

Dog on It: A Chet and Bernie Mystery Study Guide

**Dog on It: A Chet and Bernie Mystery by Spencer
Quinn**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Dog on It: A Chet and Bernie Mystery Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 – 5.....	6
Chapters 6 – 11.....	11
Chapters 12 – 16.....	17
Chapters 17 – 21.....	22
Chapters 22 – 26.....	28
Chapters 27 – 31.....	33
Characters.....	38
Symbols and Symbolism.....	45
Settings.....	49
Themes and Motifs.....	51
Styles.....	54
Quotes.....	56



Plot Summary

Dog on It is a mystery novel written by Spencer Quinn. Narrated by a large mix-breed dog named Chet, the novel was published in 2009. In the novel Chet and his owner/partner private detective Bernie Little are hired to find fifteen-year-old Madison Chambliss by the girl's mother. Although Bernie starts out believing that Madison is staying with friends and will return home on her own, this soon changes as he and Chet find that the real estate development owned by Madison's father Damon Keefer is in serious financial trouble. As the case goes on, both Chet and Bernie almost lose their lives. Bernie realizes that not only has Madison Chambliss been kidnapped, but he and Chet have also been watched and targeted since the very beginning of the case. The first book in the six-part (to date) Chet and Bernie Mystery series, *Dog on It* is followed by *Thereby Hangs a Tail*, *To Fetch a Thief*, and most recently 2013's *The Sound and the Furry*.

As Chet – the 100-pound canine narrator of the novel – and his owner/partner Bernie Little, a private investigator, are playing fetch out in their yard one night a car drives up to their house in the Valley. A woman named Cynthia Chambliss gets out and says that she wants to hire Bernie to find her 15-year-old daughter Madison, who didn't come home from school that day. Bernie initially refuses, citing that Madison has only been missing a few hours, but finally agrees to take the case after Cynthia offers him a much needed \$500 retainer. Chet and Bernie go to Cynthia's house, search Madison's room, and question Cynthia about her daughter. As they are leaving Madison comes through the door and says that she has been at the movie 'Dr. Zhivago.' Bernie asks Madison a question about 'Dr. Zhivago' and her answer tells him that she is lying about having seen the film, but also convinces him that she is a smart kid.

The next day a pretty reporter for the Valley Tribune named Suzie Sanchez spends the day with Chet and Bernie researching a story on Valley private detectives, and Chet can see that Bernie is attracted to her. The following afternoon, Cynthia Chambliss calls and tells Bernie that Madison has disappeared again, and has been gone for over a day. Chet and Bernie search Madison's room again, and then head out to the North Canyon Mall where the theater that had been showing 'Dr. Zhivago' is located. Bernie leaves Chet in their old Porsche when he goes into the mall, and Chet falls asleep. A short time later a large blond man slashes the Porsche's tires with a knife and then hits Chet with a blue car as he speeds away.

Chet is not seriously injured and the next morning he and Bernie interview the boy Madison claimed to have seen 'Dr. Zhivago' with. The boy tells them that Madison hadn't been at the movies at all; she had been visiting a friend of hers named Ruben Ramirez and that she'd called him to give her a ride home after Ramirez had come on to her. Bernie and Chet then talk with Ramirez, who tells them that when Madison left his house that night a blond man in a blue BMW that Ruben didn't recognize offered her a ride, which she refused. When Chet and Bernie return home Damon Keefer – Cynthia Chambliss' ex-husband and Madison's father – is waiting for Bernie and demands to know what progress he has made. Bernie refuses to discuss the case without Cynthia's



permission, and the three of them – along with Chet – meet later that afternoon at which time Keefer becomes a co-client with Cynthia. Later that night a strange noise wakes Chet up and he goes to investigate. Chet spots the blond man who slashed the Porsche's tires and another man sitting in a blue car in front of a house down the street, and attacks the blond man. Chet is shot with a Taser and the two men – named Boris and Harold – load him into the trunk and drive away.

Chet is taken to a compound in the mountains where a cruel man with a Russian accent named Gulagov decides to train him for dog fighting, but Chet refuses to obey any of his commands. As Chet escapes from Gulagov and takes refuge in an abandoned mine on the compound he catches a glimpse of Madison Chambliss, who is also being held there. Chet digs his way out of the mine and then walks all day through a desert before he runs across a group of bikers at a campsite who give him food and water. The next day the bikers drop Chet off at an animal shelter in the small town of Sierra Verde and three days after that, as Chet is about to be destroyed, Suzie Sanchez – the reporter from the Valley Tribune – happens to come to the shelter, recognizes Chet, and takes him home to Bernie.

Chet and Bernie get back to work on the Madison Chambliss case and go to Pinnacle Peak Homes, a real estate development owned by Madison's father Damon Keefer, where Bernie notices that a number of homes are under construction but that there are no contractors working on them even though it is a weekday. Bernie asks Keefer about the development's financial condition, which Keefer says is fine, but their conversation is interrupted by a phone call that Keefer says is from his irrigation contractor. Bernie senses that Keefer is not telling him everything he knows about his daughter's disappearance and the next morning he and Chet – along with Suzie Sanchez – track down Keefer's irrigation contractor and pay him a visit. The contractor tells them that Keefer has owed him money for months and stopped taking his calls three weeks ago – which contradicts what Keefer told Bernie the day before. As they are driving home a friend of Bernie's in the Valley Police Department calls and tells Bernie that Madison Chambliss has been spotted in Las Vegas.

Chet and Bernie drive to Vegas where they meet Damon Keefer and Cynthia Chambliss at the Golden Palm Movie Palace, where Madison had been spotted by the projectionist. Keefer tells Bernie that since it is obvious that Madison is a runaway his services are no longer needed. Chet and Bernie leave, but return to the Golden Palm later and question the projectionist, Anatoly Bulganin. As Bulganin tells them a story that Bernie doesn't believe, Chet smells the scent of beets on Bulganin – the same scent that Mr. Gulagov had. After they drive home Bernie gets on his computer and makes a few phone calls and is soon able to confirm that Damon Keefer's Pinnacle Peak development is a financial house of cards that is collapsing, that he owes money all over the Valley, and that no bank will do business with him. He and Chet then talk with a neighbor who tells Bernie that he thinks he saw two men throw Chet in the trunk of a blue car that had been parked outside the house with the For Sale sign on it down the street a few nights before. Chet and Bernie speak with the real estate agent handling the property who says that up until a few days ago the house had been rented by a blond man with an accent who had only stayed for two weeks. It becomes obvious to



Bernie that he and Chet have been watched and targeted since they started the investigation into Madison's disappearance, and that they need to find out why.

After an unsuccessful attempt to have Chet retrace his steps from the campsite where the bikers found him to wherever he'd been taken after being dog-napped, Chet and Bernie return to Sierra Verde and spot Anatoly Bulganin – the projectionist from Las Vegas –getting into a blue BMW. They chase him up a mountain road, but their old Porsche blows an engine gasket and goes over the side of a cliff. Chet is thrown clear and rescues Bernie who is clinging to a rock outcropping. When they are finally able to get home there is a message on the machine from Cynthia Chambliss that Madison called her and said she was coming home soon. When Bernie calls Cynthia back she is shocked to hear from him because Damon Keefer had told her just a couple of hours before that Bernie had been killed in a car wreck - a wreck that only Bulganin could have seen.

Chet and Bernie go to see Damon Keefer. Keefer again tells Bernie that he is fired and threatens to call the police, but Bernie questions Keefer about his finances again. He then asks why Keefer thought he'd been killed in a wreck, and Keefer says that he received an anonymous phone call. Realizing that Keefer will never tell him the truth, Bernie and Chet leave and visit one of their street contacts who puts them in touch with Albie Rose. Rose is an elderly loan shark who says that while he would never lend Damon Keefer money there is a new guy in the Valley who might do business with him – a Russian by the name of Gulagov. Chet barks when he hears the name.

When they get home Bernie works on his computer trying to find a connection between Gulagov and Keefer. Chet is picked up for an appointment with the dog groomer and when he is brought home, Bernie is gone. Suzie Sanchez comes over and after finding a piece of a whiteboard Bernie had been making notes on with the letters SV on it, she and Chet drive to Sierra Verde. While Suzie is in a convenience store there Chet sees the blond man Boris drive by in a pickup truck and manages to jump into the back of it without Boris noticing. A short time later they arrive at Mr. Gulagov's compound and Chet finds Bernie tied to a post inside the abandoned mine. After Chet gnaws through the ropes he and Bernie are able to subdue and disarm Harold, who along with Boris had kidnapped Bernie, and another member of Gulagov's gang. Harold tells Bernie that Damon Keefer owes Gulagov almost a million dollars and that Madison had been taken to make him pay. After Bernie shoots and wounds Boris, Gulagov appears holding a straight razor to Madison Chambliss' throat and threatens to kill her unless Bernie drops his gun, but Chet jumps over Madison and tackles Gulagov, forcing him to drop the razor. A few moments later Suzie arrives at the compound followed by several police cars. Gulagov and his gang are arrested and later sentenced to prison terms, as is Damon Keefer who is convicted of conspiracy. Chet and Bernie receive a large bonus check from Cynthia Chambliss' boyfriend, and Suzie Sanchez becomes a regular visitor at their house.



Chapters 1 – 5

Summary

Dog on It is the first novel in the Chet and Bernie Mystery series by Spencer Quinn. Narrated by Chet – a 100 pound mix-breed dog and the ‘partner’ of private detective Bernie Little – the novel follows their investigation into the disappearance of fifteen-year-old Madison Chambliss, a gifted high school student who fails to come home one day after school. Although Bernie initially believes that Madison is with friends and will come home on her own, the further he digs into the circumstances surrounding her disappearance, the more he becomes convinced that Madison has been kidnapped. As Chet and Bernie follow the few clues there are in the case and edge closer to the truth, they discover that they themselves have been targeted and that their own lives are in danger. Published in 2009, Dog on It is followed by five other novels in the series, the latest installments (as of this writing) being 2012’s A Fistful of Collars and 2013’s The Sound and the Furry.

Chapter One

Bernie Little – owner of the Little Detective Agency – comes home later than usual after an evening of drinking and finds his dog Chet waiting for him. He takes Chet outside and after Chet does his business, Bernie tosses a tennis ball up the canyon road that leads to their house in the Valley and Chet fetches it. As they are playing a car drives up and a tall woman gets out. She says her name is Cynthia Chambliss and that she was referred to Bernie by someone he had done work for previously. Cynthia says that she needs Bernie’s help because her daughter Madison has disappeared, and then begins to cry. As she is crying Chet hears something rustle in the bushes and runs after it. When Chet returns he hears Bernie telling Cynthia that even though her daughter didn’t come home from school that afternoon she shouldn’t be too concerned. Madison has been missing for less than eight hours, and in Bernie’s experience 15-year-old girls often hang out with friends and stay out late even on school nights. Bernie tells Cynthia to call him if Madison isn’t home by morning and he will look into it then. Cynthia says that she wants Bernie to start looking immediately, takes a roll of cash out of her bag, and peels off \$500 as an advance. Bernie considers for a moment, then takes the cash and says that he would like to start by seeing Madison’s room. Bernie and Chet get into their old Porsche and follow Cynthia Chambliss down the canyon road to her home.

Chapter Two

When they reach her house Cynthia asks Bernie if ‘the dog’ will be coming inside and Bernie says yes, Chet is a highly trained police dog that specializes in missing kids. They go directly to Madison’s room, where Chet sees a parrot in a cage hanging from the ceiling and starts to growl softly without realizing it. Chet sits down, immediately sees a small bag of marijuana (which he recognizes from his days in K-9 school) under a TV table, and starts barking. Bernie tells Chet to stop and then says that he needs



Cynthia to establish a timeline of events. Cynthia says that she last saw Madison at 8:15 that morning when she dropped her off at school, and first noticed Madison was missing when she didn't come home on the school bus at 3:15 that afternoon. Bernie tells Cynthia that he will need contact information for her ex-husband and her daughter's friends as well as a recent picture of Madison. When Cynthia leaves to get a picture, Bernie asks Chet if he's found something and Chet leans forward towards the bag of marijuana under the TV table. Bernie picks it up and inspects it, then puts it back. Cynthia returns with the contact info and a picture, and Bernie asks if he can have something with Madison's smell on it for Chet. After giving him one of Madison's pillowcases, Cynthia leads Chet and Bernie to the front door. When she opens it they see Madison Chambliss coming up the walk towards the house.

Chapter Three

Cynthia asks Madison where she has been, and Madison tells her that she went to a movie about Russia that her history teacher recommended she see with a boy named Tim. Madison says that she forgot to call home, and had her phone turned off in the movie. As he and Chet are leaving Bernie asks what the movie was and Madison says 'Dr. Zhivago.' Bernie says that his favorite part of 'Dr. Zhivago' is the tennis-court scene, which Madison says was cool. When they get home Bernie fixes a steak and splits it with Chet. While they are eating Bernie works on his laptop and tells Chet that there is no tennis-court scene in 'Dr. Zhivago,' but that the movie is playing where Madison said it was which tells him not only that she is a liar, but also that she is very good at it. Bernie and Chet then go to sleep – Bernie in his bed, and Chet on the soft rug on the floor.

Chet awakens to the sound of a car stopping in front of the house the next morning, and he sees Bernie's ex-wife Leda coming up the walk while Bernie's son Charlie stays in the car. Chet runs in and jumps on the bed, waking Bernie up, and a moment later the doorbell rings. When Bernie opens the door Leda shoves a piece of paper at him and says that the tuition check he had written to Charlie's school bounced and that her boyfriend Malcolm had to cover it. As Leda and Bernie argue Chet trots out to the car and gives Charlie a big lick. A moment later Leda and Bernie join them, and Bernie tells Charlie that they will go camping that weekend. As Leda and Charlie drive off another car pulls up in front of the house. A woman gets out of the car and introduces herself as Suzie Sanchez from the Valley Tribune. She says that she has an appointment to interview Bernie for a feature she is doing on PIs, and Bernie apologizes for running late. Suzie pats Chet, then reaches into her car and brings out a bag of large dog biscuits. After asking Bernie if it is okay she gives one to Chet, and he happily downs it in two bites.

Chapter Four

A short time later Bernie, Chet, and Suzie Sanchez are sitting in the front seat of an old black pick-up truck, staking out an office building. Chet begins to growl as Justin Anthony III – a man he and Bernie have been watching – comes out of the building, gets into a large SUV, and pulls into traffic. As Bernie follows the car, he tells Suzie that



his client suspects that her husband is cheating on her and has hired him to prove it. The SUV pulls up in front of a motel and Anthony goes into room 37. A short time later a young woman walks up to room 37 and knocks on the door. When Anthony opens the door he is naked, and Chet hears a click from Bernie's camera. As they wait, Suzie asks questions. Bernie tells her that he had gone to West Point, and that he had left the Valley Police Department six years before to become a private investigator because it was time to move on. After a while Anthony comes out of room 37, gets in his SUV, and drives away. Bernie, Chet, and Suzie head for home.

The next day Suzie Sanchez's article is in the Valley Tribune, and Bernie reads the story to Chet. The article describes Bernie as a "shambling" athletic type who is past his prime, and Chet as a 'lively mongrel dog.' After he finishes reading the article Bernie decides it is time to get into shape and he and Chet go out for a run. As they jog through the canyon near their house, Chet sees a javelina and chases it, eventually crashing into a cactus. Back in their kitchen, the phone rings as Bernie is pulling needles out of Chet. Bernie lets the answering machine get it and Chet hears the voice of Cynthia Chambliss saying that Madison has disappeared again, and this time she has been gone for over a day.

Chapter Five

Bernie and Chet return to Cynthia Chambliss' house. Bernie asks if Cynthia has called the police and when she says she hasn't he tells her she should. He then tells her that Madison had been lying the other night when she'd said she'd been at the movies, and that he suspects that she will come home soon with another lie. Cynthia says that Madison would never stay out all night alone; she'd called all of Madison's friends as well as her ex-husband Damon, and no one had seen her. Bernie says that he thinks she will come home on her own and that Cynthia should be patient, but she begs him to help her and he finally agrees. Bernie says he will need the contact names and numbers they talked about before, and then asks if Madison plays a sport. Cynthia says she is an archer, and Bernie tells her to include info for her coach and teammates.

