

Mind Prey Study Guide

Mind Prey by John Sandford

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Plot Summary

Mind Prey is John Sandford's seventh novel featuring Lucas Davenport. In Mind Prey, Lucas is called in on a kidnapping case involving the daughter of wealthy businessman Tower Manette. Lucas begins the case focusing on greed as a motive, but begins to believe a patient of psychologist Andi Manette may be behind the kidnapping. This instinct seems to be confirmed when Mail begins calling Lucas, giving him cryptic hints to the well being and location of Andi and her daughters. Mind Prey is perhaps the most haunting of Sandford's Prey series, keeping readers on the edge of their seats until the final page.

Andi Manette and her daughters are leaving a parent-teacher conference when a man forces them into a van. The man turns out to be John Mail, a patient Andi treated in prison at the beginning of her psychiatrist career. Within minutes the police are on the scene of the kidnapping, beginning to put together the evidence in a way they hope will help them find Andi and her daughters. Lucas Davenport, deputy chief and game designer, is one of the best detectives in Minneapolis and he has joined the case. Lucas begins by interviewing Andi's father, a wealthy business man, and her husband, also a very wealthy real estate developer. Lucas's first thought is a crime of greed, but it is too early to be sure.

Lucas spends the first night interviewing witness and speaking to people close to Andi. One of these interviews yields the detail that Mail was wearing an obscure t-shirt associated with a gaming convention. Lucas visits a friend at a local game store where he meets Mail but is unaware of who the man is until he is already gone. Lucas helps develop a better description of Mail with the help of his game store friend, but is still no closer to discover Mail's true identity.

Lucas has a team of investigators begin searching through Andi's patient files, much to the chagrin of her partner, in hopes that one of them might offer a clue to the identity of Mail. At the same time, Mail begins calling Lucas. The first call gives Lucas a clue to a location. When Lucas checks out this clue, it is discovered that Mail has left him a gift. An oil barrel has been left at the location with a doll inside, suggesting that one of Andi's daughters has been killed. In fact, Mail did take the youngest of Andi's daughters and promised to drop her off at a local mall, but the child has not been heard from since.

As Lucas continues his investigation, Mail begins a campaign of terror against Andi, forcing his sexual fantasies on her. Andi endures these rapes, but they begin to take a toll on her sanity. Andi also becomes frightened that Mail will begin turning his attention on her oldest child, Grace. Andi begins looking for something, anything, that can be used as a weapon. Andi spots a nail in a beam on the ceiling. Andi and Grace begin working the nail out of the wood together, devising a plan to use it when the opportunity presents itself. The nail is deeply embedded, however, and they begin to despair at the chance they will ever be able to remove it. Then Grace lays on the mattress provided to them and discovers a broken spring. Andi pries two of these springs out of the mattress and they sharpen them, not only to help remove the nail, but to use as weapons as well.



Lucas continues to speak with Mail on his cell phone, receiving clues at Mail's whim. One clue warns of a trap. A short time later, Mail contacts George Dunn, Andi's estranged husband, and arranges a ransom drop. The FBI and Lucas follow Mr. Dunn to the drop. Lucas stops Mr. Dunn just in time to keep him from walking into a room booby trapped with rocks. The lure used to get Mr. Dunn to open the door is a woman hung in a silo in the center of the room. This woman turns out not to be Andi or one of her daughters, but a young woman whom Lucas had interviewed a few days before in connection with the case. It turns out the young woman was the only person who knew the true identity of Mail and her greed in this knowledge caused Mail to take her life.

Lucas decides to use several weaknesses he has discovered in Mail to bring him out in the open. One of these weaknesses is Mail's vanity, the other his sexual interests. Lucas uses a woman from his game development company to put on a press conference and claim the company has developed a way to track Mail. Lucas then has the police watch his office building and be prepared to set up a perimeter in which to catch Mail when he makes his move. Mail, rather than go to the building himself, sends a decoy. However, it is enough. Lucas calls in the perimeter and Mail is caught inside it. Unfortunately, Mail is smart and is able to slip out, but not without killing a police officer first.

Aware for some time that Mail has an informant within the Manette family, Mail slips and tells Lucas that this informant is a woman. Since there are only two women in the Manette family circle, Lucas brings them both into the police department in hopes that one will slip and give them the information they need to find Mail. Helen Manette, Andi's stepmother, finally breaks and gives them the name Mail has been using. Lucas takes a helicopter to the location, reaching it almost at the same instant as Mail. Mail goes into the basement where the women are being held with the intention of killing them. However, Andi and Grace are waiting with their crude weapons. They strike, wounding Mail and forcing him to flee out of the house. Mail shoots a cop during his escape and disappears into a cornfield.

Once outside, Andi Manette looks around and realizes the only place Mail could have put her daughter is a cistern at the back of the property. Lucas has the same thought at the same time. Lucas looks inside, expecting to find a dead body, but instead finds a very sick, very frightened little girl still alive, hanging from a coat that is laced over a protrusion on the side of the cistern. Lucas pulls her out and sends the family to the hospital where they are met by a very grateful husband and father.

The area around the cornfield is under guard, so Lucas has no reason to believe Mail will escape until help can arrive to find him. However, Lucas begins searching the area alone, aware of how smart the man is and that he escaped a perimeter once before. Lucas finds a culvert that runs under the road from one field to the next. Lucas instinctively knows that Mail would use this to escape. Lucas looks down one side and then the other and discovers Mail is in fact still in the culvert. Lucas also knows Mail is deeply claustrophobic. Lucas plugs up one end of the culvert and waits. Mail commits suicide.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

Lucas Davenport is a deputy chief of the Minneapolis Police Department. Lucas is also a successful game designer with a company, Davenport Simulations. Due to this, Lucas is wealthier than most cops and drives a very expensive car, causing him to stick out to most cops and criminals. Lucas, a life-long womanizer, is in a committed relationship with a surgeon and has recently bought an engagement ring that he carries around in his pocket all day and keeps in his sock drawer each night.

