orderly state of his home, suggesting he’s nearby. Lucas contacts Shrake, who’s surveilling Hanson’s house, and they speculate Roger may be hiding to treat a gunshot wound from a prior encounter. Shrake agrees airport travel would be risky for a wounded fugitive, reinforcing their belief that Hanson is still local.

The next morning, Lucas directs Jenkins to inspect Hanson’s garage under the pretense of a routine inquiry, hoping to find a dirt bike linked to the case. Jenkins confirms the bike’s presence and its registration to Brian Hanson, strengthening their suspicions. Meanwhile, Lucas tasks Sandy with gathering Roger’s cell phone data, photos, and background information, while Del works on legal avenues to track the phone’s location. The team prepares to obtain witness identifications of Roger’s photo to solidify their case before pursuing a warrant.

As the investigation progresses, Lucas emphasizes the need for speed and discretion to prevent leaks that could alert Hanson or invite bureaucratic meddling. The chapter underscores the tension between legal protocols and pragmatic detective work, as

Lucas balances building a credible case with the urgency of capturing a dangerous suspect. The team’s coordinated efforts and incremental discoveries highlight the meticulous process of piecing together evidence to bring a killer to justice.

Chapter 24

In Chapter 24, Lucas secures a warrant and coordinates with his team to locate Darrell Hanson in Waconia. Del researches the area, identifying two motels—AmericInn and Wadell's Inn—while Lucas instructs the entry team to wait until 2 p.m. to serve the warrant, emphasizing caution due to Hanson's violent history. Lucas worries about leaks to the media, which could alert Hanson and allow him to flee. The team, including Del, Shrake, and Jenkins, departs in two cars, heading to Waconia under hot, still weather, with Lucas preoccupied by thoughts of Marcy Sherrill's death.

Upon arriving at the AmericInn, the team spots a white van but confirms it's not Hanson's. They decide to check the motel for any sign of him, but before entering, Shrake, Jenkins, and Del confront Lucas about their concerns. They fear Lucas plans to execute Hanson rather than arrest him, given his emotional state after Marcy's death. The trio pressures Lucas to promise a lawful approach, threatening to interfere if he doesn't comply. Lucas initially resists, feeling betrayed, but eventually agrees to proceed "straight up," acknowledging their sincerity as friends.

The tension among the team highlights the moral and emotional stakes of the operation. Lucas's internal struggle reflects his grief and desire for vengeance, while his friends insist on upholding professional standards. Their confrontation underscores the chapter's themes of loyalty, justice, and the ethical boundaries of law enforcement. The team's unity is tested, but they ultimately align on a lawful approach to apprehend Hanson.

The chapter concludes with the team entering the motel lobby, where Lucas questions the clerk about Hanson's possible stay. The clerk, surprised by their badges, checks her records as the scene builds toward the next phase of their search. The unresolved tension and impending confrontation with Hanson leave the reader anticipating the next developments, maintaining the chapter's suspenseful tone.

Chapter 25

The chapter opens with Lucas Davenport injured after a violent confrontation with Hanson, a suspect in multiple child murders. Del, his colleague, assesses Lucas's wounds—a deep cut on his forehead and a slashed shoulder—before they are treated by paramedics. Lucas is taken to the hospital, where a plastic surgeon stitches him up. During the procedure, Lucas calls his wife, Weather, who is alarmed but reassured by the surgeon. Meanwhile, Jenkins, another officer, confirms Hanson was killed during the altercation, and evidence at his home—including trophies and VHS tapes—links him to the murders of the Jones sisters and other victims.

At the hospital, Lucas recovers from the anesthesia while Del updates him on the aftermath. Hanson was shot dead by Jenkins during the struggle, and the woman he held hostage, Betty Ludwig, escaped with minor injuries. The investigation reveals disturbing evidence in Hanson’s home, such as locks of hair and personal items from victims. Lucas expresses relief that he won’t have to view the incriminating tapes. The sheriff’s department is briefed, though tensions arise over the lack of prior coordination. Lucas defends his impulsive actions, explaining he acted to protect Ludwig, despite the risks.

After being discharged, Lucas returns home, where Weather scolds him for his recklessness. His injuries make resting uncomfortable, but colleagues Jenkins and Shrake visit to confirm the shooting was justified. Public Safety Commissioner Rose Marie Roux holds a press conference, declaring Hanson responsible for at least six child murders, including his uncle and Marcy Sherrill. The case will require extensive investigation to identify all victims. Rose Marie and Weather later admonish Lucas for his behavior, urging him to appreciate his team’s loyalty.

The chapter concludes with reflections on the aftermath. Funerals are held for Sherrill, Hanson, and the Jones sisters, while Todd Barker, another victim, survives a lung

infection. Hanson’s relatives attempt to sue the state for property damage but settle quietly to avoid public scrutiny. The BCA’s DNA advancements are highlighted, showcasing their role in solving the case. Lucas, mostly healed after two weeks, contemplates the events alone, leaving the reader with a sense of closure but lingering questions about justice and the toll of his work.