Chet and Bernie drive to North Canyon Mall, where the movie theater that had been playing 'Dr. Zhivago' is located. Bernie leaves Chet in the Porsche with the top down and goes into the mall alone while Chet closes his eyes and drifts off to sleep. When he awakens he sees a blond man standing next to the car. The man pulls a knife from his pocket, leans down and punctures one of the Porsche's tires, then quickly punctures a second one. Chet jumps at the man and he swipes at Chet with his knife. Chet sinks his teeth into the man's leg and he drops the knife, then runs and Chet chases after him. The man jumps in a blue car, and hits Chet as he drives away. A few moments later Bernie comes back; Chet is lying on the pavement, feeling terrible. A kid comes up and tells Bernie that Chet was hit by a blue car that he was chasing. Chet gets to his feet and limps back to the Porsche, and Bernie sees that he is bleeding. Bernie sees that his tires are slashed, calls a tow truck, and takes Chet to the vet a couple of hours later.



Analysis

These first few chapters introduce Chet – a large, friendly (most of the time) mix-breed dog – and his owner Bernie Little, a private detective who has money problems. The novel is written entirely in the first person by Chet, and everything that happens in the story is presented to the reader as it is seen, experienced, and understood by him. Because the story is told completely from Chet's perspective, the author presents the information that would be most important to a dog first (sounds, smells, people and places he recognizes, etc.) while filling the plot out by having Chet recount conversations that he hears people have, including those times when Bernie bounces his thoughts and ideas off of Chet. In several cases conversations stop abruptly – at least as far as the reader is concerned – when Chet wanders away from them or falls asleep and therefore can no longer hear what is being said. Although Chet is very intelligent, he has only a vague understanding of time, and numbers mean virtually nothing to him. At one time Chet had gone to K-9 school to become a police dog, which is where he and Bernie met each other, but for some reason he failed to graduate – a fact that Bernie specifically fails to mention at several points in the story when introducing Chet as a highly trained police dog. Chet is extremely observant – something that will be very important throughout the course of the novel – and completely devoted to Bernie. Chet's favorite thing in the world is going with Bernie on cases, and riding "shotgun" in the old Porsche convertible Bernie drives when they are not on a stakeout. Although Chet is the narrator of the novel he cannot speak, nor is he able to communicate with Bernie or anyone else in any way other than how normal dogs do – barking, growling, wagging, etc.

Bernie Little – Chet's 'partner' – is a private detective who, because of a messy divorce and a few financial setbacks, is suffering what he calls a temporary cash flow problem – a problem that brings his ex-wife Leda angrily to his front door first thing in the morning after a check that he wrote for his son's school tuition bounces and her boyfriend has to cover it. Bernie is a fairly large, muscular middle aged man, a graduate of West Point who was wounded in the leg at some point in his life (Chet is not certain just when), and a former member of the Valley Police Department who quit six years prior to the start of the story for reasons he prefers not to talk about. Bernie is a very ethical, capable detective who hates doing divorce work even though his financial situation forces him to take that kind of case to pay the bills more often than he would like. He is also slightly vain, and decides to go jogging for the first time Chet can remember after he is described as 'shambling' in a newspaper story about him by Suzie Sanchez. Chet – who has one white ear and one black ear – is called a "mongrel" in the same story, which he thinks is very rude.

Even though he is broke, Bernie initially refuses to take Cynthia Chambliss' case because of how short a time her daughter Madison had been missing and only agrees after Cynthia says that if Bernie won't help her she will go to someone else. When Madison shows up at home shortly after Bernie and Chet get there, Bernie is able to catch her in a lie about the movie she claimed to have been at all that evening. When Madison disappears for the second time a couple of afternoons later Bernie again



assumes that it is just a case of a kid partying with her friends and again advises Cynthia Chambliss be patient, but Cynthia is adamant about having Bernie search for her daughter, and Bernie reluctantly agrees. When the Porsche's tires are slashed (and Chet is injured) by a blond man in the mall parking lot while Bernie is inside checking the movie theater Madison Chambliss claimed to be at the first time she disappeared, Bernie – and the reader – are forced to wonder whether the incident is somehow related to Madison's second disappearance and if he and Chet are being warned off the case.

The novel is set in the Valley, an area near a huge, unnamed desert and a large canyon. The name of the local newspaper is the Valley Tribune, and at one time Bernie worked for the Valley Police Department. The state in which the Valley is located is never mentioned; however, at one point later in the novel it takes Bernie and Chet just a few hours to drive to Las Vegas, so the Valley is obviously located somewhere in the Western United States.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Bernie initially refuse to help Cynthia Chambliss the first time she thinks that her daughter Madison is missing? What changes his mind about taking the case? What does Bernie advise Cynthia Chambliss to do when Madison goes missing again just a couple of days later, and why?

Discussion Question 2

When she arrives home, Madison tells her mother (and Chet and Bernie, who are at the house) that she went to see 'Dr. Zhivago' at the theater in the North Canyon Mall. How is Bernie able to tell almost immediately that Madison is lying? Why does she lie? Madison tells convince Bernie that she is a very good liar, and also that she is very intelligent?

Discussion Question 3

What causes Bernie to decide that he and Chet need to start jogging? What does Chet think when Bernie tells him that they both need to get into shape? Near the end of the jog, why does Chet end up running headfirst into a cactus?

Vocabulary

mustered, booze, saliva, nervous, impulse, recommend, ignition, aggressive, handicaps, marijuana, various, recollection, laptop, wrinkled, obviously, bloated, scratched, complainer, dramatic, stockbroker, collar, napping, stakeout, mongrel, unzipped, yawned, account, cigarettes



Chapters 6 – 11

Summary

Chapter Six

When they get home from the vet, Bernie works on his laptop while Chet sits in the La-Z-Boy with his leg on a pillow. Bernie says that there is a boy named Tim Fletcher in the archery club at Madison Chambliss' high school. Bernie then picks up the phone and calls his friend in the Valley PD's Missing Persons division, Sergeant Rick Torres. After finding out that Cynthia Chambliss had called him as he'd suggested, Bernie tells Torres that the cashier at the theater where Madison claimed to have seen 'Dr. Zhivago' said that she'd seen her in the ticket line, but that she'd left with a young man. Bernie says that he is going to work on finding the young man and hangs up. Bernie tells Chet that what they need to do is reconstruct the events of the first time Madison disappeared and that the best way to do that is to start by talking to Tim Fletcher, who Madison claimed to have been at the movies with.

First thing the next morning – Saturday – Chet and Bernie drive out to Tim Fletcher's home. After Bernie identifies himself as a PI, Tim's mother wakes Tim up and then leaves him alone with Chet and Bernie. Bernie starts to question Tim – who is a senior at Madison's high school – about the events of Wednesday night. Tim tells Bernie that he hadn't been at the movies with Madison; she had been at the mall, but left with a kid named Ruben Ramirez who had dropped out of school and now sold pot out of his place in Modena. Madison had gone with Ramirez to his place but left after he came on to her and called Tim from a convenience store to pick her up. Tim drove her home, and promised he wouldn't say anything about where she had been. Bernie tells Tim to call him if he remembers anything else, and he and Chet leave.

Chapter Seven

Bernie and Chet drive out to Modena and find the address they are looking for, but the young man who answers the door denies having ever heard of Madison Chambliss. When Bernie says that he thinks Madison Chambliss is in the house with him, Ramirez hits Bernie in the jaw. Chet jumps on Ramirez and gets him by the pant-leg, and Bernie swings around and gets Ramirez in a choke hold that knocks him out. Bernie quickly searches the house, but Madison isn't there. When he gets back to Chet, Ramirez is coming to. Bernie says that Ramirez has some interesting weapons in the house, as well as about nine pounds of pot – but he will forget about all that in return for his cooperation. Ramirez lies about what happened Wednesday night, but Bernie lets the lies pass and moves on to Thursday – the day of the second disappearance. Ramirez says that he was in jail all day Thursday because of some outstanding warrants, and only made bail a few hours ago. Bernie then asks about what really happened Wednesday night, and Ramirez tells him that he got a little romantic and Madison walked out on him. He then says that there was a blue BMW parked across the street



and that the blond guy in it had offered Madison a ride, but she'd just walked past him and a moment later the car drove off. Chet and Bernie stop at the convenience store Madison had called Tim Fletcher from after leaving Ramirez's house, but no one there recognizes her.

Chapter Eight

As they drive home, Bernie tells Chet that it is beginning to look to him as though this could be a kidnapping; the first try outside Ruben Ramirez's house Wednesday night had been unsuccessful, and whoever it was had got Madison on the second attempt. There is a large black car parked in the driveway when they get home and a man with a goatee is standing next to it. He introduces himself as Damon Keefer, Madison's father, and demands that Bernie give him a report. Bernie says that since Cynthia Chambliss hired him he only reports to her and suggests that he, Keefer, and Cynthia all meet. Bernie calls Cynthia and a short time later they are all in Bernie's office. Bernie asks if either of them have received a ransom demand, and Cynthia says they have not. Bernie then asks if either of them have any enemies or business rivals who might be involved in Madison's disappearance. Keefer says that as a land developer he has rivals, but they don't kidnap the kids of each other. Bernie then starts telling them everything he has learned so far, and Chet drifts off to sleep. When Chet awakens, he and Bernie are alone in the office. Bernie is holding a check for \$2,000 and tells Chet that Damon and Cynthia are now co-clients.

Bernie's son Charlie arrives for the weekend. Bernie pitches a tent in the backyard then grilles sausages for dinner on a campfire. When it is time to turn in, Bernie and Charlie crawl into the tent while Chet curls up next to the campfire. Chet awakens when he hears a dog barking and follows the sound to the front of the house, then down the street. After passing a couple of houses Chet sees a parked car with two men sitting in it and recognizes one of them as the blond man from the mall parking lot. The man's arm is hanging out the passenger window and Chet charges, clamping his teeth down on the man's arm. The man screams and the driver of the car pulls out a Taser and shoots Chet with it. Chet is paralyzed, and the two men load him into the trunk of the car and drive off. Chet immediately realizes from the smell that not long before Madison Chambliss had also been in the trunk.

Chapter Nine

After a while Chet feels the car come to a stop, and hears two men who call each other Boris and Harold talking about what they should do. Harold says they should shoot the dog and leave him by the side of the road, but Boris – who has a heavy accent – says they must take him to Mr. Gulagov and let him decide. The car starts moving again and although he tries to remain alert, Chet falls asleep. When Chet awakens it is light; he sees that the trunk is open and springs out of it, but jumps directly into a cage. Chet sees Boris, Harold, and a short, strong man with a shaved head looking in at him. The man with the shaved head says that Chet is a fine animal, and that they should be able to train him to fight. The man, who Boris calls Mr. Gulagov, says that they will name him Stalin and tells Harold to bring Chet to the barn. Harold uses a forklift to bring Chet's



cage to the back of the barn and leaves him in the hot sun. A long time later Mr. Gulagov comes by with a bowl of water. He tells Chet that he can have the water if he will obey his commands, and then tells Chet to sit. Chet remains standing. He tries again, but Chet continues to stand. Gulagov shouts that he will not tolerate disobedience, kicks the water bowl over, and walks away. Chet sticks his snout through the cage bars and licks up some moist dirt.

Chapter Ten

The sun is setting when Gulagov and Boris return to the cage. Boris opens the cage door and Chet charges through it, but Gulagov gets a choke chain around Chet's neck and pulls it tight. Chet struggles, realizes it is only making things worse, and stops. Gulagov loosens the chain and commands Chet to sit, but he remains standing. After more unsuccessful attempts to get Chet to obey, Gulagov tells Boris to get the horsewhip. Boris returns with the whip, but at that moment Chet sees Madison Chambliss stick her head out of a window in the barn and hears her shout for Gulagov not to hurt the dog. An instant later a woman drags Madison away from the window. Gulagov is distracted and loosens the choke chain. Chet bolts, ripping the chain from his hand. As Chet runs he hears Gulagov order Boris to kill him, and then hears a gunshot. A moment later Chet runs into the opening of an old mine and rests in the darkness inside.

Harold, Gulagov, and Boris enter the mine with flashlights, and one of them fires a shot that hits the rocks right next to Chet. Chet runs further into the mine, finds that there is running water, and follows it until he finds a spot where water is running down the wall of the mine. Chet hears the men approaching, and then hears Harold suggest that it might be safer to wait for the dog near the entrance since there is only way out of the mine, and Gulagov agrees. When they leave Chet drinks his fill, then lies down and soon falls asleep.

Chapter Eleven

When Chet awakens he sees a narrow shaft of light in the distance and moves towards it, still wearing the choke chain. He finally reaches the crack in the wall where the light is coming from and starts to dig. When he is able to stick his head through the hole he has dug he sees that he is on the side of a mountain above the desert. He manages to squeeze through the hole and tumbles down the side of the mountain, coming to rest on a narrow ledge. Chet follows the ledge until he reaches a gully, and smells something that reminds him of cats. A moment later Chet sees a mountain lion coming towards him. The mountain lion pounces and they roll down the side of the mountain together. When they come to a stop the mountain lion swipes at Chet with her claws; she hits Chet's side, but also catches her claws in the choke chain. The chain snaps and one of the links goes down her throat, causing her to choke. Chet runs, and doesn't stop until he reaches the desert below.

Chet follows the sun and by the time night falls he is tired, hungry, and thirsty. He sees a faint light in the distance and moves towards it, and soon smells meat cooking.



Following the scent Chet finds a group of bikers sitting around a campfire. A huge biker with a white beard notices Chet, sees that he's been hurt, and gives him a burger and then some beer. Chet stays with the bikers that night and in the morning when they leave the huge biker straps Chet to the back of his large bike with a bungee cord and takes Chet with him.

Analysis

Although Chet is sore after being hit by the car in the North Canyon Mall parking lot there is nothing seriously wrong with him, and he and Bernie get back to work on the Madison Chambliss case. While there is nothing at all to go on as far as Madison's current disappearance is concerned, Bernie is still bothered by the lie she told about being at the movies and decides that the best way to proceed is to reconstruct the events surrounding her first disappearance on Wednesday night and find out what really happened. After learning that Madison had been in line to see 'Dr. Zhivago' but left with a young man instead of buying a ticket, Bernie recalls that Madison had told her mother that she had seen the movie with a senior at her school named Tim-something, and that he had taken her home afterwards. After finding that Tim Fletcher – a senior at her high school – is also in the archery club with Madison, Bernie is reasonably certain that talking to Fletcher is where he needs to start and heads out to interview him at his house. Tim Fletcher is nervous and a little frightened, and by using a mixture of subtle warnings about what could happen if he doesn't cooperate and Fletcher's own obvious concern about Madison, Bernie is able to get Tim to break his promise to Madison and tell him what really happened on Wednesday night. By the time he leaves Fletcher's house, Bernie is even more impressed with Madison's cleverness, as well as with her ability to lie well.

Things go differently when Bernie and Chet arrive at Ruben Ramirez's house in Modena. Ramirez first denies being himself, then denies having ever heard of Madison Chambliss, and finally hits Bernie in the jaw to make him go away. Bernie takes the punch well – Chet comments that they have been in a lot of fights and he has never seen Bernie go down – and while Chet has a hold of Ramirez's pant-leg he gets Ruben in a sleeper hold and knocks him out. When Ramirez comes to Bernie has been through the house and found a number of automatic weapons as well as nine pounds of marijuana, and tells Ruben he will forget what he has seen in return for his cooperation. Ruben tells Bernie lie after lie about Wednesday night, but is able to provide an alibi for the next day when Madison disappeared for the second time. Bernie is beginning to think that he has reached a dead end when Ramirez mentions that there was a blue BMW – not the kind of car he was used to seeing in his neighborhood – with a blond man in the driver's seat parked in front of his house when Madison left on Wednesday night. Bernie questions him about it, but Ramirez doesn't know anything other than that the blond man offered Madison a ride, she had refused, and had then run to the convenience store down the block.