In chapter 1, John Mail takes a boat out into Lake Minnetonka where he knows Andi Manette has a home on the shore. Mail pretends to be fishing, but he only sits all day and watches Andi's house, remembering the fantasies he had when he was a boy and she was his psychiatrist. Andi goes upstairs in her home to check on her children only to find them watching a sexually explicit movie. Andi chastises them, but then her youngest daughter makes a comment about the male actor that causes all three of them to fall on the floor laughing. School begins again that week after the long summer. Andi leaves her office early to attend a parent-teacher conference at the school. As they come out of the conference it is raining. Grace, her oldest daughter, is wearing a new dress and does not want to get it wet. The three discuss how to get to the car when a psychotherapist Andi dislikes comes up and tries to start up a conversation. Andi is polite but curt. Finally Andi and Genevieve, her youngest daughter, make a run for the car. A red van is parked next to the car and when Andi moves between the two vehicles, a man grabs Genevieve and then herself and forces them into the van. The man then pulls up to the school's porch where Grace is waiting and grabs her as well. When Andi asks who he is and what he wants, the man tells her his name is John Mail, a name Andi recognizes and causes her fear.

In chapter 2, the police have arrived on the scene. Detectives Sherrill and Black are waiting for the crime scene investigators to finish under Andi's car where they are photographing a shoe Andi left behind, when Lucas arrives. Lucas Davenport is a deputy chief with the department who happens to drive a Porsche, thanks to some games he designed and were popular. Lucas tells the detectives that Andi Manette is the daughter of Tower Manette, a local businessman with a lot of well placed friends. Therefore, there is a lot of pressure on the chief of police to wrap this kidnapping up quickly. Sherrill tells Lucas what they know so far, which consists of finding the lost shoe that might have some blood on it and two witnesses. As they talk, Sherrill notices that Lucas is fidgeting with an engagement ring. Afterward, Lucas goes into the school to speak to one of the witnesses, but believes the man is either lying or did not see as much as he claimed to have seen.



Chapters 1-2 Analysis

John Mail appears to be obsessed with Andi Manette, a theme of the novel. Little is known at this point regarding the origins of Mail's obsession, except that Andi was Mail's psychiatrist during a point in his life when sexual desires were just forming. The fact that Mail is a dangerous man, however, appears to be clear when Andi reacts in fear at his name. Andi, a psychiatrist with two young daughters, is a clear headed, sophisticated woman who is clearly polite and unable to be rude to other people, even when a man annoys her as the psychotherapist she runs into outside her daughters' school clearly does. This shows that Andi is a kind, gentle person who has the perfect temperament for a psychiatrist. That she is good at her job seems clear from the fact that Andi lives in a nice house on the lake. However, the reader later learns that Andi's father is a wealthy man with powerful friends, therefore her money could come from him. Andi's wealth also presents a motive for the kidnapping. Unfortunately, the fact that the kidnapper knows Andi personally suggests that money is not the first motive, if a motive at all.

Lucas Davenport is introduced in these early chapters. Readers of Sandford's earlier novels will be familiar with Lucas, but new readers will discover that Lucas is a smart, efficient detective who is handsome and clearly has been a womanizer at some point in his adult life. However, the fact that Lucas has an engagement ring that he carries in his pocket suggests that there is a woman in his life who has brought him to a point where he is considering getting married. This shows the reader that Lucas has matured in his relationship with women. At the same time, Lucas is able to see things in the kidnapping investigation from the start that others have overlooked or have not taken the same intellectual leap with, suggesting Lucas is highly intelligent and very good at his job.



Chapters 3-5

Chapters 3-5 Summary

In chapter 3, Lucas meets Chief of Police, Rose Marie Roux at her home where he fills her in on the investigation up to this point. Lucas and Chief Roux then go to the home of Tower Manette where they find him waiting anxiously for word of his daughter and granddaughters along with his wife, Helen Manette, and Andi's psychiatry partner, Nancy Wolfe. Lucas tells Tower what they know up to this point and then begins asking questions about the family finances and Andi's personal life. Manette's opinion seems to center around the idea that Andi's estranged husband, George Dunn, might have hired someone to kidnap Andi to protect himself from financial losses in the event of a divorce. Lucas goes to see Dunn next. Dunn is clearly upset about his missing wife and children, but insists he has no reason to have taken them. Dunn says that he and Andi are separated because of a one-time slip on his part and he had hope to believe they would get back together. Besides, Dunn insists he would be willing to give Andi all his money, but she did not need it because her psychiatric practice was doing well and she had income from the Manette Trust. Lucas asks questions about the trust and Manette's finances, learning that Andi's father has lost most of his fortune and has been surviving on the trust for several years. However, Dunn is sure that no one would benefit from Andi's death, except perhaps for her partner who would get a large life insurance pay out.

In chapter 4, Lucas arrives at his office just in time to hear the psychotherapist giving an interview on the radio about the case even though he had been warned not to talk about what he saw. All the detectives on the case attend a meeting in which they discuss the investigation up to that point and assignments are given. Lucas focuses on the idea that Andi was either kidnapped out of greed or that one of her patients has taken her. To continue the investigation, Lucas goes to the home of a young girl who was the second witness. When Lucas speaks to her, the girl tells him that the kidnapper was wearing a GenCom t-shirt, a gamer's convention. This is a detail that the girl did not tell anyone else. By then it is very late, so Lucas goes home where he crawls into bed with his girlfriend after sneaking the engagement ring back into his sock drawer.

In chapter 5, Andi and her daughters find themselves in a small room in a basement or cellar that smells like potatoes. They have been given a mattress, a game console, and a cooler full of orange soda. They were brought here after a long ride in the back of the van. The area is rural, surrounded by cornfields. The basement is in a small farmhouse that has been long abandoned, hidden behind a more modern house at the front of the property. It is clear Mail has long planned this, an idea that frightens Andi even more. Andi recalls treating Mail while doing her post-doc routine at the University of Minnesota. Mail had been in the Hennepin County jail, a twelve year old boy who was arrested for arson. Mail had been badly abused by his mother and stepfather, causing the already unstable boy to go over the edge. Andi recommended he be sent to the state hospital. Now Mail is apparently getting his revenge. Mail takes Andi out of the



room where she and the girls are being held prisoner and into a basement where a mattress has been laid. Mail forces Andi to undress and he rapes her. When Mail takes Andi back into the small room, he tells her he is going to take Genevieve and drop her at a local mall. Andi protests, but when John refuses to listen, she insists her daughter take her jacket and instructs her on what to do once she is left at the mall.

Chapters 3-5 Analysis

Lucas begins his investigation by speaking with the family of Andi Manette. Greed, a theme of the novel, comes into play as Lucas begins asking the Manette family who might benefit most from Andi's death or kidnapping. The Manette family has a great deal of money, but a ransom demand has not been made, making it appear that money is not the motive. However, Tower Manette points a finger at Andi's husband, George Dunn. Dunn points the finger back at Tower, however, claiming that he is doing well financially without his wife's help, but that Tower Manette has lost most of his fortune and lives of the tiny amount he receives from a trust each year. However, no one is clear on what would happen if Andi died, as far as the trust is concerned. The reader suspects that if Andi were to die, however, that someone would benefit in some form with the trust, but it is unclear at this point who that might be and if that person would be willing to set up Andi's death to benefit.