Although it doesn't prove anything conclusively, Bernie begins to believe that this could more than just a teenager running away from home and hanging out with friends for a



couple of days as he had first thought. As he bounces his ideas off Chet, he theorizes that Madison's encounter with the blond man in the BMW Wednesday night might have actually been an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt. Bernie also remembers that the kid he'd talked to in the North Canyon Mall parking lot had told him that the car which hit Chet had been blue, although he didn't know the make. Later, when he presents what he has learned to Cynthia Chambliss and her ex-husband Damon Keefer – who, much to Bernie's irritation, is now a co-client – he tells them that while nothing is certain it is looking more and more like a kidnapping of some kind to him and then starts to ask them questions about enemies and rivals. As happens at several points during the story, Chet falls asleep during this questioning and the reader is not told what, if anything, Bernie discovers.

When Chet is grabbed by Boris and Harold he does everything he can think of to get away, and spends a great deal of his time both in the trunk of the car and in his cage remembering things that Bernie had told him over the years, as well as some of the tough situations they had found themselves in. When Mr. Gulagov first tells Chet that his name is now Stalin and that he needs to obey him, Chet doesn't have any real idea of what is happening, but can sense that Gulagov is a bad man and wants nothing to do with him. Chet's complete refusal to even do something as simple as sit infuriates Gulagov – who the reader understands from his conversations with Boris and Harold is a very powerful man who always gets what he wants – and makes him try even harder to get Chet to obey. For his part, even though he knows that Gulagov wants to train him so that he can fight some dogs he doesn't even know down in Mexico, Chet refuses to answer to the name Stalin and knows that the only person he has to 'obey' is Bernie. As Gulagov is about to try and beat him into submission with a bullwhip, Chet sees Madison Chambliss in a window in the barn. Although Chet himself is unable to put everything together, it is obvious at this point that Boris – who hit Chet with the blue car in the parking lot – is the same blond man who tried to pick up Madison Chambliss outside of Ruben Ramirez's house, which indicates that her disappearance is indeed a kidnapping, as Bernie suspects. All Chet can think of, however, is escaping from Gulagov and somehow finding his way home to Bernie.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Tim Fletcher lie to Bernie about driving Madison Chambliss home from the movies when Bernie first questions him about it at his home? What causes Tim to change his mind and finally tell Bernie the truth? Do you think that Tim was being loyal to Madison and trying to keep her out of trouble by lying at first, or do you think he was trying to protect himself?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Damon Keefer – Madison Chambliss' father – insist that he has a right to hear what progress Bernie has made on the case when he meets Bernie for the first



time? Why does Bernie refuse to tell him anything? How does Bernie finally work the situation out? Do you think he does the right thing?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Chet refuse to obey Mr. Gulagov's commands to sit? What is it about Mr. Gulagov that immediately makes Chet mistrust and dislike him? Later, after he is finally able to escape from the mine, what does Chet remember that helps him survive his encounter with the mountain lion and how do his memories help him?

Vocabulary

keyboard, cashier, downwind, trotting, licensed, investigator, admissions, tilted, detour, shotgun, pavement, whoosh, processing, bewildering, blackboard, territory, information, backpack, fiery, jolting, roadside, vision, rubbery, adjusting, loyalty, forklift, shivers, campfire



Chapters 12 – 16

Summary

Chapter Twelve

The bikers ride across the desert and finally come to a town. Most of the bikers stop at a bar, but the huge biker continues on and stops in front of a small building. He unstraps Chet and the two of them go inside where they are greeted by a woman. As the biker explains how he found the dog in the desert, Chet smells the scent of other dogs. The woman asks the biker if he would like to adopt the dog and says that they only have a three day grace period, but the biker says no and leaves. Chet tries to follow him, but the shelter woman slips a leash on Chet and leads him to a small room where she feeds him. The next three days pass very slowly for Chet. As one point a family comes by and looks in on him, and Chet hears the mom say “he looks too aggressive”; at another point he hears the shelter woman say something about him only having until tomorrow at 9:00 AM. The next morning Chet awakens and hears a female voice he recognizes talking to the shelter woman. He hears the woman say she has brought a big bag of dog biscuits, and Chet realizes that it is Suzie Sanchez and starts to bark. While he is barking a man and woman come into Chet’s room and get a leash on him. When the man asks why Chet is barking, the woman says that “some of them just know.” The two lead of them Chet to a metal door, and then drag him through it.

Chapter Thirteen

The man and woman lift Chet up onto a cold metal table and manage to clamp him down. The door opens and he hears Suzie Sanchez say that she wants to “witness this,” and Chet barks. When she steps into the room Suzie sees Chet, who thumps his tail as hard as he can on the table, and Suzie tells them to stop. A few minutes later Chet is riding shotgun in Suzie’s car while she feeds him dog biscuits, and after a long ride they finally turn into Chet’s driveway. The front door to the house opens and Bernie – who looks thin and tired – steps out, and soon he and Chet are rolling happily on the ground. A short time later Bernie and Suzie are on the sofa sipping wine while Chet sits at their feet. Bernie says that there is a large reward for finding Chet, but Suzie says he can make her dinner sometime instead. She tells Bernie that she found Chet at an animal shelter she’d been doing a story on in the small rural town of Sierra Verde. She says that the biker who dropped him off said he’d found Chet in the desert in New Mexico. As they are talking the phone rings; Bernie answers it and returns a few moments later, saying that the call was about a missing person case that he is getting nowhere with involving a girl named Madison Chambliss. When he hears the name Chet remembers Mr. Gulagov, Madison’s face in the barn window, and the mine and starts to bark loudly.

Chapter Fourteen



The next morning Chet and Bernie meet with Rick Torres from the Valley PD Missing Persons department. Torres says he interviewed Madison's parents; Damon Keefer thinks she's run off to Vegas while Cynthia is sure Madison has been kidnapped. Bernie says that Rick might also want to keep an eye out for a blue BMW with a blond driver. When they are alone, Bernie tells Chet that they need to find out why Damon Keefer thinks Madison has run off to Vegas. They drive to Pinnacle Peak Homes at Puma Wells – Damon Keefer's land development – and follow a road bordered by the private golf course to the Model Home and Office. They are greeted by a tall blond woman who introduces herself as Elena Larapova, VP of marketing. Bernie asks to see Damon Keefer, and Elena takes Chet and Bernie to the golf course clubhouse in a golf cart. As they ride Bernie asks Elena about her accent, and she tells him that she was born in Russia but has lived in the states for years.

When they reach the clubhouse they find Damon Keefer in his office, and he asks Bernie if there has been any progress. Bernie says no, and then asks why Keefer thinks Madison has run off to Vegas. Keefer says that he just used Vegas as an example of the kind of place she might have run off to, but when Bernie asks if Madison has ever run off before Keefer says no. Bernie says he believes they are dealing with a kidnapping, and asks Keefer if he ever has any trouble with his suppliers or labor contractors. Keefer says he has plenty of trouble with them, but not the kind that would involve kidnapping. Keefer says that he is the sole owner of Pinnacle Peak Homes and arranges his financing through reputable Valley banks. Bernie asks to see the room Madison uses when she stays with Keefer, and he tells Bernie to meet him at the office in 15 minutes. As Chet and Bernie walk back to the model home they pass some workers and Bernie asks if they are coming off a break. One of the men laughs and says yes, a three day break.

Chapter Fifteen

Chet sees a cat as soon as he and Bernie follow Keefer into his house, but ignores it after Bernie shoots him a look. Keefer says that he is in the process of moving out, and then takes Bernie and Chet to Madison's room. As Bernie looks through the room he asks Keefer how he would describe his relationship with Madison. Keefer gets angry and tells Bernie that if he had any kids he would know that she was the best thing in his life. Bernie tells Keefer that if he is holding anything back, even just a suspicion, now is the time to tell him. Keefer starts to say something but his phone rings and he steps out of the room. When he returns Bernie asks him what the call was about, and Keefer says he is having a minor dispute with an irrigation supplier. Bernie says that he needs Keefer to be forthcoming with anything that could have a bearing on Madison's disappearance, and Keefer finally says that Bernie might want to check out Simon Berg, Cynthia's new boyfriend. Keefer says it is just a feeling he has and there is probably nothing to it, but gives Bernie Simon Berg's address and phone number anyway.

After a long ride Bernie pulls up in front of a building with a sign reading Rover and Company. Inside, Bernie tells a security guard that they are looking for Simon Berg. Berg is a small man dressed in white coveralls and after introducing himself asks Bernie if there has been any progress finding Madison. Bernie says no, and asks what Rover



and Company is. Berg says that they make high end dog treats. He then leans down, pats Chet, and asks Bernie if Chet would like to test a new rawhide chew they are working on. A short time later, as Chet tests the chew, Bernie asks how Berg's relationship with Madison is, and Berg says that he thinks it is good. Bernie then asks what Berg thinks of Damon Keefer, but someone comes with a bowl of something else for Chet to taste, and he misses the answer.

Chapter Sixteen

As they drive towards home, Bernie says that he is getting worried. Everything about the case suggests that it is a kidnapping, but there has been no ransom demand. They are driving past the North Canyon Mall and Chet starts to bark, vaguely remembering Madison in a window somewhere and the blond man named Boris. Bernie pulls into the mall parking lot and parks near where he had been parked on the day Chet was hit. Chet sniffs around the area and starts to bark when he reaches a storm drain, remembering the knife Boris had slashed him with. A short time later a mall security guard fishes the knife – which Boris had dropped when he ran away – out of the drain with a magnet attached to a long pole.

After leaving the mall they drive to the home of Otis DeWayne, a Civil War re-enactor who Bernie uses as a weapons expert. When DeWayne opens the door his dog, General Beauregard, sees Chet and a moment later the two dogs are running and playing in the desert. When they return Bernie and Otis pull cactus needles out of both of them while they talk. Otis says that the knife Bernie bought is a fine weapon and was made in Zlatoust, a town in the Ural Mountains in Russia. Otis asks if there is a Russian connection to his case and Bernie says he doesn't know if it is a connection exactly, but remembers that Elena Larapova had told him she was from Russia.

Analysis

After Chet is rescued at the last minute from being killed at the animal shelter and returned home by Suzie Sanchez he and Bernie get back to work on the Madison Chambliss disappearance. While Chet was gone Cynthia Chambliss had taken Bernie's advice and contacted Rick Torres, his friend in the Valley Police Missing Persons department, but when Bernie meets with him the day after Chet gets home he finds that Torres' official investigation has gotten no further than his own private inquiries. Torres has put Madison's picture and description out on the wire to other area police and sheriff's departments and checked with all the local hospitals, but has heard nothing back. During their meeting Torres mentions that Damon Keefer told him that he thought Madison had run off to Vegas, and Bernie remembers that Damon had said the same thing to him back when he had met with Keefer and Cynthia Chambliss just before Chet disappeared. Although Bernie is rapidly becoming convinced that Madison Chambliss has been kidnapped, the fact that there has been no ransom demand both worries and puzzles him. He finds himself again wondering about Damon Keefer's competitors and business associates and decides that it is time to pay him a visit.



Pinnacle Peak Homes at Puma Wells is a gated luxury housing development sitting on an 18-hole golf course and as Bernie drives up the road to the Model Home and Office he sees that although many of the homes are still being constructed, there is no one working on them even though it is mid-morning on a weekday. When Bernie and Chet are ushered into Damon Keefer's office, Keefer is on the phone telling someone not to worry and that "it'll clear." Later, Chet and Bernie run into a group of workers who tell Bernie that they are coming back from a three-day break. As Bernie is inspecting the room where Madison stays on the weekends Keefer has her, he asks Damon about his competitors and then his suppliers and contractors. Keefer becomes irritable and Bernie can see that he is not being totally honest with him. After Keefer takes a phone call from someone he later tells Bernie is an irrigation contractor during which he says "I need more time," Bernie presses him harder and Keefer finally says that while there is nothing concrete and that it is just a feeling, Bernie should check out Simon Berg, Cynthia's new boyfriend. Bernie and Chet check Berg out and find nothing at all suspicious – and even leave the interview with a trunk filled with high-end dog treats, which is enough to convince Chet that there couldn't be anything wrong with Simon Berg. Bernie suspects is that Keefer used Berg as a red herring to both stop him from asking questions about Keefer's business, and to shift the focus of the investigation away from himself. This only serves to make Bernie even more suspicious of Keefer although, as has been the case throughout the entire investigation, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Keefer knows anything more than he is telling.

While previous chapters have touched on Chet's memory, these chapters go deeper into both how his memory works and how he actually processes the information he is able to retrieve from his previous experiences. As a dog he lives mostly 'in the moment', concentrating on what he is experiencing now as opposed to dwelling on what has happened before and so does not retrieve information from his memory the way most humans do. Even though the events that led him to the animal shelter – being grabbed by Boris and Harold, seeing Madison Chambliss in the barn window, etc – happened only a few days before, the actual sequence of events has already started to fade for Chet. Although he sometimes remembers bits and pieces of things that have happened, he is unable to recall why what he is remembering is important. He needs something concrete to actually trigger his memory of things that have happened in the past, as happens when he and Bernie drive past the North Canyon Mall parking lot. The sight of the lot, and then the smells associated with the area where Boris had attacked him, trigger the memory of Boris dropping his knife down the storm grate. For his part, over the years Bernie has learned to 'read' Chet and is willing to follow the dog's lead when something causes him to behave differently than he usually does. This aspect of Chet and Bernie's partnership will play an increasingly important part in the rest of the story.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the fact that there has been no ransom demand even though it appears that Madison Chambliss has been kidnapped worry Bernie? What reasons other than ransom do you think might cause someone to kidnap Madison – or anyone else, for that matter? Explain your answer.



Discussion Question 2

How does Damon Keefer act when Chet and Bernie meet him in his office at the golf course clubhouse, and later when they are going through Madison's room? Why do you think he acts in this manner? Why do you think Bernie asks Keefer again about his competitors, and then later about his suppliers and contractors?

Discussion Question 3

What memories does driving past the North Canyon Mall trigger for Chet, and how do these memories eventually lead to him and Bernie finding the knife in the storm drain? Apart from being made in Russia, what does Otis DeWayne tell Bernie is unique about the knife and why do you think this may be important information?

Vocabulary

biker, opposite, puke, stroked, counter, uneasy, spaniel, dragged, shelter, clamped, dashboard, biscuit, motorcycle, halt, typical, expressing, fountain, marketing, humor, restricted, initiation, odor, jittery, ransom, kidnapping, specializes, tilted, speculation, rawhide, freeway, reenacting



Chapters 17 – 21

Summary

Chapter Seventeen

Chet and Bernie drive back to Pinnacle Peak and find a woman they do not recognize in the model home office who tells them that Elena Larapova is no longer with the company. Bernie then asks to see Damon Keefer, but the woman tells him that Keefer is away on business and she doesn't know where. Outside the office Bernie tries Keefer's home and cell phone numbers but gets no answer. As Chet trots to the parking lot he gets a whiff of beets which reminds him of Mr. Gulagov, but Bernie thinks Chet is reacting to Damon Keefer's scent and they leave. When they get home Suzie Sanchez calls to check on Chet. After he hangs up Bernie tells Chet that Suzie is coming over for dinner and quickly starts cleaning the house.

Bernie grills steaks for dinner, but Suzie doesn't eat meat. She finds something Chet doesn't recognize in the fridge, says she will freshen it up, and tells Bernie to give her steak to Chet. When they finish eating Bernie and Suzie have a glass of wine and Suzie asks about the Chambliss case. Bernie shows her the knife they got from the storm drain and says it is their only tangible clue. Bernie then fills Suzie in on what they have been doing and when he is finished Suzie asks if there is anything she can do to help. Bernie starts to say no, then stops and tells her about the phone call Keefer took from the irrigation supplier while they were in Madison's room. Suzie offers to check into Keefer's irrigation supplier, and Bernie says they should do it together.