Lucas continues to investigate, not narrowing his view down to one particular motive at this point in the investigation. Lucas comes across one clue that no one else has gotten yet, that the kidnapper was wearing a GenCon shirt and is most likely a gamer. As Lucas is involved in the gaming community, he has friends who might be able to help him find the kidnapper's identity, adding some hope to the investigation. For Andi, however, this information is old news. Andi knows her kidnapper, was in fact his psychiatrist ten years before when he was just a teenager in jail for arson. Andi visited him in jail while working on her post-doc and recommended he be placed in the state hospital. It is perhaps for this reason that Mail targeted Andi, suggesting to the reader that Mail developed some sort of sexual obsession with Andi at the time of his treatment and is hoping to either exact revenge or play out his obsession. When Mail takes away Andi's youngest daughter, the reader not only sees how much control Mail has over Andi, but how little her psychiatric training will help her and how bleak the future truly is for her. Genevieve leaves with the promise that Mail will take her to the mall, but Andi knows that Mail is most likely lying. Taking Genevieve to the mall would risk him being caught and he is too smart for that.



Chapters 6-8

Chapters 6-8 Summary

In chapter 6, Lucas meets Black and Sherrill at Andi's office. Lucas shows the warrant to look through Andi's office and files to the receptionist, who instantly gets Nancy Wolfe. Wolfe is concerned about patient confidentiality and tells the police to get out of the office. Lucas refuses, even threatens to arrest Wolfe if she interferes. Wolfe leaves the office, but promises to call her lawyer and get an injunction. From there, Lucas goes to a game store where he is friendly with the owner. Lucas asks about any new faces that might fit the description of the kidnapper. The store owner tells Lucas that a man who happened to be in the store when Lucas walked in fits the description perfectly. Lucas goes to speak to the man but discovers he is already gone. The store owner is able to give them a good description to add to the composite already created from the eye witness reports. Lucas also learns that Sherrill has found a file among Andi's patient files that suggest Andi has been ignoring a law that says she is obligated to report child molester if she suspects they are actively attacking children. Lucas gives the file to the chief who decides to sit on it until Andi and her daughters are found. Later that same day, Lucas gets a phone call from the kidnapper in which he talks about games, giving what Lucas later realizes is a clue to a location.

In chapter 7, Andi is struggling with her sanity. Andi sleeps for a time and talks to people who are not there, but after a while she is able to focus on Grace. They worry that Mail might have a microphone in the room, listening to them, so they say some cruel things about him to see if he will react to it. The next time Mail comes, Andi tries to get him to tell her where Genevieve is, but Mail becomes agitated. However, Mail does not mention the things they said, so Andi assumes Mail is not listening to their conversations, making it possible for them to safely discuss an escape plan.

In chapter 8, Lucas and Sloan go back to Andi's office and are stopped by a reporter who wants information on the case. Lucas brushes her off and goes into the office to speak to Wolfe. Wolfe continues to be less than helpful and continues to insist that she had nothing to do with Andi's disappearance despite the insurance she would receive upon Andi's death and the fact that she dated Dunn before Andi, suggesting jealousy as a motive. Lucas visits Tower again and he continues to insist Dunn is the only one who would benefit from Andi's death. Dunn, however, continues to insist he did not take the girls. Dunn provides a possible suspect, a man who worked for him, but says he can think of no one else who would want to hurt Andi, including Wolfe. Lucas gets a call informing him that the clue the kidnapper gave him on the phone the night before is from the Bible and describes a water gate of some sort. Lucas has all possible locations checked out and is on his way to a place where police have discovered an old oil barrel when the kidnapper calls again. The kidnapper does not stay on long enough for Lucas to respond to him, however.



Chapters 6-8 Analysis

With an idea that one of Andi's patients might be responsible for her kidnapping, Lucas arranges for a warrant to search the files. Nancy Wolfe is very upset by this, claiming patient confidentiality, but the depth of her concern leaves both the reader and Lucas wondering if maybe she might not be hiding something. Wolfe would get a large life insurance policy in the event of Andi's death as well as sole ownership of the practice and a chance to reclaim George Dunn, a man she dated before Andi met him. This all seems like motive, but Wolfe swears these things would not benefit her as much as it appears on the surface. At the same time, Dunn says the same thing about Wolfe. However, Wolfe and Manette are both pointing the finger at Dunn, saying he is the one who would inherit everything if Andi died.

At the same time, Lucas gets a lead on the kidnapper when he goes to a game store and sees him sitting there. However, Lucas does not know this is the kidnapper, therefore he is able to get away. The kidnapper later calls Lucas and gives him a clue that Lucas later discovers is a water gate in a nearby county. As Lucas rushes to the sight, the kidnapper calls again, suggesting that the kidnapper is playing a game with Lucas. At the same time, Andi is beginning to struggle with her sanity. When she is clearheaded, Andi and her daughter devise a plan to be sure Mail is not listening to them, proving she is still somewhat sane and fighting for her daughter's life if not her own. Andi knows Mail, knows what he is capable of, and is frightened for Grace. Andi is fighting back, foreshadowing a showdown between her and Mail.



Chapters 9-11

Chapters 9-11 Summary

In chapter 9, Lucas arrives at the location hinted at by Mail and finds that the local police located an oil barrel. After discussion about what to do, the cops open the barrel and find a body inside. However, the body is only a doll, suggesting to Lucas that the kidnapper is hinting that he killed one of the little girls and placed her in some sort of watery grave. The kidnapper calls as Lucas heads back to the city, joking about what he did. Lucas tries to talk to him, but Mail becomes angry and hangs up. An attempt is made to trace the call, but Mail did not stay on long enough. That night Lucas arranges to have dinner with a friend, Sister Mary Joseph. On the way home, Lucas stops by the offices of his company, Lucas Simulations, to check in and discuss with one of his software developers the possibility of putting the composite sketch out on the Net. At home, Lucas talks with Sister Mary Joseph about the kidnapper, getting hints on how to talk to him. Later the conversation turns to the law that says a psychiatrist must report an active child molester. Sister Mary argues that Andi might have postponed the reporting in order to help the man. However, Lucas is of the opinion that no amount of therapy can stop a child molester.

In chapter 10, Mail is watching the late news when he gets a phone call from a mystery person who has been phoning him since he took Andi and her daughters. In fact, it is this person who reminded him of Andi and set the whole kidnapping in motion. This person tells Mail that the police are about to check the records of the boat rental place where he rented the boat he used to watch Andi. Mail goes to get Andi, hoping to have sex once more, but Andi refuses to respond and Grace convinces him she is too sick to go upstairs. It is a ruse, but one that gives Andi and Grace some hope that they can manipulate Mail. From there, Mail goes to the boat rental place and fire bombs it. In chapter 11, Lucas gets up early, has breakfast with Weather, and goes to Andi's office to check on progress. While there, Lucas learns that Andi's patient files associated with her time at the University are still at the University. The University quickly agrees to allow them access and Lucas puts Sherrill and Black on it. They come across Mail's name almost immediately and place him at the top of the list of suspects. Lucas also learns of the firebombing of the boat rental shop, instantly suspecting the kidnapper is responsible and giving him another criterion to investigate. The kidnapper calls Lucas, giving him a chance to try out Sister Mary's advice, but it does not help keep the kidnapper on the line any longer.

Chapters 9-11 Analysis

Lucas continues his investigation, finding a clue from the kidnapper that the youngest daughter is most likely dead, in some sort of watery grave. While this is downheartening, it is not something Lucas can actively use to find Andi, so he files it away. At the same time, Lucas talks with a psychologist friend of his hoping to find some way to



talk to the kidnapper that will keep him on the phone long enough to trace the call, but this technique does not seem to help. The kidnapper is very intelligent and seems to be one step ahead of Lucas every time. Now Lucas turns his attention to Andi's growing list of patients, including those she treated while at the University. These files give them John Mail, suggesting to the reader that Lucas is very close to finding Andi and her daughters.

Mail is getting help from someone. Someone is calling Mail and talking to him about Andi, possibly the person who put this plan into action by reminding Mail of his childhood fantasies about Andi. This person warns Mail that the police are close to finding his name through the boat rental facility, so Mail burns the place down. This saves Mail's identity from being discovered, but it also gives Lucas another detail about the kidnapper that he can use to find him. Andi, meanwhile, is growing more determined to survive. Andi and her daughter, Grace, push Mail to see how far they can manipulate him. Andi hopes to be able to protect Grace long enough for them to put into action their plan to escape.



Chapters 12-15

Chapters 12-15 Summary

In chapter 12, the FBI have become involved in the case. Lucas arranges with them to use a cell phone Andi carries in her purse to find the kidnapper's location. Lucas arranges to have a radio station call the phone as though they have randomly selected it as part of a game the station plays. Then they will use the phone's signal to find the kidnapper's location. Mail answers the phone and response, but figures out the ruse and hangs up before they can triangulate his location. In chapter 13, Andi and Grace find a nail that is partially sticking out of a beam in the ceiling. They begin working it, hoping to release it and use it as a weapon. As they begin to work on the nail, they can hear Mail coming. Andi is forced to go with him where he rapes her once again. Afterward, Mail tells her what Davenport did with the cell phone and how someone has been calling him, telling him about Andi and helping him with the kidnapping. Mail rapes her again and in the aftermath, Andi convinces him to allow her to make a message for her family and friends, to let them know she is still alive.

In chapter 14, Lucas attends a meeting with the investigative team and the Manette's. Lucas notices some affection between Manette and Wolfe and suggests to Roux they might be having an affair. The following morning, Mail calls Lucas and plays him a recorded message Andi has made. The call is recorded and the police are able to play it for Andi's family. The family notices that Andi says hello to an aunt who has been dead several years. This tells Lucas that Andi is trying to tell them she is on a farm, since her aunt's name was Farmer and she lived on a horse farm. Since they have Mail's location nailed down to a specific part of the county, they begin researching farms in that area. On that same day, Lucas learns that their prime suspect from the University files, John Mail, is dead. In chapter 15, Mail gets a call from his anonymous informer telling him the police are getting too close. Mail ignores the advice to move. However, Mail does learn that Andi put a secret message in the recording, so he beats her for it. Andi is badly damaged this time, both mentally and physically.

Chapters 12-15 Analysis

Lucas tries to find the kidnapper using a ruse in which they can use the cell phone signal of Andi's phone to find him. Mail, however, is too intelligent for this to work and hangs up before they can pinpoint his whereabouts. They do learn the general area in which he is located and with a hint from Andi they begin searching farms in the area. Lucas also attends a meeting with the Manette family. Shortly after this, Mail gets a call warning him that the police are getting close to finding him. This suggests to the reader that the informant is a member of the family, or someone close to the family, such as Nancy Wolfe who is present at all these meetings. It also appears Wolfe is having an affair with Tower Manette.

Andi continues to be raped and beaten by Mail, worse so when he learns that she tricked him and put a hidden message in the recording he allowed her to make. Andi's situation is becoming precarious and her tiny hold on her sanity seems to be growing more thin as time passes. The reader is becoming concerned that Andi might not survive her ordeal, leaving Grace unprotected against Mail. This appears to be a fear Andi shares.



Chapters 16-19

Chapters 16-19 Summary

In chapter 16, Lucas receives a call from a woman who claims to have met the kidnapper once while playing a game at an acquaintances apartment. The woman takes Lucas and his partner to the apartment where they interview the woman. The woman, Gloria Crosby, claims that the kidnapper was a guy she met him at a restaurant and let him stay at her place for a week. Lucas and his partner return to their witness and learn that the woman lied about the kidnapper's name. When they return to the apartment to interview Crosby again, she is gone. Lucas and Sloan attempt to chase her down, but have no luck. They return to search her apartment and speak to her neighbors, but do not learn anything useful. In chapter 17, Lucas learns that Crosby has mental issues. Lucas interviews Crosby's mother, but do not learn anything. All they know is that she is a gamer and so is the kidnapper. Lucas decides to use this by throwing a press conference with a woman from his company, claiming to have developed computer software that will track the kidnapper. Lucas hopes this will draw the kidnapper out into the open.