Chapter Eighteen

When Suzie arrives the next morning to check out the irrigation supplier Bernie can't get the Porsche started. After he calls AAA they end up taking her car instead. They drive to a building with a huge man made waterfall in front of it and a sign that reads: "Water Water Everywhere." As Chet drinks from the waterfall, a man walks up and introduces himself as Myron King, the owner of the company. Bernie says that he and Suzie are researching irrigation options for a development on a golf course. Suzie says they are looking to do something along the lines of Pinnacle Peak Homes, and Myron's attitude immediately changes. As Bernie questions him, Myron says that he knows the irrigation at Pinnacle Peak is state-of-the-art because he designed and installed it all himself. The only problem was that he wasn't getting paid. After the initial advance and a few small payments, Damon Keefer kept stalling Myron with stories about money that was on its way from a bank in Costa Rica and finally stopped taking his calls three weeks ago. Myron says that his lawyer is slapping liens on Keefer, and then says that the waterfall Chet was drinking from cost \$250,000 and was supposed to be installed at Pinnacle Peak, but that it is now available.



As they drive home, Bernie says that while Keefer had told him that he was on the phone with his irrigation contractor yesterday at his house Myron King said Keefer stopped taking his calls three weeks ago, which means that Keefer lied. Bernie's phone rings and after hanging up he tells Suzie that the call was from his friend in the Valley PD, Rick Torres. Torres said that Madison Chambliss had been spotted in Las Vegas, and that he is on his way to Bernie and Chet's place. When they arrive home there is a man standing in the front yard that Bernie and Chet don't recognize, and Suzie says that it is her ex-boy friend Dylan McKnight, who she thought was still in Northern State Correctional doing two years for drug offenses.

Chapter Nineteen

Chet backs Dylan McKnight up against a tree and after Bernie reaches them he tells Chet to sit on the porch. McKnight greets Suzie Sanchez, who looks uncomfortable, and says that her paper gave him Bernie's address and said she was doing a story about a private eye. Chet sees Bernie shoot Suzie a strange look as McKnight says he is heading for LA asks Suzie if she can give him a ride to the airport. Suzie agrees and the two drive off as Rick Torres pulls in the driveway. Torres hands Bernie an envelope containing a photo of Madison Chambliss and says that the picture was taken outside of the Golden Palm Movie Palace in North Vegas last night by the theater projectionist. Torres says that Madison's parents are already on their way to Vegas, and that the LVPD have put Madison on their runaway list. Torres gives Chet and Bernie a lift to the garage and Bernie picks up the Porsche. Chet falls asleep as soon as they get on the road.

When Chet awakens the sun is setting and they are entering Las Vegas. They drive to the Golden Palm Movie Palace where they find Damon Keefer and Cynthia Chambliss waiting. Bernie asks if they have Madison and Keefer says no but that they are hopeful now that it is clear this is a runaway situation and not a kidnapping. When Bernie says that is not clear to him Keefer says that his services are no longer required and he can send the final bill to his office. Bernie says Keefer can put the bill on the stack underneath the one from Myron King, the waterfall man, then gets back in the Porsche. As he drives he asks Chet how stupid it is to stay on a case when you are not getting paid, and then says that he really thought Suzie was hanging out with them because she wanted to, not because she was doing another story. Finally, Bernie says, "Let's go be stupid," which is fine with Chet.

Chapter Twenty

Bernie drives back to the Golden Palm. A short time later he sees the projectionist walking towards the theater and asks him if he has a minute to talk about the Madison Chambliss case. The projectionist says his name is Anatoly Bulganin and that he spotted Madison coming out of the theater when he arrived for work, recognized her from a photo posted on a website he goes to because he is something of a 'crime junkie,' and snapped her picture. Bernie asks if she looked sad or anxious, but Anatoly says she looked like any other kid. As they are talking Chet catches a whiff of beets, which reminds him of Mr. Gulagov, and starts to bark. Anatoly is carrying a bag and



Bernie asks him if he is carrying any pot or hash in it which would cause Chet to bark. Bulganin says all he has in the bag is borscht – beet soup – for dinner.

There are three messages on the machine when Chet and Bernie get home. The first is from Leda saying that she wants to take Charlie on a cruise that Saturday even though it is Bernie's weekend. The second is from a man Bernie doesn't know saying that he needs someone to handle security for a financier in Maui for two weeks starting the day after tomorrow; he had been recommended by someone in the Valley PD, and the pay is \$5,000 a week. The third message is Leda again saying that she can't believe Bernie hasn't paid Malcolm back for Charlie's tuition yet. Bernie calls the man from the second message and turns the Maui job down. The next morning Suzie calls and says she is out of town but wants to know what happened in Vegas. Bernie asks her if she is writing another story on him. As she starts to answer, he hears Dylan McKnight ask who is on the phone. Bernie says he has to go and hangs up. Then, he tells Chet that Suzie went to LA with Dylan. Bernie works on his laptop, makes a few phone calls and finds out from a contact that one of the local Valley banks cut Damon Keefer loose several months before and that no other bank would take him on. Bernie also finds out that there are a number of liens on Pinnacle Peak Homes. It is a financial house of cards.

Chapter Twenty-one

Sometime later Bernie and Chet head out for a walk. As they are coming back, their next door neighbor, an old man named Mr. Parsons, asks if Bernie can spare a moment. After saying that he was on his medication at the time and so things are a little fuzzy, Parsons says that he saw a car parked down the street in front of the house with the FOR SALE sign on it a few nights ago, and that he thinks he saw two men throw a dog that looked like Chet into the trunk and drive off. Parsons says that he couldn't see too clearly, but that one of the men was blond. Chet and Bernie walk down to the house with the FOR SALE sign on it and find a woman realtor in the yard preparing for an agent walk-through. She tells Bernie that the house has been empty for a couple of months except for some renters who left last week after only a few days even though they had paid for three months in advance. Bernie asks what the renters looked like and the woman says she only met one, a blond man with an accent. The woman then shows him a photocopy of the man's driver's license, which identifies him as Cleon Maxwell.

Bernie and Chet drive to a restaurant called Max's Memphis Ribs and tell the black man behind the counter that they are looking for Cleon Maxwell. The black man says he is Maxwell and when Bernie asks if he has been a victim of identity theft, Cleon says yes and that the police had told him it was probably Russian gangsters who had done it. When they return to the car (after a huge Memphis Ribs meal) Bernie says that their next step is to try and trace what happened to Chet after he was grabbed, which means starting with the shelter in Sierra Verde.



Analysis

When Bernie finds that Elena Larapova no longer works at Pinnacle Peak Homes and Damon Keefer has left town on business – even though both of them had been in their offices just a few hours before – his suspicion that Keefer has not been telling him the whole truth becomes even stronger. This suspicion is confirmed the next morning when Bernie, Chet, and Suzie Sanchez talk with Myron King who says that not only did Keefer stop paying him several months before because he ran out of money but also stopped taking his calls over three weeks ago. Keefer had lied when he said that the call that came while Bernie was looking through Madison's room the day before had been from his irrigation supplier, as well as when he claimed that everything was fine financially with Pinnacle Peak Homes. Later, after Bernie spends time working on his laptop and making a few calls, he is able to determine that not only will no reputable bank do business with Damon Keefer but that there are multiple liens on Pinnacle Peak Homes. It is obvious to Bernie that Keefer has been keeping a financial house of cards standing for months but that in recent weeks it has started to collapse.

Although Chet is uncertain of what – if anything – is happening between Bernie and Suzie Sanchez (his dealings with the females of his species are done differently and far more quickly) he can see that Bernie acts differently when she is around. Bernie seems both happy and nervous when Suzie comes over for dinner. He sings louder and longer in the shower on the morning before the three of them go to see Myron King. However, after Suzie's ex-boyfriend Dylan McKnight says that he knew she was with Bernie because someone from her paper told him she was working on a story about a PI and gave him Bernie's address, Chet can sense that Bernie's feelings about her change. When she calls later and Bernie realizes that she has gone to LA with McKnight, he abruptly ends the conversation. While Chet has only briefly touched on Bernie's feelings about women in the book (with the exception of his negative feelings towards Leda) the reader understands that Bernie had started to hope that there might be some special connection between him and Suzie – a connection that he presumably doesn't make with many women. Bernie is both disappointed and hurt by the developments since McKnight entered the picture, as well as irritated with himself for feeling that way – none of which Chet understands at all.

After Madison Chambliss is photographed coming out of a theater in Las Vegas both Cynthia Chambliss and Damon Keefer tell Bernie that they convinced that she has not been kidnapped but is really a runaway. Even though Bernie tells them both that he still believes that kidnapping is a possibility, it is obvious that Cynthia is letting Damon handle things and Keefer fires Bernie on the spot, saying that if they decide to use a PI they will hire one in Vegas. Bernie knows that the smart thing to do is simply go home and forget about the case since he is no longer getting paid, but there are too many unanswered questions and too many coincidences for him to just quit. The fact Madison shows up in Vegas just a few days after Keefer tells Rick Torres that he thinks she's run off to there – even though she has never run away before – is too much of a coincidence for Bernie to blindly accept. His belief that everything is not as it seems gets even stronger after he interviews Anatoly Bulganin – the projectionist at the movie



theater – who just happens to be a ‘crime junkie’ and recognize Madison from a photo on a website as she was coming out of the theater he was working at. While he knows that the coincidences could all be genuine, Bernie’s gut tells him that something is very wrong and that Madison Chambliss is not a runaway – something that Chet knows for a fact, although he is not certain how he knows it – and he is too much of a professional to give up on what he sees as a live case.

The first concrete evidence that Bernie’s gut might be right and that Madison Chambliss is not a runaway comes from a very unlikely source, his elderly next door neighbor Mr. Parsons. Parsons, his wife – who is suffering the aftereffects of a massive stroke – and their dog Iggy have lived next door to Chet and Bernie for as long as Chet can remember. Chet considers Iggy his best dog-friend and they used to play together almost every day until the Parson installed an invisible dog fence; now Chet and Iggy only bark at each other across their yards. When Parsons relates his story about seeing Chet thrown into the trunk of a car by two men, one of whom was blond, he is not clear on all the details because he had been under the influence of medication at the time but his story is enough to get Bernie moving. After finding out that presumably the same blond man had rented a house just a few doors down from his a couple of weeks before, Bernie realizes that someone has been watching him and Chet almost from the moment they started working on the case. The attack in the parking lot and Chet’s disappearance had both been intended to keep Bernie from digging too deeply into the Madison Chambliss case. Finding out that the man who rented the house had used a stolen ID and that the police had told the real Cleon Maxwell that his identity had probably been stolen by Russian gangsters provides Bernie’s investigation with yet another Russian connection, although he still has no idea what that connection could mean. What he does know is that he and Chet have been watched and targeted since they started the Madison Chambliss case, and they need to find out why.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Bernie decides to take Suzie Sanchez with him and Chet to see the irrigation contractor, Myron King? What does Suzie’s ex-boyfriend say that seems to cause Bernie to change towards Suzie, and why do you think this change happens? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Why is Bernie not convinced that Madison Chambliss is a runaway even after she is spotted coming out of a movie theater in Las Vegas? Why do you think Bernie decides to stay on the case after Damon Keefer fires him in Las Vegas, even though it means he has to turn down a \$5,000 a week job in Maui?



Discussion Question 3

How does what Mr. Parsons tells Bernie about what he saw the night Chet disappeared change Bernie's view of the case? After he learns that a blond man with an accent rented a house just down the street from his using a fake identity, what does Bernie think it means, and why? Why is Chet unable to recognize the blond man in the photo the realtor gives Bernie?

Vocabulary

snooze, obsolete, shambles, vacuuming, flabby, sidestep, skinnier, implication, spongy, stillness, irrigation, puddle, muttering, waterfall, development, actors, apologies, urgent, unscrambled, photograph, exorcist, raccoon, financier, growling, motivation, roamed, complicated, stringing



Chapters 22 – 26

Summary

Chapter Twenty-two

Chet and Bernie drive to Sierra Verde and go to the animal shelter but only hear what they already know; a huge biker who refused to give his name turned Chet in. They leave the shelter and Bernie drives to a bar down the street with a number of motorcycles parked in front of it. After he and Chet walk into the biker bar Bernie calls for everyone's attention and asks if anyone recognizes Chet. Everyone remains silent, but Chet recognizes several people including the huge biker and walks up to him wagging his tail. When Bernie says that Chet seems to know him, the huge biker says that Bernie smells like a cop to him and he doesn't talk to cops. Bernie says he just wants to know where he found Chet, and a moment later another biker swings a chain at him; Bernie catches the chain and wraps it around the biker's neck. The huge biker charges Bernie swinging a pool cue but Bernie moves inside, hits him in the throat, and the huge biker drops to the ground. The other bikers in the bar start to move in, and Bernie kneels on the huge biker's back, pulls his head up, and tells everyone to back off. Bernie tells the huge biker to start talking, and he says that Chet just walked into their camp on the Apache Wash near the New Mexico border. Bernie tells the huge biker to draw him a map on the sawdust floor. After he does so Bernie buys a round for the house, and he and Chet leave.

Chapter Twenty-three

Chet and Bernie drive through the desert to Apache Wash. Bernie finds the biker campsite and Chet starts sniffing around, recognizing his own scent. It is getting dark, and Bernie gets a flashlight out of the Porsche and tells Chet to show him where he came from when he wandered into the biker's camp. Chet follows a number scents he thinks he recognizes for several hours. They pass a sign that reads 'Ghost Town: 5 Miles' and a couple of other campsites, but not much else. Finally they wind up back at the biker's campsite, and they realize they have been going in circles. As the sun comes up Bernie and Chet drive back through the desert to Sierra Verde, and stop at a convenience store. As they are about to get out of the car Bernie tells Chet not to move a muscle and Chet sees Anatoly Bulganin – the projectionist from the theater in Vegas – walking across the parking lot carrying a bag of groceries.

Chapter Twenty-four

As Bulganin puts the groceries in the trunk of a blue BMW Bernie walks over to him and says hello. Bulganin races around to the driver's side and the BMW speeds out of the parking lot. Chet and Bernie follow the BMW in the Porsche onto a narrow twisting road that takes them up into the mountains, and soon there are steep rocky slopes rising above them on one side and a sheer cliff with no barriers in front of it on the other.



Bernie closes in on the BMW and passes it, then starts slowing down. Suddenly Chet hears a loud boom come from under the car and a thick cloud of black oil sprays from the engine and covers the windshield. The BMW passes them as the Porsche starts to spin. The Porsche collides with the rocky slope, and Chet is thrown out onto the ground. As he gets to his feet Chet sees a huge rock tumble down the slope and a moment later the Porsche hits it, bounces end over end, and goes over the cliff. Chet runs to the edge of the cliff in time to see the Porsche explode into flames in the canyon below, and then sees Bernie clinging to a rock outcropping with one hand. Bernie uses his free hand to take his belt off and tosses one end to Chet, who is able to pull him up to safety. Bernie hugs Chet and tells him that at least he was able to the BMW's plate number.

Chet and Bernie finally get home after hitching several rides, taking two busses, and finally getting a taxi and find a message on the answering machine from Cynthia Chambliss. The message says that Madison called and said that she would be home soon and for Cynthia not to worry. Bernie calls Cynthia back and after he identifies himself there is a long pause after which Chet hears Bernie says that he is fine in a strange tone of voice. After another pause he asks if Cynthia taped the call with Madison, then says they will be right over. When he hangs up, Bernie tells Chet that Damon Keefer told Cynthia that he had been killed in a car wreck.

Chapter Twenty-five

Chet and Bernie drive to Cynthia Chambliss' house in the old pickup. Cynthia says that the call from Madison came yesterday afternoon, and then plays the tape for them. Madison says she is fine and that Cynthia shouldn't worry, she has just been working a few things out and will be home soon. Near the end of the call she says that it might be nice to get a dog like one she'd seen the other day with mismatched ears, and then asks if there is a ghost of a chance they could do that. Chet sees Bernie's face change when he hears this, and a moment later the call ends. Bernie rewinds the machine and plays the part about the dog again. Cynthia says that she played the tape for Rick Torres a couple of hours before and that he'd said he thought Madison would be home soon, then bursts into tears and runs out of the room. Bernie leans down and asks Chet if he saw Madison, and Chet wags his tail. When Cynthia returns a few moments later Bernie asks if Damon knows about the call. Cynthia says that she told him about it but he hadn't come over to listen to the tape and then says that she called Damon again to tell him that he was wrong about Bernie being killed. After asking more questions that Chet doesn't hear, Bernie asks where Damon got the idea that he had been killed in an accident, but Cynthia says that she doesn't know.