In chapter 18, Gloria Crosby goes to Mail's house. Crosby was a patient at the state hospital the same time Mail was there. Crosby and Mail got out at the same time, along with another patient. In the halfway house, each patient was given a small life insurance policy. Mail and Crosby killed another patient, made it appear as though Mail had committed suicide, and split the life insurance money. However, Crosby has held that information over Mail's head and now wants to be cut in on the kidnapping. Mail plays along, even stringing Andi up for Crosby to beat her. However, Mail kills Crosby instead of allowing her to hurt Andi. In chapter 19, Mail calls Lucas and gives him a detailed message that includes lots of numbers. Due to the fact that the last clue was from the Bible, Lucas faxes this message to Sister Mary Joseph. At the same time, Mail lets it slip that he knows Andi put a hidden message in her recorded message, tipping Lucas off to the fact that someone is giving Mail information. After a few hours, Sister Mary Joseph tells Lucas that the message says that Mail has Gloria Crosby. The message also says something about a town called Stillwater and gives a few versus that mention Bit and Bridle as well as something about a trap. Lucas has the detectives begin looking for horse farms.

Chapters 16-19 Analysis

Mail continues to get warnings from his informant, again suggesting someone close to the investigation is the informant. However, this time Mail ignores the warning, deciding that there is no way Lucas can find his house. Mail is beginning to believe he is smarter than the cops. This is good news for Lucas, suggesting Mail might make mistakes like letting it slip that he knows Andi gave a hidden clue in her message. Now Lucas knows to keep an eye out for this informant, foreshadowing a time when Lucas might make this



informant tell him where Andi is being held. At the same time, Mail gives a new message to Lucas that is some sort of cryptic clue. Lucas has Sister Mary Joseph decipher it, telling him that the message suggests Mail has Crosby and that there might be something about to happen involving Stillwater, horses and a trap. Lucas begins having his people search for a horse farm, hoping this is where Mail has Andi.

Gloria Crosby is a fellow state hospital patient who knows Mail. This woman helped Mail fake his own death and collected his own life insurance. Due to this, Crosby has the power to help police find Andi. Crosby elects instead to cash in on her knowledge and encourage Mail to ask for a ransom. Instead, Mail decides to kill Crosby and get her out of his life for good. All of this tells the reader, however, that Mail owns his house under a false name. It also makes it harder for Lucas to find him because he does not know what name to look under.



Chapters 20-23

Chapters 20-23 Summary

In chapter 20, Lucas tries to think over who might benefit from helping the kidnapper. Lucas decides to call Dunn and ask his opinion. However, Lucas upsets Dunn so badly that the man hangs up on him. Lucas wakes Weather and discusses the case with her. Weather suggests that the informant would most likely be either Wolfe or Dunn. Lucas spends all the next day going over patient files, frustrated that the best suspect is dead. In chapter 21, Lucas is called to the station in the middle of the night when they hear a phone call between Dunn and the kidnapper over a wire tap asking for a ransom. Lucas arranges with the FBI to follow Dunn without Dunn's knowledge. Lucas attends the press conference his software developer puts on. Afterward, Lucas begins thinking about the suspects again. Lucas looks over the death report on John Mail and discovers that Gloria Crosby was the witness in the case. Lucas becomes suspicious and talks to both the coroner and the dentist at the state hospital, curious if Mail's death could have been faked. When Lucas learns that Crosby was an assistant in the dental office, he becomes convinced that Mail is not dead. In fact, Lucas begins to believe Mail is the kidnapper.

In chapter 22, Lucas puts someone on Mail, searching for more information and a picture. Lucas then begins to follow Dunn in a car with his partner, Sloan. When it appears Dunn is headed to Stillwater, Lucas and Sloan go on ahead. Lucas and Sloan check out the town, hoping to find Mail watching the action. When Lucas sees a store called Bit and Bridle, he knows that this is a trap that Mail has set up for them. Lucas goes inside with Dunn, all the while being told to get out of the way by both the FBI and Dunn. Inside is a grain storage shaft where a woman's body hangs. Dunn thinks it is Andi, but Lucas recognizes Gloria Crosby. Another door opens into the shaft, but Lucas stops anyone from opening it seconds before a ton of rocks fall behind it. In chapter 23, Mail is watching all the fuss at Bit and Bridle, amused even though the trap did not work as he had planned. Later Mail watches the news coverage and is angry with Lucas for suggesting it was not a brilliant plan. At the same time, Mail sees the software developer from Lucas's company and finds her attractive, as well as fascinated by the software they created to find him. In the cellar, Andi and Grace continue to attempt to pull the nail from the wood, but are finding it nearly impossible. During a break, a spring pokes Grace in the back when she lies on the mattress. Andi turns the mattress over and removes the spring along with another to use both as weapons and to help remove the nail.

Chapters 20-23 Analysis

Lucas is bothered by the case, staying awake at night thinking it over. Lucas is particularly bothered by the informant who is feeding Mail his information, convinced that it is someone close to the family or part of the investigative team. Lucas is also

bothered by the apparent death of their prime suspect. Lucas begins to dig into the death and discovers that Gloria Crosby was the witness in the report, so he continues to investigate and learns that Crosby was also an assistant in the clinic at the state hospital, suggesting she could have changed Mail's dental records. This tells Lucas that Mail is his prime suspect.

Dunn receives a ransom request and he proceeds to meet the demands without informing the police. The police have his phone tapped, however, because Lucas ordered taps on all the family phones to find the informant. The ransom drop turns out to be the booby trap that the message Mail gave Lucas predicted. Lucas is able to foresee the trap and save anyone from being hurt. However, it shows Lucas that Mail wants to play games with him, giving Lucas the idea to play one back. Lucas sets up a press conference with one of his software developers to show the public how the company is helping on the case using computers. This is untrue, but Lucas hopes the trick will lure Mail out, force him to walk into a trap. At the same time, Andi and Grace have found several weapons to use against Mail, but now must wait their opportunity, predicting for the reader a moment in which there will be a showdown between Andi and Mail.



Chapters 24-27

Chapters 24-27 Summary

In chapter 24, after discussing the case with Roux, Lucas stops at a sandwich shop to pick up dinner before going to his office at Davenport Simulations. While in the shop, Lucas thinks he sees a van with a man watching him. Lucas calls for back up and then confronts the man, but it turns out to be some random thieves who wanted to carjack him. At his offices, Lucas talks with the cops who have been assigned to watch the building. There has been no sign of Mail so far. However, the software developer, Ice, who was the star of the press conference and tells Lucas that someone is watching her house. In chapter 25, Lucas goes to Ice's house and slip her out with an undercover cop. Lucas watches the street for signs of Mail, but sees nothing. However, Mail is across the street from the house watching them. Mail follows them back to the office building before deciding to go look for a friend of his. In chapter 26, Lucas is sleeping in the conference room when he gets the call that someone is attempting to break into the building. Lucas and Sloan go to the back of the building from different directions and confront the man. The man rushed Sloan, forcing him to shoot. While waiting for an ambulance, Lucas asks the man who sent him and learns Mail did. Lucas has the area locked down, hoping Mail is watching from somewhere close. Sloan stays with the wounded man while Lucas and another cop begin searching the area. Behind the office building is a container yard where Lucas sees tail lights.