A short time later Bernie and Chet meet with Rick Torres, who says that as far as he is concerned everything about the call is kosher; Madison took off for a while to get her head straight and will probably turn up back home in a day or two. Torres says he did trace the call, but it traced back to an anonymous pay phone. Bernie then tells Torres that he and Chet found the blue BMW up in Sierra Verde, and that Vegas projectionist Anatoly Bulganin had been driving it instead of the blond guy. Bernie gives Rick the plate number, and Torres says he'll run it for him.



Chapter Twenty-six

Chet and Bernie find Damon Keefer at his home in Pinnacle Peak and Keefer is not happy to see them. He says he already fired Bernie and that if they don't get off his property he will call the police. When Bernie tells him to go ahead, Keefer asks if Bernie is trying to shake him down for more money. Bernie asks how deep in debt he is, and Keefer says again that everything at Pinnacle Peak is fine and going according to plan. Bernie then asks why Keefer didn't actually listen to the tape of Madison's phone call. Keefer says that Cynthia gave him a full report and he didn't need to hear the tape, but Bernie says he doesn't buy that and that maybe Keefer didn't need to listen to it because he already knew what she was going to say. Keefer takes a swing at Bernie but Bernie dodges it, picks Damon up off the ground, and slams him into a door. He asks Keefer what the truth really is, and Damon says that as far as he knows the truth is on the tape and Madison is coming home. Bernie then asks why Keefer thought he'd been killed in an accident and tells him that there is a lot riding on his answer. After a moment Keefer says that he got an anonymous phone call, and Bernie and Chet head back to the pick-up.

Analysis

Although Chet is unable to retrace the steps that brought him to the biker's campsite at Apache Wash during the night he and Bernie spend wandering around in the desert, they get lucky back in Sierra Verde when they spot Anatoly Bulganin – the projectionist from Las Vegas who had taken the picture of Madison Chambliss– loading a bag of groceries into the trunk of a blue BMW. Their luck does not hold however, and Bernie is almost killed when the old Porsche's engine blows a gasket and the car goes over the side of a cliff. When they get home and hear the message from Cynthia Chambliss on the machine, Bernie is interested in the fact that Madison called her, and becomes even more interested when he learns that Damon Keefer told Cynthia that Bernie had died in a car accident just a few hours after the Porsche had gone over the cliff. No one other than Anatoly Bulganin could have seen the accident, which tells Bernie that there is some connection between a group of Russians that Bulganin is a part of and Damon Keefer – a connection that in all likelihood is at the heart of Madison Chambliss' disappearance.

When Bernie listens to the tape that Cynthia Chambliss made of her conversation with Madison he is immediately struck by her reference to a “big, funny-looking dog ... like the one I saw the other day, with mismatched ears” and her asking if there was a “ghost of a chance” that they could get one. Remembering that Madison is an intelligent, gifted student it is obvious to Bernie that the dog she had been talking about was Chet, and that her ‘ghost of a chance’ comment may have been Madison's way of saying that she was being held in or near a ghost town somewhere – like the town Bernie and Chet had seen the sign for when they were in the desert. When Bernie asks Chet if he had seen Madison during the time he was missing, Chet says yes by wagging his tail and wonders why Bernie hadn't understood that sooner. Bernie doesn't believe any of the rest of the call in which Madison says that she ran away to work a few things out and



that she will be home soon, but he doesn't tell this to Cynthia Chambliss. The stress of Madison's disappearance has taken a huge toll on Cynthia and the last thing she needs to hear is his suspicion that Madison is still in danger, particularly since he can't prove it.

When they stop by Damon Keefer's house to question him, Chet can smell that he has been drinking, and Keefer immediately becomes hostile. He threatens to call the police if Chet and Bernie don't get off his property and later accuses Bernie of trying to blackmail him. However, when Bernie asks what dirt he could possibly have dug up to blackmail him with Keefer becomes silent. Bernie again starts questioning Keefer about his finances and asks how deeply in debt he is, and Keefer again tells Bernie that everything is fine with Pinnacle Peak Homes and that he only has the kind of normal business debts that any real estate developer would have. Bernie knows he is lying and eventually accuses Keefer of not listening to the tape that Cynthia made of her conversation with Madison because Damon knew what Madison was going to say before she even made the call. After a brief struggle Bernie gives Keefer one last chance to tell him the truth and asks why Keefer thought that Bernie had been killed in an accident. When Keefer says that he got an anonymous call Bernie realizes that there is no point in continuing to question him. For some reason, Keefer has done nothing but lie to him from the start of the case, and he isn't going to start telling him the truth now.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Chet is unable to retrace the steps that brought him to the biker's camp on Apache Wash during the night he and Bernie spend in the desert and instead is only able to lead Bernie in a big circle? How does Chet feel about this failure?

Discussion Question 2

In the phone call that Cynthia Chambliss recorded between herself and Madison, why does Madison say that she ran away? What does Madison say that makes Bernie suspect that she saw Chet during the time he was missing? Why do you think Bernie doesn't tell Cynthia that he suspects this?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Bernie doesn't tell Damon Keefer what he knows about his finances when he questions him after hearing the recording of Madison's call to her mother? Why doesn't he tell him about seeing Anatoly Bulganin in Sierra Verde or about the Russian connection he suspects has something to do with Madison's disappearance?

Vocabulary

breeze, roadrunner, plume, chimney, clipboard, neon, martini, wagging, sawdust, binoculars, options, smithereens, paved, stench, tumbleweed, campsite, spiky,



benevolent, launched, somersaulting, nightmares, anchored, divorce, especially, sector, muttering, exposed, ruckus



Chapters 27 – 31

Summary

Chapter Twenty-seven

Chet and Bernie go to see Nixon Panero who owns an auto body shop and is one of their best sources of information. After they discuss the possibility of Panero finding him another old Porsche, Bernie asks where on the street a real estate developer might be able to borrow several hundred thousand dollars. Panero says he only knows of a few guys who could handle that kind of money and gives Bernie the names, including an old man named Albie Rose who Bernie has heard of. When Bernie asks if Panero knows of any Russians lending money on the street, Nixon says he doesn't know any and doesn't want to.

Chet and Bernie meet Albie Rose by the pool at Rose's home – the biggest house Chet has ever seen. Bernie says he is interested in finding out how Rose's business works and asks what happens if someone wants to borrow \$500,000 from him. Rose says he would say yes or no based on a lot of factors, including how he felt about the person and if they are in a cash business, which is the only kind of business he'll deal with. When Bernie asks what happens if someone is always late with payments Rose nods to his bodyguard, who is standing in the corner, and says that he used to be a baseball player and still has his Louisville Slugger. Bernie asks if Rose has ever heard of Damon Keefer and Albie says he hasn't. He then adds that he never deals with land developers but that there is a newcomer in the Valley who might deal with them – a Russian by the name of Gulagov. Chet barks when he hears the name.

Chapter Twenty-eight

Back at home, Bernie talks through the case with Chet, concentrating on the Russian connection. Bernie works on his laptop and a short time later announces that the Golden Palm Movie Palace in Vegas – where Anatoly Bulganin worked and snapped the picture of Madison Chambliss – is owned by Rasputin Environmental Investments Group. Talking to Chet the whole time, Bernie starts searching the Internet to find out if anyone named Gulagov has a connection with the Golden Palm or Rasputin Environmental. A short time later a woman named Janie arrives to pick up Chet for a grooming appointment. Bernie has forgotten the appointment but says she might as well take Chet. After a complete wash and grooming Janie brings Chet back home, but Bernie is nowhere to be found. After Janie leaves Chet walks through the house and when he reaches the kitchen he smells the scent of beets. The beet smell is stronger in the office and Chet sees that a whiteboard Bernie had been using to list names involved in the case is missing from its place on the wall. Chet races around the house finding that all the doors and windows are closed and that he can't get out.

Chapter Twenty-nine



Hours later, after it gets dark, the telephone rings and Chet hears Suzie Sanchez's voice after the machine picks up the call. Chet leaps up, knocks the phone off the hook, and barks into the receiver. After a while Suzie arrives at the house. She opens the unlocked front door and Chet runs out of the house to try and pick up the beet smell and Bernie's scent, but both die out in the front yard. Chet goes back inside and follows Suzie as she walks through the house, checking all the rooms. The phone rings and Chet hears Nixon Panero's voice saying that he has a line on a replacement for Bernie's Porsche. Suzie realizes that Bernie is not just out driving around without Chet and decides to call the police.

Rick Torres arrives at the house and after a quick look around says that he doesn't see anything unusual or any signs of a struggle. He tells Suzie that since his divorce Bernie sometimes goes out to kick up his heel and leaves Chet at home. Suzie isn't convinced, but Torres says Bernie has only been gone for a couple of hours and that he will probably be home soon. After Torres leaves, Suzie goes back to the office and tries to turn on the computer, but it won't boot up. She lets Chet out, and he catches a faint whiff of the marker Bernie uses on the whiteboard and follows it around the side of the house, where he finds a piece of the whiteboard. Suzie walks up behind him, picks up the piece of whiteboard, and sees Rasputin, Ghost Mine, and SV written on it. Returning to the office Suzie takes the back off the computer and sees that the motherboard is gone. Suzie looks at Chet and says she thinks that the SV written on the whiteboard could stand for Sierra Verde, the town where she found Chet, and gets her car keys.

Chapter Thirty

Chet dozes off as Suzie drives through the night, and when he awakens they are in Sierra Verde. Suzie pulls up outside the convenience store where Chet and Bernie had seen Anatoly Bulganin, calls someone named Lou on her cell phone and asks him run a search for 'Rasputin' and 'Ghost Mine' and get back to her, then goes into the convenience store. A moment later Chet sees a pickup truck driven by the blond man named Boris pass Suzie's parked car. Chet jumps out the car's open window and chases the truck, finally managing to jump into the open bed of the pickup. As the truck heads through the desert towards the mountains Chet can smell Bernie's scent in the pickup's bed. As dawn breaks, they pass the biker's campsite at Apache Wash and soon reach the mountains. After a while they drive past a long house, a barn, some sheds, and finally the mine Chet had escaped from. Boris parks the truck and after waiting a bit Chet jumps out and walks to an open window in the house. He sees Mr. Gulagov sitting at a kitchen table and Ms. Larapova pouring him a cup of coffee. Chet backs away from the window and suddenly catches Bernie's scent. Chet follows the scent into the mine and sees Bernie sitting with his hands tied to a support beam behind his back, and a choke-chain around his neck attached to the ceiling.

Chapter Thirty-one

Bernie is groggy when Chet reaches him, and Chet walks around the beam and starts gnawing at the ropes binding Bernie's hands. Chet is most of the way through the ropes when two people appear at the mine's entrance and Bernie whispers for Chet to get



back into the shadows. Olga – the woman Chet saw pull Madison away from the barn window the first time he was there – and Harold walk into the mine. Olga has a water bottle and Harold has a gun. As Chet sees the ropes he has gnawed fall away from Bernie's hands, Olga says that Mr. Gulagov wants him to live a little longer and pours water on Bernie's face. Bernie grabs for Harold's gun but misses. Chet lunges and knocks Olga to the ground and then clamps his teeth down on Harold's wrist. The gun flies out of Harold's hand and Chet races over to it and takes it to Bernie. Bernie has Harold tie Olga up, then ties Harold to the beam with the choke chain.

A short time later Boris walks into the mine carrying a rifle. Bernie steps into the light with his gun raised and tells Boris to drop the rifle. Boris fires instead, misses everyone, and Bernie shoots him in the leg and then again in the shoulder. Boris falls and drops the rifle, then gets to his feet and limps towards the barn. He falls again before he reaches it and lays there shouting words Chet can't understand. Chet retrieves the rifle and brings it back to Bernie. Harold offers to tell Bernie anything he wants to know if he will let him go, and says that Damon Keefer managed to get into Mr. Gulagov for almost a million dollars and had stopped making his \$12,000 a week payments, which was why Gulagov had snatched Madison. He tells Bernie that there have been other hostages and one time it didn't work out so well; the body is buried further down in the mine. A moment later Chet and Bernie see the barn door open and Madison Chambliss walk out with Mr. Gulagov behind her holding a straight razor to her throat. They walk to the mine and Gulagov tells Bernie to drop the guns or he will kill Madison. As Bernie drops the guns, he shoots Chet a look and whispers "Go." Chet leaps up and over Madison; Gulagov is surprised, takes the razor from her throat, and slashes at Chet as Chet hits him and knocks him to the ground. Bernie grabs Madison and kicks the razor out of Gulagov's hand. A moment later Suzie drives up to the mine followed by a number of police cars.

A few days later Simon Berg, Cynthia's boyfriend, sends Chet and Bernie a huge box of dog treats along with a final check for the case, which is enough for Bernie to buy another old Porsche. All of Gulagov's gang – as well as Damon Keefer – go to prison except for Harold, who cuts a deal with prosecutors. Suzie starts spending more time at Chet and Bernie's house although Chet doesn't understand why, but Bernie seems happy and so it is fine with Chet.

Analysis

After he speaks with Albie Rose and finds out that there is a new Russian loan shark working in the Valley by the name of Gulagov, Bernie starts to work trying to put the pieces of the Russian connection puzzle together. He is quickly able to trace ownership of the Golden Palm Movie Palace in Las Vegas where Anatoly Bulganin had worked to a presumably Russian- owned company called Rasputin Environmental Investments Group. Bernie understands that Bulganin is definitely involved in at least some aspect of the case since there is no way Damon Keefer could have possibly known about his accident on the mountain road unless Bulganin had reported it to someone who got the information to Keefer. Seeing it as his best chance to finally nail down the Russian



connection Bernie sets to work trying to find out everything he can about Rasputin Environmental Investments including whether or not there is anyone named Gulagov involved with them. Chet is taken by the dog groomer right after Bernie starts looking into this, but Bernie has spent the day making notes on a large whiteboard that hangs on the wall of his office, and it is these notes – which Chet finds outside in the backyard after Bernie's disappearance – which eventually lead Suzie Sanchez to figure out that whatever Bernie found out before he disappeared had something to do with a 'ghost mine' in or near Sierra Verde, as well as the name Rasputin.

Suzie Sanchez calls Bernie to try and explain what happened when she went to LA with her ex-boyfriend Dylan McKnight, and senses that something is wrong when she comes over to Chet and Bernie's house and finds Chet there all alone. Even though Rick Torres – who has been Bernie's friend for years and knows him as well as anyone – assures her that he sometimes leaves Chet behind when he goes out to kick up his heels, Suzie doesn't believe it. When she finds that Bernie's cell phone is still on his desk, and then discovers that the motherboard from his computer is missing, she knows that something is wrong. Following her reporter's instincts, she takes off for Sierra Verde without a moment's hesitation after Chet finds the whiteboard in the backyard. While they are together, Suzie talks to Chet in much the same way Bernie does, asking him what is the matter with her and why she had ever even thought about letting Dylan McKnight back into her life. It is obvious that Suzie is attracted to Bernie, has already developed feelings for him, and feels bad that she may have destroyed any chance she might have had with him by going off with McKnight. Although in earlier chapters Bernie also has a hard time understanding why Suzie did what she did, in the end it appears that they work things out. Suzie becomes a frequent visitor at Chet and Bernie's house, and even joins them and Bernie's son Charlie 'camping' in the backyard. As far as Chet – who still doesn't understand how relationships between human males and females work – is concerned, as long as Bernie is happy he is fine with any relationship he and Suzie decide to have.

In the end, Bernie is shown to have been right almost from the start about Madison Chambliss' disappearance being a kidnapping – although not exactly a kidnapping for ransom. After getting in debt to Mr. Gulagov for almost a million dollars, Damon Keefer had stopped paying even the interest on the loan and Gulagov had taken Madison to force him to pay. Gulagov had also placed Elena Larapova in Keefer's office at Pinnacle Peak Homes to keep an eye on him, and arranged for Anatoly Bulganin to take the picture of Madison coming out of the Golden Palm Movie Palace in Las Vegas. In the end Gulagov and his gang are arrested and sentenced to long prison terms, except for Harold who turns state's evidence in exchange for immunity. Damon Keefer – who, it is clear, told Gulagov that Bernie had survived the car accident on the mountain road – also goes to prison for conspiracy, even though Madison begs Bernie to keep her father out of trouble.

While Chet is being groomed Janie, the woman who always works on him, notices a lump while she is grooming him and leaves a note about it when she returns Chet home and finds that Bernie is not there. Chet subsequently knocks the note behind the recycling bin while he is tearing around the house trying to figure out what happened to



Bernie and the lump is not mentioned again in this novel. However, both the lump and the note play a part in the next book in the Chet and Bernie Mystery series, 2010's *Thereby Hangs a Tail*.

Discussion Question 1

What does Bernie learn from Albie Rose? How is he able to use the information to finally firmly establish the 'Russian connection' he has suspected since almost the beginning of the case? Why do you think Mr. Gulagov has Bernie kidnapped instead of simply having him killed?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Suzie Sanchez make the call to Bernie that eventually leads her to come to the house and find Chet there alone? What does Suzie want to explain to Bernie, and why do you think she feels it is important that she explain it? Do you think that Bernie and Suzie's relationship is likely to go forward and, if so, why?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Mr. Gulagov have Madison Chambliss kidnapped? Why do you think Damon Keefer wouldn't tell Bernie the truth and let him try to help him? In the end, how do you think that Chet and Bernie's "partnership" helps to stop Gulagov and his gang and save Madison's life?

Vocabulary

sprawled, fender, glob, diversified, outfit, stressful, spraying, messiness, cozy, elephant, whiteboard, anxious, scrubbed, vocalizing, squeaky, overwhelmed, fluttered, sandal, horrible, chopping, mopped, stomach, tailgate, gnawing, crouched, gunplay, pinged, shrewd, dampened



Characters

Chet

Chet, the narrator of the novel, is a one hundred pound mix-breed dog with one black ear and one white ear. Chet is a smart, energetic animal who is owned by Bernie Little – who also owns the Little Detective Agency – although throughout the novel Chet refers to Bernie as his ‘partner.’ At some point in his past Chet went through K-9 police dog training school, which is where he met Bernie, although he failed to graduate due to an incident with a cat. Chet is called ‘Chet the Jet’ by Bernie’s young son Charlie due to his leaping ability, and his favorite thing in the entire world is riding ‘shotgun’ in the old Porsche convertible Bernie drives. Chet is devoted to Bernie, and jumps in the middle of any situation in which Bernie is threatened or attacked. Chet tends to be friendly with strangers, although he has a habit of growling without realizing he is doing it which causes some people to think he is aggressive. There are some individuals that Chet takes an instant dislike to – including Damon Keefer, Mr. Gulagov, and Dylan McKnight – and in each of these cases his judgment proves to be right. There are other people who Chet instantly likes and trusts – including Suzie Sanchez and Madison Chambliss – and again, his judgments are correct. Chet accompanies Bernie almost everywhere he goes – particularly when they are on a case – and Bernie often uses Chet as a sounding board for his ideas.

Because he is a dog, Chet processes information differently from the way humans do. Chet is not good with numbers (two is basically the only number he really understands, because it stands for him and Bernie) and he is never sure about exactly how much time passes between events. Chet lives ‘in the moment’, and what is happening to him now is always more important to him than anything that has happened in the past. Although he has an excellent memory for smells (for example, recognizing the smell of beets allows him to identify several of Mr. Gulagov’s gang, and realize that Bernie has been kidnapped near the end of the novel) and faces, his recollection of incidents and experiences tends to be short-term unless something triggers a specific memory. For example, just a couple of days after seeing Madison Chambliss in a window at Mr. Gulagov’s compound, Chet vaguely remembers seeing Madison somewhere when he hears her name mentioned, but can’t put his finger on exactly where or when it was. However, Chet has excellent instincts about people and situations, and over the years Bernie has learned how to ‘read’ Chet and trust his instincts, which ends up being instrumental in rescuing Madison Chambliss from Mr. Gulagov.

Bernie Little

Bernie Little is a middle age private detective who owns the Little Detective Agency, and is also Chet’s owner (or partner). Bernie has suffered some financial setbacks, most of which are the result of his recent divorce from Leda, which has left him with a cash flow problem. As a result, he has been forced to take on more divorce work – something he



hates – in the months leading up to the start of the novel to make ends meet. Bernie is a large, muscular man who Suzie Sanchez calls “shambling” in the article she writes about him, but is surprisingly quick and agile when he needs to be; for example, when he is attacked by a pair of bikers in the biker bar in Sierra Verde. At one time Bernie was a detective with the Valley PD who quit when it was “time to move on” but has maintained a good relationship with a number of people in the department, particularly Sergeant Rick Torres. Bernie is also a West Point graduate who was wounded in combat, although Chet – and consequently the reader – is uncertain of when or where this happened. Bernie is quite passionate about the Valley, and the desert and mountains that surround it, and talks about them often although Chet usually has a hard time understanding what Bernie means when he talks about them. Bernie has a young son with his ex-wife named Charlie who he sees on weekends, and during the course of the novel starts a relationship that Chet doesn’t quite understand with Suzie Sanchez, a pretty reporter for the Valley Tribune.

Bernie is a very good detective with excellent instincts who cares about his clients, takes his work seriously, and refuses to quit until he finds out the whole truth. When Cynthia Chambliss hires Bernie to find her daughter Madison, Bernie’s instincts tell him that the girl has been kidnapped even though most of the “facts” point to her being a runaway. Using Chet as a sounding board for his ideas, Bernie pursues the few leads he is able to turn up even after Damon Keefer – Cynthia’s ex-husband and Madison’s father – fires him after Madison is spotted in Las Vegas. Because Bernie continues to believe that Madison has been kidnapped he is unable to drop the case, even after he is offered a \$5,000 a week job in Maui. His sense of responsibility and loyalty – two things that Chet particularly loves about him – keep Bernie on the case, and eventually leads to he and Chet finding out the truth and rescuing Madison Chambliss.

Suzie Sanchez

Suzie Sanchez is a reporter for the Valley Tribune who meets Chet and Bernie while doing a story on private investigators. Suzie is pretty, intelligent, and takes an instant liking to Chet and Bernie which they reciprocate (Chet, at first, because Suzie keeps a large bag of dog biscuits with her at all times). After Suzie rescues Chet from being destroyed at the animal shelter in Sierra Verde, a relationship that Chet doesn’t completely understand starts to form between her and Bernie, but this relationship comes screeching to a halt when her ex-boyfriend Dylan McKnight enters the picture and she foolishly goes with him to LA.

Suzie almost immediately regrets letting McKnight back into her life and calls Bernie to explain, but the machine gets the call and a moment later she hears Chet barking frantically into the phone. When she goes to Bernie and Chet’s house to investigate she discovers Chet home alone and Bernie nowhere to be found. Suzie immediately realizes that something is terribly wrong and calls the police. Bernie’s friend Sergeant Rick Torres tells her that Bernie often leaves Chet home alone – particularly when he goes out drinking – but Suzie’s reporter instincts tell her that Bernie is in trouble. Eventually, after Chet leads her to a piece of the whiteboard Bernie had been making



notes about the Madison Chambliss case on, she is able to figure out that she and Chet need to get back to Sierra Verde, which eventually allows Chet to find Bernie and help rescue Madison Chambliss. After the case is over Suzie becomes a frequent visitor at Chet and Bernie's house, and the reader understands that a relationship between them is definitely moving forward – although Chet still does not understand exactly what kind of relationship it is.

Damon Keefer

Damon Keefer is Madison Chambliss' father and eventually becomes a co-client with his ex-wife Cynthia Chambliss in Bernie's investigation into Madison's disappearance. Keefer is a land developer in the Valley and the sole owner of Pinnacle Peak Homes at Puma Wells, a multimillion dollar housing development. Chet and Bernie find Keefer to be uncooperative and unfriendly throughout the novel, and neither one likes him from the start (Chet, initially, because Keefer smells like cats). Keefer resents the fact that Bernie continually asks him about his company's financial status, and eventually fires Bernie after Madison is spotted in outside a theater in Las Vegas. Bernie and Chet remain on the case, and are able to find out that Keefer owes money all over the Valley and that no reputable Valley bank will do business with him. After Keefer tells his wife that Bernie has been killed in an automobile accident that only one person – who Bernie suspects is involved in Madison's disappearance – could possibly have seen Bernie becomes convinced that Keefer knows more about the case than he is letting on. Chet and Bernie finally find out that Keefer has borrowed almost a million dollars from a Russian loan shark named Mr. Gulagov and when he stopped making the payments on the loan, Gulagov had kidnapped Madison to make him pay. In the end, Keefer is sentenced to prison for conspiracy.

Madison Chambliss

Madison Chambliss is a fifteen-year-old girl who Chet and Bernie are hired to find after she disappears one day after school. Madison is a very intelligent girl and a gifted student who is a member of the archery club at school. After she disappears, Chet and Bernie also find out that she is friends with a high school dropout named Ruben Ramirez who deals pot. Although at first Bernie is fairly certain that Madison is with friends and will return home on her own, this changes after he discovers that a man in a blue BMW had been waiting for her outside Ramirez's house one night and offered her a ride, which she'd refused. Eventually, Bernie becomes convinced that Madison has been kidnapped and continues to believe this even after she is photographed leaving a movie theater in Las Vegas. Near the end of a taped phone call in which she tells her mother Cynthia that she will be home soon, Madison says that she wants to get a dog like one she'd seen the other day with mismatched ears. Although he is uncertain of the circumstances, Bernie understands that the dog she is referring to is Chet and that she had seen him at some point during the time when Chet had also gone missing. This further convinces Bernie that Madison has been kidnapped. In the end Chet and Bernie



are able to rescue Madison from Mr. Gulagov, a Russian loan shark who 'snatched' her to force her father Damon Keefer to pay him.

Cynthia Chambliss

Cynthia Chambliss is Madison Chambliss' mother, and hires Bernie twice to look into Madison's two disappearances – first when she is a few hours late coming home from school, and again a day later when she disappears for real. Cynthia is also the ex-wife of Damon Keefer, who in the end is found to be at least partially responsible for Madison's disappearance. Although for reasons that he never makes clear Damon Keefer thinks that she is a terrible mother, Cynthia loves her daughter with all her heart, and is emotionally devastated by her disappearance. Unable to cope with it on her own, she allows Damon Keefer to become co-clients with her in Bernie's investigation into Madison's disappearance and lets him talk her into firing Bernie when Madison is spotted in Las Vegas. Cynthia appears emotionally and physically exhausted when Madison calls her at the end of the case to say she will be home soon, and Bernie decides not to tell her that he still believes her daughter is in danger to spare her feelings.

Mr. Gulagov

Mr. Gulagov is a Russian loan shark who has Madison Chambliss kidnapped after her father, Damon Keefer, borrows almost a million dollars from him and then stops making payments. Gulagov is a cruel, sadistic man who has a compound near a 'ghost mine' where he keeps Madison Chambliss captive and is the key player in the 'Russian connection' Bernie keeps running into while investigating Madison's disappearance. After two of his employees grab Chet and bring him to the compound, Gulagov tries to train him as a fighting dog and get him to answer to the name Stalin, but Chet refuses to obey even simple commands and eventually escapes. Near the end of the novel Gulagov threatens to cut Madison Chambliss' throat with a straight razor, but Chet is able to use his leaping ability to tackle him before he can carry out the threat. Gulagov and the rest of his gang are eventually tried and sentenced to prison.

Sergeant Rick Torres

Rick Torres is a sergeant with the Valley Police Department attached to the Missing Persons division, and is who Bernie tells Cynthia Chambliss to ask for when he advises her to call the police after Madison's second disappearance. Torres and Bernie worked together when Bernie was a detective with the Valley PD, and he has remained one of Bernie's closest friends since Bernie quit the department. From the start Torres believes that Madison Chambliss is a runaway, although he does track down a few important pieces of information for Bernie including who the blue BMW Bernie spotted Anatoly Bulganin driving just before his accident on the mountain road is registered to. Later Torres tells Suzie Sanchez not to worry that Bernie has left Chet home alone because



he often does that when he goes out to “kick up his heels.” Even though Torres is constantly wrong throughout the novel, Chet is quite fond of him because he sneaks him pieces of his donuts, and the reader understands that his heart is in the right place.

Simon Berg

Simon Berg is Cynthia Chambliss' boyfriend and the owner of Rover and Company, which makes high end dog treats. Bernie interviews Berg after Damon Keefer tells him that he has 'suspicions' about him, but realizes that Keefer only did this to turn Bernie's attention away from himself after spending only a couple of minutes with Berg. Berg is a small, friendly man who answers Bernie's questions without hesitation and seems to be genuinely fond of Madison Chambliss as well as her mother. After the case is over it is Berg who sends Bernie a large bonus check, as well as a huge box of high-end dog treats for Chet.

Charlie Little

Charlie is Bernie and his ex-wife Leda's son. Although no exact age is given, the reader can assume that Charlie is somewhere between 5 and 8 years old, since he goes to school but is not yet allowed to use the telephone on his own. Charlie spends most weekends with Bernie and Chet (whom he calls Chet the Jet because of his leaping ability) and loves camping out in a tent in Bernie's backyard – which is what they are doing the night that Chet is dog-napped. Bernie loves Charlie and wishes that he could spend more time with him but his ex-wife Leda is firm on his visitation rights and occasionally takes Charlie places that she thinks he 'should experience' on Bernie's weekends. Chet loves Charlie as well, and he lets him ride on his back whenever the two of them are together and Leda isn't watching.

Leda

Leda is Bernie's ex-wife and Charlie's mother. Leda owns at least a part of the Little Detective Agency, but Chet is uncertain of how much. Leda shows up at Bernie's front door one morning to inform him that the check he'd written for Charlie's private school tuition has bounced and that her boyfriend had to cover it, and over a week later leaves a message on Bernie's machine saying she can't believe he hasn't paid the boyfriend back yet. Leda is presented as consistently overbearing, obnoxious, and rude (possibly because she does not like Chet at all) and is the cause of most of Bernie's financial problems.

Elena Larapova

Elena Larapova is a tall, blond Russian woman who Bernie and Chet meet when they go to Pinnacle Peak Homes to interview Damon Keefer for the first time. Although she tells them that she is a VP of Marketing for Pinnacle Peak Homes, in reality she works



for Mr. Gulagov and is sent to the development to keep an eye on Keefer. After Bernie is told that Ms. Larapova is no longer with Pinnacle Peak Homes later on the same day he met her, Bernie realizes that there is something very wrong at the development that Keefer is not telling him about. Chet sees Larapova at Mr. Gulagov's compound just before he finds Bernie in the mine and she manages to escape from the police when they arrive, but she is later caught and sent to prison.

Anatoly Bulganin

Anatoly Bulganin is a thin young man with spiky hair, and another member of Mr. Gulagov's gang. Bernie first meets Bulganin at the Golden Palm Movie Palace in Las Vegas – which is owned by Gulagov and where Bulganin claims to work as a projectionist – where he snapped a photo of Madison Chambliss as she was supposedly coming out of the theater after seeing a movie. Later, when Chet and Bernie stop at a convenience store in Sierra Verde they see Bulganin driving the blue BMW they have been looking for. Bulganin is sent to prison with the rest of Gulagov's gang at the end of the novel.

Boris

Boris is a large blond man who works for Mr. Gulagov. It is Boris who Ruben Ramirez sees offer a ride to Madison Chambliss in the blue BMW the night she runs out of his house, and it is Boris who slashes the Porsche's tires and hits Chet with the BMW in the North Canyon Mall parking lot. Later, Boris and Harold "dognap" Chet and take him to Gulagov's compound. Bernie is forced to shoot Boris after Chet finds Bernie in the mine at the compound, but he recovers from his wounds and is sent to prison with the rest of Gulagov's gang.

Otis DeWayne

Otis DeWayne is a Civil War reenactor who owns a large dog named General Beauregard that Chet enjoys playing with anytime they are together. DeWayne is the Little Detective Agency's weapons expert, and Bernie consults him about the strange looking knife Chet was attacked with in the North Canyon Mall parking lot. DeWayne is able to identify the knife as having been made in a small town in the Ural Mountains of Russia, which helps to establish the 'Russian connection' more firmly in Bernie's mind.