In chapter 27, Mail watches the police take out his friend. Mail jumps in his van and pulls away, careful not to turn on the lights or use the breaks too often. However, when Mail heads toward the street he sees police cars move in. Mail backtracks and goes through the rail yard where he quickly becomes stuck among dozens of stacked containers. Mail sees cops on the overpass above him and begins to worry. Finally Mail realizes he cannot escape the area in the van, so he parks it between some containers, hoping it will not be found too soon. Mail wipes it down the car for fingerprints, removing everything that could reveal his real identity. Mail knows they can use the VIN number to get the name he bought the van under, leading them to a storage place where Mail has been selling computer parts. Mail escapes and makes his way toward a residential area. At the same time, Lucas gives control of the search to the patrol captain and begins searching on foot. Lucas and Haywood search along the containers, looking for the van while Mail escapes across the train tracks. Lucas finds a van as Mail slips into a park in the neighborhood near the container yard. Mail is forced to crawl through a small pond and is almost caught when he startles a bunch of ducks. The police fail to see him in the dark, however, and Mail is able to escape into a neighbor's back yard at the same time Lucas gets an address from the van's VIN number.



Chapters 24-27 Analysis

Lucas goes to his offices where he hopes Mail will show up based on the press conference Ice held earlier in the day. Lucas knows that Mail will find Ice attractive and will want to meet her, and that he will be intrigued by the computer software they supposedly are using to track him. Lucas's assumption appears to be correct when Ice reports that someone is watching her house. Lucas does not see Mail watching, however, so he misses the opportunity to take him down outside the house, a third missed opportunity in the investigation.

At his offices, someone attempts to break in and Lucas goes after him. The man is not Mail, but he was sent by Mail. Lucas calls in the police and has them set up a perimeter to find Mail. Lucas is convinced that Mail would have to be near because he would have wanted to see Lucas's reaction to his friend's attempted break in. Lucas proves to be correct when Mail attempts to drive away but is trapped by the perimeter the police are setting up. Mail leaves his van, giving Lucas the van and an address to search. Lucas hopes the address is that of the house where Andi is, but the reader knows that it is only a storage compartment where Mail sells computers. Mail is too smart to put his van under the same name as the house, and would not have left the van if it would lead Lucas to Andi. Now, Lucas is about to search the address while Mail is attempting to escape the perimeter, leaving the reader wondering who will win this time.



Chapters 28-33

Chapters 28-33 Summary

In chapter 28, Andi and Grace finally get the nail free and begin practicing their scenario to attack Mail. In chapter 29, Lucas and Haywood go to the address they got from the van and discover a self-storage place. The address is a storage compartment where Mail sold computers and computer parts. Lucas is able to establish an alias and the picture of Mail is the same as the man who rented the compartment, but this is all. At the same time, Mail slips out from behind a house and hits a distracted cop over the head with a spade. Mail takes the cops jacket, hat, and shotgun. A witness comes forward immediately and the perimeter is moved, but Mail still manages to escape. In chapter 30, Lucas goes to the hospital where the cop has been rushed and speaks to Roux. Lucas convinces her to put Mail's name and picture out on every news show in the area. Then Lucas asks Roux to disappear for a few hours later if he should ask her to. At the same time, Mail breaks into the home of an elderly lady and knocks her over the head before stealing her car. Lucas goes to the scene of the cop's injury and speaks to the witness. While there, Mail calls him from a gas station. Not only does Mail gloat about escaping the perimeter, but lets it slip to Lucas that his informant is a woman.

In chapter 31, Grace and Andi once again practice their attack on Mail, planning on Andi attacking first and then Grace hitting him in the eye with the nail. In chapter 32, Lucas hatches a plan to find the informant. Lucas has both Helen Manette and Nancy Wolfe arrested, stripped, and questioned. Both women are angry and frightened, and Tower Manette is insisting on a lawyer being present. Lucas keeps everyone away but the four cops helping him. Eventually, under heavy pressure and intense questioning, Helen Manette breaks. Helen tells them the name Mail has been using. Lucas gets into a helicopter and flies over the area with Sherrill and Del. In chapter 33, Lucas and his group have to wait to confirm the address on Manette retrieving the phone number she called. Finally they get the address and arrive almost simultaneously with Mail.

Chapters 28-33 Analysis

Andi and Grace finally have the nail free and are ready to attack. Andi makes Grace practice with her several times until they are both comfortable with the act. It is ironic to have a child practice to injure someone, but this speaks of the desperation of Andi and Grace's situation, setting up a confrontation could save their lives. At the same time, Mail is stuck in a perimeter set up by the police. However, Mail is able to escape after injuring a cop and dressing in his clothing. Mail escapes, but has to gloat to Lucas. In doing this, Mail mistakenly gives away the sex of the informant, reducing down the possibilities to only two people. Lucas uses this information to illegally arrest and interview these two women in order to learn the name and address of the kidnapper.

Lucas quickly rushes to the address they have been given, hoping to find Andi and her daughters still alive. However, Mail is also on his way. Lucas has set up barricades, but arrives at the same time as Mail. This all foreshadows a huge showdown that not only introduces a great deal of tension and suspense into the plot, but calls into question the safety and recovery of Andi and Grace.



Chapters 34-36

Chapters 34-36 Summary

In chapter 34, Mail learned about the blockades that were looking for him on all the major highways out of the city, so he took the back roads, arriving at his house at the same time as Lucas and his team. Mail rushes into the house and down into the cellar, opening the door to the room where Andi and Grace are. Andi and Grace surprise Mail by immediately attacking him. Andi stabs Mail in the chest with the springs from the mattress and Grace stabs him in the eye. Grace runs up the stairs and runs into Lucas and Haywood. Lucas falls, giving Mail the time he needs to slip out a coal chute. Sherrill is waiting outside. When Mail confronts Sherrill, he fires his shotgun, hitting her in the leg. Mail then disappears into a corn field. Outside, Lucas has the helicopter that brought him and his team in take Sherrill to the hospital. The local police arrive and help Andi and Grace out of the house. Once in the yard, Andi asks about Genevieve and learns she was not rescued. Andi sees an old cistern in the yard and begins to run toward it. Lucas stops her and opens the lid himself. Inside, Lucas discovers that Genevieve has survived by hanging her coat on a protrusion on the side of the cistern. Lucas gets her out.