Dylan McKnight

Dylan McKnight is Suzie Sanchez's ex-boyfriend. McKnight is a young, handsome man whom Suzie is surprised to see waiting for her in Bernie's driveway because she thinks he is in jail for drug offenses. After explaining that he was released early due to overcrowding, McKnight asks Suzie to give him a ride to the airport so he can make a flight to LA, and Bernie later finds out that Suzie went with him, which both disappoints



and hurts him. Chet dislikes McKnight as soon as he sees him, and backs him up against a tree before Bernie calls him off.

Ruben Ramirez

Ruben Ramirez is a high school dropout and pot dealer that Madison Chambliss visits the night her mother thinks she has disappeared for the first time. When Bernie goes to his house to question him, Ramirez takes a swing at him and Bernie knocks him out with a sleeper hold after Chet gets him down on the ground. Although Ramirez lies about almost everything, he provides Bernie with an important clue when he says that he saw a blond man in a blue BMW offer Madison a ride after she left his house.

Albie Rose

Albie Rose is an elderly loan shark who agrees to talk to Bernie after checking Bernie out. Rose tells Bernie that while he would never lend money to a real estate developer like Damon Keefer there is a Russian newcomer in the Valley by the name of Gulagov who might be willing to do business with someone like Keefer. As he is leaving, Rose offers Bernie a job starting at \$90,000 a year which Bernie turns down.

Nixon Panero

Nixon Panero is an ex-con who owns an auto body shop, and is one of Chet and Bernie's best sources of information on the street. Panero gives Bernie the names of the Valley loan sharks who would be able to handle the \$500,000 Bernie thinks Damon Keefer may have borrowed, including Albie Rose. At the end of the book, Bernie buys another used Porsche convertible from Panero to replace the one that was destroyed when it went over a cliff.

Harold/Olga

Harold and Olga are two other members of Gulagov's gang. When Chet is brought to Gulagov's compound the first time he sees Olga drag Madison Chambliss away from the barn window, and later Olga pours water on Bernie's face as he is tied to a post in the mine. Harold helps Boris dognap Chet, and later turns on Mr. Gulagov and tells Bernie why Madison Chambliss was kidnapped. Olga is sent to prison, but Harold turns state's evidence and walks after he testifies.



Symbols and Symbolism

Dog Biscuits/Chew Strips

While Chet is fond of dog treats and toys of all kinds. His very favorite treats are dog biscuits and rawhide chew strips. Chet thinks of anyone who is thoughtful enough to give him a dog biscuit or a rawhide chew strip as a friend until they prove themselves to be otherwise (which, in this novel, no one ever does.) The best example of this is Suzie Sanchez who carries a bag of large dog biscuits with her wherever she goes because she runs into a lot of dogs in her job as a reporter, and starts her relationship with Chet out by giving him several. Chet takes an instant like to Suzie based on this and remains fond of her even after Bernie finds himself hurt and disappointed in her when she goes to LA with her ex-boyfriend Dylan McKnight.

'Dr. Zhivago (movie)

'Dr. Zhivago' is a classic 1965 film about the Russian Revolution, and the movie that Madison Chambliss claims to have seen the night that she 'disappears' for the first time. Although Bernie is able to catch her in a lie which convinces him that Madison has never actually seen the film, he is impressed by the fact that the rest of her story about seeing 'Dr. Zhivago' could be true – the movie was playing for one night only at a local theater the night she claimed to have seen it and ended shortly before Madison returned home. The fact that Madison had constructed her lie so carefully and tells it so convincingly shows Bernie that she is a very intelligent young woman, which plays an important part in the story later on.

Smiles

Chet pays close attention to the different ways that humans smile. How a person smiles helps him decide how he feels about that person. In the case of Suzie Sanchez and Madison Chambliss, Chet can see that their smiles are genuine and that they can probably be trusted, so he likes them. The smile that he sees on Mr. Gulagov's face when he is trying to get Chet to answer to the name Stalin, on the other hand, is thin and cruel and instantly causes Chet to dislike and distrust him. Chet is also able to get an idea of how Bernie is feeling by the different smiles he has. When Bernie is happy, such as when he is with his son Charlie, Bernie has one kind of smile and when he is angry (or disgusted, or irritated) as is the case any of the times he questions Damon Keefer he wears a harder, far less pleasant smile. For Chet, smiles can represent both the best and the worst in humans, and help him to decide how he feels about the people he meets throughout the novel.



Knife

The knife that the blond Russian man Boris uses to slash the Porsche's tires and then attack Chet with becomes the first real clue in the Madison Chambliss case. Chet and Bernie retrieve the knife from the storm grate in the North Canyon Mall parking lot where Boris dropped it several days after the attack, and their weapons expert Otis DeWayne is eventually able to identify it as a top quality weapon made in Zlatoust, a small town near the Ural Mountains in Russia. Along with being the first piece of hard evidence Chet and Bernie come up with, the knife is also the first thing that Bernie is able to firmly tie in to what he starts to think of as the 'Russian connection' in Madison Chambliss' disappearance.

Choke Chain

After Chet is dog-napped by Boris and Harold, Mr. Gulagov decides to train him so that he can fight with other dogs down in Mexico. When Chet refuses to answer to the name Stalin, or even sit on command, Gulagov uses a choke chain – something that Chet has never had around his neck before in his life – to cut off Chet's air supply and 'help' with the training. Later, when Chet finds Bernie in the mine at Gulagov's compound, one end of a choke chain is fastened tightly around Bernie's neck, and the other end is attached to the ceiling in the mine making it difficult for him to breath. For Chet, the choke chain is a symbol of Mr. Gulagov's cruelty and heartlessness and helps to reinforce Chet's dislike for the man.

Scent of Beets

Throughout the novel, Chet encounters the scent of beets, which comes from the beet soup called borscht that Mr. Gulagov and his gang eat. Chet first smells beets when he is attacked by Boris in the North Canyon Mall parking lot, smells it on Mr. Gulagov when he is held at Gulagov's compound, and later smells it on Anatoly Bulganan – the projectionist at the Golden Palm Movie Palace in Las Vegas. When he smells the scent of beets in his own house after the groomer brings him home and he finds Bernie is not there, Chet immediately realizes that something is wrong and that Bernie is in trouble. During the course of their investigation the scent of beets comes to represent danger to Chet as he associates it with the various Russians he and Bernie encounter – all of whom are enemies who are working for Mr. Gulagov.

Laptop/Answering Machine

Although Bernie claims to dislike machines – something that Chet agrees with him about wholeheartedly – he is extremely adept at using computers and spends a lot of time getting information on his laptop computer. Although he has no idea how it works, or why Bernie is able to get answers to the questions he often asks aloud from it, Chet understands that the laptop is something that Bernie uses to solve their cases and



knows enough not to chew on it or pull it around the house when Bernie isn't home. The answering machine is something else Chet doesn't understand, although he knows that voices that he recognizes sometimes come out of it and so he thinks it is probably okay. When Chet hears Suzie Sanchez's voice coming out of the answering machine after Bernie is kidnapped by Gulagov's men, he is able to knock the handset of the phone off the hook and bark into it, which brings Suzie to the house and eventually results in Chet being able to find Bernie and save him.

Cats

Not surprisingly, Chet does not like cats. Several years before the story opens a cat was somehow responsible for Chet not graduating from K-9 police dog training school (although like so many other things in his past, Chet's memory of the incident is very fuzzy and the reader is never told the whole story), and his dislike for cats has stayed with him. When Chet meets Damon Keefer the first thing he notices about him is that he smells like cats, and Chet takes an immediate dislike to him. Later, after he escapes from the ghost mine in Mr. Gulagov's compound, Chet smells a cat and is immediately attacked by a mountain lion and almost killed. Chet sees cats as evil, malicious creatures that he doesn't totally understand and doesn't want to.

The 'Ghost Mine'

After Chet is able to get away from Mr. Gulagov he runs into the opening of an old, abandoned 'ghost mine' which is part of Mr. Gulagov's mountain compound. The mine is dark and allows Chet to hide from Gulagov and his gang and get some much needed rest before he finally escapes by digging a hole in the wall further inside the mine and tumbling down the mountainside. In the taped phone call to her mother, Madison Chambliss gives a clue as to her whereabouts when she asks if there is a "ghost of a chance" that they can get a dog when she gets back – referring, of course, to the ghost mine. At the end of the novel, the shadows and darkness inside the mine – and Chet's ability to see in these conditions – proves to be instrumental in saving Madison Chambliss and stopping Mr. Gulagov and his gang.

Blue BMW

During the course of their investigation Chet and Bernie find themselves encountering a blue BMW over and over again. The first time they encounter it is when Boris hits Chet with it in the North Canyon Mall parking lot, and a short time later Ruben Ramirez tells Bernie that a blue BMW was parked outside his house the night Madison Chambliss went to visit him. Boris and Harold throw Chet into the trunk of the blue BMW when they "dognap" him, and later Chet and Bernie see Anatoly Bulganin driving the blue BMW, which helps to firmly convince Bernie that the 'Russian connection' is not a product of his own imagination. For Chet, the blue BMW becomes yet another thing that symbolizes how evil and cruel Mr. Gulagov and his gang are.



The Porsche/Riding Shotgun

Bernie drives an old, beat-up Porsche convertible when he and Chet are not on stakeout (for stakeouts, they use an old pickup truck) and riding shotgun in the passenger seat is Chet's absolutely favorite thing in the world to do. For Chet, riding shotgun represents everything good about his relationship with Bernie and symbolizes the fact that rather than just being a dog and his owner, Chet and Bernie are indeed partners. When the Porsche goes over a cliff and is destroyed, Chet rides shotgun in the pickup for the rest of the investigation, but it just isn't the same. However, when Cynthia Chambliss' boyfriend Simon Berg gives Bernie a large bonus check after he and Chet bring Madison home safely, Bernie uses the money to buy another old, beat-up Porsche convertible.



Settings

The Valley

The vast majority of the action in the novel takes place in the Valley, a very large area that is bordered by a huge desert, open plains, and numerous canyons. Because Chet and Bernie are able to drive to Las Vegas in just a few hours – as well as to a place in the desert that is located near the New Mexico border in roughly the same amount of time – it is obvious that the Valley is located somewhere in the Western United States, although no specific State is ever mentioned and the Valley has no recognizable cities or towns in it. It does, however, have its own major newspaper – the Valley Tribune where Suzie Sanchez works – as well as the Valley Police Department, which has both a Missing Persons and a Metro division. There are a number of smaller towns in the Valley including Coronado, a middle-class area where Chet and Bernie meet Cleon Maxwell at Max's Memphis Ribs, and Modena, a lower class area where Ruben Ramirez – the pot dealer Madison Chambliss goes to visit the night she claims to have seen 'Dr. Zhivago' – lives. The Valley is also home to a number of luxury housing developments including Pinnacle Peak Homes at Puma Wells, a development located on a private 18-hole golf course that is owned by Damon Keefer. Chet and Bernie live on Mesquite Road, one of the oldest parts of the Valley; their property borders one of the larger canyons in the area where Chet often finds and chases all sorts of small animals including javelinas – a species of wild pig.

Bernie loves the Valley, and continually complains to Chet about how quickly it is growing and how the area's natural resources – most specifically the water supply – are being misused as shopping malls and housing developments like Pinnacle Peak pop up in places where there had been unspoiled desert just a few short years before. Although Chet has a hard time figuring out what is so upsetting to Bernie, the reader understands that while in the not too distant past the Valley had been a part of the great Western wilderness of the United States, in Bernie's lifetime the area has experienced a rapid, unchecked growth which he sees no signs of slowing down any time soon, and which he hates.

Sierra Verde

Sierra Verde is a small town which borders a large desert, and is the nearest town to the mountains in which Mr. Gulagov's compound is located. Chet is first brought to Sierra Verde by the huge biker who finds him in the desert after he escapes from the mine and who drops him off at the local animal shelter, where he is rescued from being destroyed by Suzie Sanchez. Later Bernie and Chet come to Sierra Verde looking for clues as to where Chet was taken when he was dog-napped, and visit a biker bar in the town where Bernie is able to subdue the uncooperative huge biker and get the information he wants from him. Bernie and Chet see Anatoly Bulganin and the blue BMW in a convenience store parking lot in Sierra Verde, and later Chet spots Boris driving a pickup truck when



he and Suzie Sanchez return to the same convenience store after Bernie is kidnapped. Although it seems like a lot goes in Sierra Verde, it appears as though the town has only one main street and a couple of side streets, and is the epitome of a small, 'one-horse' town.

Mr. Gulagov's Compound

Several significant scenes take place at Mr. Gulagov's 'compound' (which at one point after he first arrives there Chet likens to a ranch he, Bernie, Charlie, and Leda had once visited) including the novel's final major scene in which the case is solved and Madison Chambliss is rescued. The compound is located in a remote, isolated part of the mountains outside of Sierra Verde and consists of a main house, a barn, several sheds, a large open area, and an old abandoned mine that is known in the area as the 'ghost mine.' The compound is where Mr. Gulagov – a loan shark – takes people he has kidnapped when someone in their family borrows a large amount of money from him but stops making their payments, as is the case with Madison Chambliss' father Damon Keefer. Shortly before they rescue Madison Chambliss, Chet and Bernie learn that at least one of the people Gulagov kidnapped is buried in the mine, presumably after his or her relative failed to pay up.



Themes and Motifs

Partnership / Relationships

As is shown from almost the first page of the novel the relationship between Chet and Bernie is unique and far stronger than what is usually found between a dog and his/her owner. Throughout the novel Chet refers to Bernie as his 'partner' and he thinks of himself as an equal partner in the Little Detective Agency. Chet cannot imagine Bernie being able to solve a case without him, and it would seem that Bernie agrees since – with the exception of the times when one or the other of them is missing as a result of being kidnapped (or dog-napped) by Mr. Gulagov – Bernie takes Chet with him everywhere he goes during the course of the investigation. Because they are partners, Chet is able to read Bernie's moods – particularly when it appears that a situation is likely to turn dangerous (such as when Ruben Ramirez or the huge biker attacks Bernie) – and knows what he needs to do to keep up his end of the partnership without being told.

While the partnership between Chet and Bernie is explored in depth throughout the novel, Bernie's relationships with other humans are not quite so well defined. It appears that Bernie has very few close friends – Rick Torres is the only one the reader actually meets during the course of the novel, although a Lt. Stine is also mentioned at a couple of points – and it is very obvious that whatever the reason was for Bernie's divorce from Leda, the split was not amicable. Bernie does love his young son Charlie and looks forward to the few weekends he is able to spend with him, but otherwise seems to have almost no real friendships or close personal relationships with people outside of his work as a PI prior to the start of the novel – which could explain why he is so close to Chet. While he does try to start a relationship with Suzie Sanchez, it is obvious from the first that Bernie is not particularly confident when he is around women that he is attracted to. Bernie is very nervous anytime he is around her (at one point during the evening she comes over for dinner he manages to spill an entire glass of wine on her), and overreacts to her going to LA with her ex-boyfriend Dylan McKnight. Chet – whose dealings with the females of his species are almost always far less complicated and take far less time – has no idea why Bernie acts so strangely when he is around Suzie.

Instinct / Senses

Chet and Bernie's reliance on their own instincts and those of one another and Chet's use of his heightened senses play a large part in making their partnership work as well as it does. In this novel, they are able to find Madison Chambliss and rescue her from Mr. Gulagov. For his part, Chet is able to tell whether or not he likes or trusts a human being based simply on the person's scent, tone of voice, or even the way they smile and laugh. His instincts are almost never wrong. He immediately dislikes Mr. Gulagov (because of his smile) and Damon Keefer (because he smells like cats) while taking an instant liking to Madison Chambliss (because of her scent and voice) and Suzie



Sanchez (because of her eyes and her laugh, although the fact that she carries a large bag of dog biscuits with her wherever she goes helps as well). Chet also is able to instinctively tell when things are about to turn dangerous usually well before they do, or when things are not as they should be even though everything may appear to be okay to Bernie's human eye (for example, when he catches the faint scent of beets on Anatoly Bulganin and realizes that he is somehow involved with Mr. Gulagov).