In chapter 35, Mail is in the cornfield, slowly crawling toward the road. Mail is half blind and hurt, but determined to escape. Lucas follows him into the cornfield and finds blood, which convinces him they will find Mail dead when the backup arrives. In the meantime, Lucas begins walking the road, trying to find places where Mail might escape. Lucas comes to a culvert and thinks this might be Mail's intended destination. In fact, Lucas finds marks on one side of the culvert but not the other, suggesting Mail is inside. Lucas remembers that Mail is claustrophobic so he begins piling grass over the opening. After time, Mail begins to panic and shoots himself in the head. In chapter 36, Lucas learns that Helen Manette knew her husband was having an affair and suspected he might divorce her, so she orchestrated the plan with Mail in order to have Andi and her children killed. Upon Andi and the girls' deaths, the Manette trust could be dissolved, giving Tower Manette the bulk of the money. This could mean a windfall for Helen in the event of a divorce or Tower's death. Lucas also learns that Nancy Wolfe wants him fired for arresting her. This talk is brought to an end, however, when Del informs Wolfe that if they insist on suing the city, he will have to arrest her for ignoring the laws that say a psychiatrist should report an active child molester immediately. Finally Lucas goes home and tells Weather that he thinks they ought to get married. It turns out Weather has known about the engagement ring all along and is thrilled he has finally decided to ask.

Chapters 34-36 Analysis

The showdown that has been foreshadowed throughout the novel finally takes place in these final pages. Lucas arrives at Mail's home at the same time Mail arrives with the



intention of killing Andi and Grace. However, Andi and Grace have a surprise of their own. Andi and Grace attack Mail, wounding him bad enough that he has trouble seeing and is in terrible pain as he attempts to escape. Before he escapes, however, Mail shoots Sherrill, leaving her badly wounded and Lucas without his ride home. Mail escapes into the cornfield and is allowed to remain there because there is no where else for him to go. At the same time, Lucas and Andi find a cistern where they realize Genevieve must have been placed. Lucas expects to find Genevieve dead, but by some miracle she is still alive. It is a happy ending to one piece of a sad plot.

After Andi and her daughters leave the area, Lucas goes in search of Mail. Lucas has gotten to know the way Mail thinks. Lucas knows that Mail will do almost anything to escape. Lucas begins looking for places where Mail might get beyond the police and finds one. In a moral choice, Lucas traps Mail in a culvert and pushes him into committing suicide. Lucas does not care about Mail's survival or seeing justice done in a court. Lucas feels Mail's death is the best outcome for the Manette's, so he does what he can to encourage it without coming out and suggesting it. In Lucas's mind, justice is done, and perhaps it is the most humanitarian thing to have done for Andi Manette.

When the case is finished, Lucas learns there was a greed motive in the case. Helen Manette encouraged Mail to kidnap Andi with the hopes that her death and that of her children will leave the Manette Trust dissolved and give her access to thousands of dollars in the event of a divorce or the death of her husband. Lucas also finds himself the target of a lawsuit until the truth about Wolfe's illegal practice are brought up. This shows how deep support runs for Lucas in the police department and how good everyone knows him to be. Finally, Lucas proposes to his girlfriend in a calm, unceremonious way, finally giving in to the impulse he has had all along. Lucas is no longer the womanizer, but a mature, loving man who has found the woman he wants to settle down with for the rest of his life.



Characters

Deputy Chief Lucas Davenport

Deputy Chief Lucas Davenport is a detective with the Minneapolis Police Department. Lucas is a wealthy man who has made a great deal of money developing games, both role playing games and computer games, as well as police training simulations. This side job has turned into a lucrative business that Lucas oversees when not working on important cases for the police department. Lucas continues to be a cop, however, because he enjoys the challenge of figuring out clues and chasing down bad guys.

When this novel begins, Lucas arrives at the scene of a kidnapping. Andi Manette and her two daughters were kidnapped as they left a parent-teacher conference at a private school. Lucas interviews an eyewitness before going to speak to Andi Manette's family. Lucas focuses both on money as a motive as well as the patients Andi saw in her psychiatric practice. As the case progresses, Lucas's involvement in the case comes to the attention of the kidnapper. The kidnapper is a gamer and a fan of Lucas's early games, therefore he focuses on Lucas. The kidnaper begins calling Lucas on his cell phone, taunting him with clues as to the whereabouts of Andi Manette and her daughters. Lucas plays the game with the kidnaper hoping that some clue will eventually lead him to Andi Manette. Finally Lucas decides to play his hand and force the kidnaper's anonymous informant to reveal his whereabouts, leading to the rescue of Andi and her daughters shortly before their imminent death.

Lucas is a bachelor who has enjoyed his freedom immensely. On a recent case, Lucas met and fell in love with a surgeon named Weather. Lucas has been living with Weather and recently began thinking of asking Weather to marry him. Lucas carries a ring in his pocket throughout the investigation, attempting to make a final decision and to figure out how to ask the question. Finally Lucas simply states that he thinks they ought to get married and Weather calmly agrees.

Andi Manette

Andi Manette is a psychiatrist who did her case work for her doctorate with prisoners at a federal facility in Minnesota. During this time, Andi worked with John Mail, a twelve year old boy who had been brutally abused by his mother and stepfather. Mail was in jail for arson. Mail would set fire to people's homes and watch them burn. Andi recommended Mail be sent to a psychiatric hospital. Now, years later, Andi is shocked to discover that her kidnapper is the same John Mail, now a grown man who has been released from the hospital and is looking for revenge.

Andi is strong at first, protecting her daughters and urging them to stay strong. When Mail drags her from the room where he has imprisoned Andi and her daughters, she attempts to use psychology to keep Mail from harming her. Unfortunately, this technique



backfires, causing Mail to become angrier with her. Mail rapes and beats Andi before dumping her back into the room that has become her prison. Mail repeats this action over and over, raping Andi more times than she can count. That first day Mail also takes Andi's youngest daughter away, claiming that he intends to set her free at a mall, but Andi knows Mail intends to kill her innocent daughter.