While Bernie's human senses are nowhere near as sharp as Chet's, his instincts – which are the result of his many years as a detective with the Valley Police Department and his years as a private investigator – are very well developed and over the years he has learned to rely on them completely. Throughout the case Bernie's instincts tell him that Damon Keefer is not telling him everything he knows about his daughter Madison's disappearance long before he is able to find any facts to support this belief. Even when all of the evidence overwhelming points to Madison Chambliss being a runaway – including a phone call from Madison to her mother in which she basically states that this is the case – Bernie's instincts tell him that things are not as they appear to be and he continues to treat her disappearance as a kidnapping, which it is eventually shown to be. Although Chet and Bernie each possess excellent instincts and unique abilities, it is when they put them together that they truly become a special team.

Lies and Deception

Lies and deception – and Chet and Bernie's ability to find the truth in spite of them – are major components of the Madison Chambliss investigation and a theme that runs through the entire novel. Madison herself is the first person to lie to Bernie in the novel when she claims to have been at the movies seeing 'Dr. Zhivago' during the first time her mother believed she was missing. This lie – along with the care she takes when she concocts and tells it – leads Bernie to believe that Madison is a very intelligent and gifted young woman. Their belief that Madison is very smart and clever later proves to be instrumental in Bernie and Chet learning the truth about her second disappearance when she leaves them what appears to be a cleverly 'coded' message during the taped phone conversation she has with her mother.

While a number of other characters – including Ruben Ramirez, Elena Larapova, and Anatoly Bulganin – lie to Bernie for a variety of reasons, the most important and most damaging lies are told by Damon Keefer, Madison's father. His lies about the state of his finances – which is the reason that Mr. Gulagov, a loan shark Keefer is into for almost a million dollars, kidnaps Madison in the first place – as well as his not telling Bernie everything he knows about her disappearance hinders the investigation and costs valuable time that Bernie increasingly comes to believe Madison does not have. While Bernie is finally able to see through Keefer's deception and uncover the financial house of cards that is beginning to collapse around him, Keefer himself never wavers from his lies and sticks to them to the bitter end. While it is never made completely clear whether Keefer believes that he needs to carry on his deception to get his daughter back or whether he persists in his lies in the hopes that he will be able to avoid prosecution, in the end he is sent to prison for conspiracy. Whatever the reason for them, Keefer's lies

and his refusal to cooperate with Chet and Bernie's investigation, almost ends up costing both Chet and Bernie – as well as Madison Chambliss – their lives, and so in Chet's opinion Keefer gets what he deserves in the end.

Styles

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person and is narrated by Chet, a one hundred pound mix- breed dog of indeterminate age. All of the action in the novel is presented as it is experienced by Chet, and Chet is present in every scene. Chet lives very much in the moment, and so while his descriptions of events that are happening to him 'now' are quite reliable, his memory of things that have happened in the past – even the very recent past – is often fuzzy and unclear, and so is not completely reliable. Because he is a dog Chet places a great deal of importance on things that most humans would not – particularly scents and smells – and his narration reflects this.

The novel is written using a combination of descriptive prose and dialogue. The descriptive prose consists of Chet's observations and descriptions of the places, people, and events around him. These parts of the book often reflect what Chet, as a dog, thinks is important and not necessarily what Bernie or the other human characters place the most importance on. The dialogue consists of Chet relating conversations he hears humans –most often his owner/partner Bernie Little and someone else – having, as well as relating those times when Bernie bounces ideas about the case off him. The author is quite adept at using the dialogue between humans to fill in those parts of Chet's description of events which, as stated above, do not focus on the same things a human narrator would. At several points in the novel conversations abruptly end when Chet falls asleep, or is distracted by a small animal and runs after it. This unique and often comical combination of canine and human perspectives helps to keep the novel entertaining and fun to read.

Language and Meaning

The book is written for an adult audience and the language used in both the narrative and dialogue portions of the novel reflects this. The narrative sections of the novel consist, for the most part, of short declarative sentences which reflect what Chet sees, hears, smells, and feels at that moment. It is only rarely that Chet is able to successfully relate something he is experiencing 'now' to something that happened to him before and consequently there are no long flashback scenes. The language used in the dialogue sections of the novel is what one would expect to hear during the course of a normal conversation between adults. For the most part the dialogue flows well and is quite natural sounding, and there are very few lengthy speeches in the novel which helps to keep the action moving along at a satisfyingly rapid pace.

There are no sexually explicit scenes in the novel. While there is some profanity used in the dialogue sections, it is in keeping with the nature of the characters that use it and the circumstances in which they find themselves (often these circumstances involve Chet's teeth on their ankles or wrists). There are several violent scenes in the novel, but



the violence is not excessively brutal or graphically presented and in most cases is necessary to the plot. Because Chet has only the most rudimentary understanding of time, the precise amount of time that passes between scenes is either mentioned in the dialogue sections, or not conveyed to the reader at all; instead phrases like “after a long time” and “a short time later” are used. The same general rule applies to numbers as well as distances. While this may be a bit confusing in the beginning of the novel, the reader quickly gets used to the way Chet conveys information, and it should not interfere with the most readers’ overall understanding or enjoyment of the story

Structure

The book is divided into Thirty-one numbered, untitled chapters, each of which is divided into several unnumbered sub-chapters. The longest chapter is just over 12 pages long, while the shortest chapter is just under seven pages in length. Each chapter contains both dialogue and descriptive prose. In the majority of cases the sub-chapters present a single conversation or incident from beginning to end and covers a relatively short period of time, although in a couple of cases much longer periods of time (in one instance over three days) pass during the course of a single sub-chapter. Although – as stated before – exactly how long passes between events or conversations is rarely clear due to the fact that Chet’s understanding of time is limited, the author does manage to keep the reader aware of approximately how much time has passed at those points in the course of the story when it is important for the reader to know.

The novel contains one main plot line and several subplots. The main plot follows Chet and Bernie as they investigate the disappearance of fifteen-year-old Madison Keefer and work their way through a web of lies and deception to discover why someone would want to kidnap her. One of the subplots centers on the relationship that seems to be growing between Bernie and Suzie Sanchez, a pretty reporter for the Valley Tribune. A second subplot follows Bernie’s relationship with his ex-wife Leda and his young son Charlie. While the main plot involving Madison Chambliss’ disappearance is brought to a reasonable and satisfying conclusion, because this is the first novel in a series the subplots are left open ended and are continued in the next installment in the series, *Thereby Hangs A Tail*.

Quotes

And then one day it hit me. What was my favorite thing to do in the whole wide world? Riding shotgun in the Porsche, far and away. Sitting up high, wind pushing my face all out of shape, and sights and smells – rushing by so fast I couldn't take it all in. Speed, rush, sensation. I knew about getting high, had been high lots of times.

-- Chet (Chapter Two paragraph Page 9, paragraph 4)

Importance: As the novel opens Bernie Little returns home to Chet – his 100-pound mix-breed dog and the novel's narrator – after staying out drinking later than he intended. While Chet recognizes both the smell of alcohol and how it changes the way Bernie feels and acts, he doesn't really understand the human need to get high using alcohol or drugs – which he learned about when he was in K-9 police dog school. For Chet, nothing beats the high he gets when he is riding shotgun with his 'partner' Bernie in their old beat-up Porsche convertible.

Full frontal nudity was the kind of evidence that couldn't be beat, not in our line of work. Humans look so guilty without their clothes on, case closed; so different from me, for example, or any of my buddies ... We just don't need them, end of story.

-- Chet (Chapter Four paragraph Page 34, paragraph 9)

Importance: Because they have been experiencing some cash flow problems, the Little Detective Agency has been forced to take a number of divorce cases, which Bernie hates, just to make ends meet. Chet, Bernie, and Suzie Sanchez – a reporter for the Valley Tribune who is spending the day with Bernie to research an article she is doing on Valley Private Detectives – follow a man whose wife has hired Bernie to catch him cheating to a motel. A few minutes later an attractive young woman knocks on the door and when he opens the motel room door, the man is completely naked. Bernie snaps a couple of pictures, and Chet knows that the job is over.

Two hard facts as far as I can see," said Bernie. "One – a young male appears at the line to the movie, and Madison leaves with him. Two – she tells her mother that she got a ride home with Tim, a senior at her high school. Notice, Chet, that I don't state as a fact that was how she actually got home.

-- Bernie (to Chet) (Chapter Six paragraph Page 54, paragraph 1)

Importance: As he does throughout the novel, Bernie discusses the ins and outs of the Madison Chambliss case with Chet and bounces his ideas off him. In this instance, Madison has just disappeared for the second time and with no leads in the current disappearance to follow, Bernie decides to look into her first disappearance, which lasted just a few hours. While at this point Bernie believes that the girl is with friends and will return home on her own before long, he also feels that he needs to earn the money he has been paid and see if the few facts he has about the first disappearance lead him anywhere.



It leads,” Bernie said, “to the conclusion that this wasn’t spur-of-the-moment but a premeditated snatch. Whoever it was failed the first time, coming out of Ruben’s, and got her the second, how and where to be determined. And, if that’s true, we’re looking for a blond guy in a BMW.

-- Bernie (to Chet) (Chapter Eight paragraph Page 74, paragraph 1)

Importance: After learning from Ruben Ramirez that Madison Chambliss had been offered a ride from a blond man in a blue BMW after she’d stormed out of Ramirez’s house the night she ‘disappeared’ for the first time, Bernie begins to think that Madison might not be with friends after all, but instead may have been kidnapped. Although at this point it is only a suspicion, there are so many things about the case that simply don’t make sense to Bernie so far that it is a suspicion he can’t ignore.

Sure, bones, but not only bones. We have reward, we have punishment. This is math, Boris. Reward plus punishment equals loyalty.

-- Mr. Gulagov (to Boris) (Chapter Nine paragraph Page 87, paragraph 2)

Importance: After Chet is dog-napped outside of his house by Boris and Harold, he is brought to a compound owned by their employer, a man named Mr. Gulagov. Gulagov decides to rename Chet Stalin and train him for the dog fights down in Mexico using a mixture of reward and punishment. However, Chet refuses to answer to the new name or obey even simple commands, like to sit, and Gulagov soon becomes frustrated. He shifts his methods to all punishment, but Chet is soon able to escape from Gulagov.

I heard footsteps, moving fast, and then Suzie came in sight, Suzie! She looked down at me, eyes narrowed, face worried. “Chet, is that you?” What a question! Did I need a tag dangling from Suzie’s neck to identify her?

-- Chet/Suzie Sanchez (Chapter Thirteen paragraph Page 119, paragraph 10)

Importance: After escaping from Mr. Gulagov’s compound Chet is left at an animal shelter in the small desert town of Sierra Verde by a huge biker who finds him in the desert. After three days, the staff at the shelter are preparing to destroy him when by sheer luck Suzie Sanchez – the reporter who had done the story on Bernie for the Valley Tribune – recognizes Chet and he is saved at the last moment. Suzie returns Chet to Bernie and refuses the reward he offers her, saying that Bernie can make her dinner sometime instead.

Ms. Larapova gave him a quick glance, the corners of her mouth turned down, a look often appearing on women’s faces after one of Bernie’s jokes.

-- Chet (Chapter Fourteen paragraph Page 132, paragraph 15)

Importance: When Chet and Bernie go to Pinnacle Peak Homes to question Damon Keefer –owner of the luxury housing development and Madison Chambliss’ father – they are met by a tall, good looking woman with Russian accent named Elena Larapova who identifies herself as the VP of Marketing. After Bernie makes a joke about Chet not being either well-behaved or a pet that Ms. Larapova does not understand, Chet sees a look on her face that he has seen before on the faces of other attractive women. While



he senses Bernie's embarrassment, Chet also agrees that the joke Bernie made wasn't in the least bit funny.

Now it was Suzie giving Bernie a quick look – as though ... as though they were getting their timing right, teaming up. Impossible, of course. The team was me and Bernie.
-- Chet (Chapter Eighteen paragraph Page 173, paragraph 7)

Importance: After having a nice time at dinner the evening before –even though Bernie cooked steaks without knowing that she doesn't eat meat – Suzie Sanchez goes with Chet and Bernie to question Myron King, Damon Keefer's irrigation contractor. Working together – something that Chet neither understands nor particularly likes, even though he likes Suzie – Bernie and Suzie are able to uncover that Keefer owes King a large amount of money that he can't pay, even though Keefer had told Bernie earlier that his business was in fine shape financially.

Another wave of beet smell passed over me. It was coming from the bag, no question, but that wasn't the point. The point was I remembered where I'd smelled it before, who it reminded me of – Mr. Gulagov. I started barking. Anatoly jumped in his skin, a pleasant sight.

-- Chet (Chapter Twenty paragraph Page 191, paragraph 14)

Importance: Chet and Bernie drive to Las Vegas to question Anatoly Bulganin, the projectionist at the Golden Palm Movie Palace who snapped a picture of Madison Chambliss coming out of the theater the evening before. While Bernie has his doubts about Bulganin's story from the start, Chet has no doubt that the beet smell coming from the borscht Anatoly brought with him for dinner is exactly the same scent that he smelled on Mr. Gulagov when he had been held captive at his compound. Though he doesn't understand what it is, Bernie realizes that Chet is trying to tell him something and questions Bulganin more carefully.

Time passed, maybe a lot of it. He didn't say a word. I could feel his confidence. Bernie believed in me. That made me even stronger than my normal self. I could keep searching all night if I had to.

-- Chet (Chapter Twenty-three paragraph Page 226, paragraph 5)

Importance: Running low on firm leads, Bernie decides to test a theory he has that Chet might have seen Madison Chambliss during the time he was missing. Bernie takes Chet back to the campsite in the desert where the huge biker found him and spends the night following Chet as he tries to retrace the path he took to get there. In the end, however, there are just too many smells in the desert, and Chet is unable to find his way back to Mr. Gulagov's compound.

One thing about the so-called gift of speech: Too often it just went on and on. Besides, I already knew damn well that Maddy wasn't a runaway, had known practically from the start. Bernie, get on the stick!

-- Chet (Chapter Twenty-eight paragraph Page 266, paragraph 3)



Importance: After Madison Chambliss calls her mother and says that she left to get her head straight and will be home soon, Madison's mother and even Rick Torres – Bernie's friend in the Valley PD – believes Madison has been a runaway all along and that she will come home soon on her own. However, after hearing the tape of the call and then talking to Damon Keefer, Bernie is still not willing to believe that Madison is out of danger. Chet, who saw Madison back at Mr. Gulagov's compound and knows she has been kidnapped, becomes frustrated with Bernie as he keeps bouncing ideas off him, but there is no way that Chet can tell him exactly what he knows.

The truth was that humans didn't turn out to be the best judges of other humans. We, meaning me and my kind, were much better. Once in a while they tricked us; some humans got up to a lot of trickery, strangely like foxes, but usually we were on to that type from sniff one.

-- Chet (Chapter Thirty paragraph Page 287, paragraph 2)

Importance: As she and Chet drive to Sierra Verde to try and find Bernie, Suzie Sanchez talks to Chet (in much the same way Bernie does) and asks him how she could have let Dylan McKnight suck her back into his life – which she is afraid might have messed up her chances with Bernie. Chet, who didn't like or trust McKnight starting from the moment he met him, is often amazed by how difficult a time people have sensing and understanding things about other people that comes naturally to him.

With all that going on, and Maddy sobbing in his arms, Bernie took his eyes off Mr. Gulagov. That was where partnership came in. Mr. Gulagov began to wiggle away, toward the mine. What was he planning now? No idea. I grabbed him by the pant leg. Case closed.

-- Chet (Chapter Thirty-one paragraph Page 303, paragraph 5)

Importance: After he finally finds Bernie in the mine at Mr. Gulagov's compound and they are able to take Gulagov and the rest of his gang down, Chet sees Gulagov making a move to get into the mine, presumably to escape. Although Bernie doesn't notice the move Chet does and, without needing to be told because he knows it is what Bernie would expect of him, he holds Gulagov where he is until the police arrive.