Andi begins losing her grip on reality even as she fights to protect her eldest daughter. Andi and Grace begin to focus on a nail they find partially exposed in a wooden beam. Andi and Grace take turns attempting to dig the nail out of the wood in order to use it as a weapon. The work is hard and causes bruises to their fingers, but they keep fighting. When Andi is brutalized over and over by Mail she begins sleeping long hours and speaking to people who are not there, leaving Grace to work the nail alone. Eventually, Andi discovers springs in the mattress Mail has allowed them. Andi and Grace use a spring to free the nail and the next time Mail comes, they use the springs and the nail to attack him and flee their prison.

Genevieve Dunn

Genevieve Dunn is Andi Manette's youngest daughter. Genevieve is a precocious young girl who finds everything about life amusing. The day she and her mother are leaving a parent-teacher conference, Genevieve teases her sister for her reluctance to get a new dress wet in the rain. When Genevieve is snatched up into a van by a stranger, she does not scream, but worries about the safety of her mother. Genevieve cries when they are taken to a strange place and placed into a strange room, but calms at her mother's soothing voice. Genevieve is taken away, the kidnapper promising to drop her at a mall and allow her to go free. Andi insists her daughter take her coat. This coat proves to save Genevieve's life. Mail throws Genevieve down a cistern on his property, but Genevieve is able to use the coat as a sling or hammock, hung over what might have once been a pump or other mechanism, and survive for four days alone, in the damp of the cistern.

Grace Dunn

Grace Dunn is Andi Manette's eldest daughter. Grace is more solemn than her sister, more serious. Grace worries about her sister's immaturity and her mother's apparent lack of concern for the small things that are so important to young girls. On the day Andi Manette is kidnapped, Grace is concerned about the rain and her new dress. Grace waits on the porch of the school while her mother and Genevieve make a run for their car. When a van pulls up to the porch, Grace turns to run, but is too stunned to get far. A man grabs her and shoves her into the van with her mother and sister. Grace cries, but eventually calms and begins to take charge. Grace witnesses her mother's slow break with reality and attempts to nurse her through the trauma of her repeated rapes. Grace is frightened, however, because even she is aware of Mail's growing interest in her. Grace refuses to look him in the eye or acknowledge him in any way as her mother instructs her, but is frightened that she will be the one Mail will take out of the room next.



When Grace is able to get the nail free of the wood, she is more than willing to use it against Mail. Grace manages to stab Mail in the eye with the nail before running from her prison and into the arms of the Minneapolis police.

John Mail

John Mail is a young man who was brutally abused by his mother and stepfather as a child and has become a criminal as a result. Mail is obsessed with sex and gaming, two things that play into the plot he has created for himself in the kidnapping of Andi Manette. Mail had become obsessed with Andi Manette when she counseled him while he was in prison after committing several arsons. However, Mail had forgotten about Andi for a time until an anonymous caller brought her back to the forefront of his thoughts. Mail recalls his obsession with Andi's body, with his fantasies of a sexual relationship with her, and begins to fantasize again. Mail kidnaps Andi so that he can bring to life all the fantasies he has dreamed of her.

At first, Mail ignores the children. Genevieve bothers Mail, so he decides to get rid of her. Grace does not bother Mail as much. In fact, Mail entertains the idea of using Grace in a sexual way when Andi can no longer give him the satisfaction he craves. That time is coming, but first he brutally rapes Andi over and over, sometimes more than four times a day. At the same time, Mail becomes aware that Lucas Davenport, the creator of some of his favorite games, is a detective on his case. Mail begins calling Lucas, baiting him with hints and clues about the whereabouts of Andi and her daughters. Mail is very smart, but Davenport is smarter. Eventually Davenport figures out who the mystery caller is that got Mail set on Andi again and uses her to track him down. Mail is caught, but he makes a run for it through a cornfield. Davenport chases him down, catching him in a culvert that crosses under a road. Aware that Mail is deeply claustrophobic because of his childhood abuse, Davenport baits him until Mail commits suicide.

George Dunn

George Dunn is Andi Manette's husband and therefore the prime suspect in her kidnapping. Police suspect Dunn has hired someone to kidnap Andi in order to avoid having to pay a settlement to her in the divorce. However, Dunn denies any involvement and insists that he is not the one who wants the divorce. Dunn also insists that he makes enough money in his real estate development business that he does not need the money Andi gets from the Manette trust. Lucas believes Dunn, but continues to keep an eye on him in case his hunch is wrong. In the end, it turns out Dunn was honest and that he truly loved his family. In fact, Dunn is the first to the hospital when Andi and her daughters are found.



Tower Manette

Tower Manette is Andi Manette's father. Tower is a man who made his fortune in business. Tower set up a trust for his children that both he and his daughter receive a payment from every year. However, the trust is the only source of income Tower has. Tower made some bad investments that destroyed his fortune and left him near penniless. Tower has a motive for wanting his daughter dead in the fact that the trust could be dissolved if Tower has no children and the lump sum given to him. However, Tower is a sick man and has no reason to want the money. Not only this, but Tower loves his daughter and wants nothing more than her safe return.

Helen Manette

Helen Manette is Tower's second wife. Helen was in real estate when she and Tower met and persuaded him to make some investments that caused him to lose the last of his personal fortune. Helen has learned that Tower is having an affair and suspects he might be on the verge of either asking for a divorce or dying. Helen has decided the best way for her to walk away from the marriage with a small fortune would be in Andi and her children died, causing the Manette Trust to be liquidated. Helen believes this will leave her with at least half the money. To see this happen Helen needs Andi to die. When Helen meets John Mail and realizes he would be the perfect criminal for the job. Helen calls Mail anonymously and puts into his head the idea of kidnapping Andi. Helen continues to keep in touch with Mail, letting him know when the police are getting too close. Eventually Lucas discovers that Helen is the anonymous informant and uses her to find Mail.

Nancy Wolfe

Nancy Wolfe is Andi Manette's partner in her psychiatric practice. Nancy Wolfe and Andi Manette have been good friends since college. In fact, Nancy Wolfe dated George Dunn before Andi. Nancy Wolfe is also having an affair with Tower Manette. All of these things, plus Nancy Wolfe's attitude when the police come to search through Andi's files, leave them thinking she might be behind the kidnapping in some way. When Lucas learns that Mail's anonymous informant is a woman, he has Nancy Wolfe arrested and bullied until a confession is received. Nancy Wolfe threatens to sue the department over her treatment, but drops the case when Lucas tells her that they have discovered that she and Andi have broken the law in several cases dealing with child molesters.

Marcy Sherrill

Marcy Sherrill is a cop who works with Lucas Davenport. Sherrill is one of the first cops on the scene and is involved with the case in a peripheral sense the entire novel. When Lucas learns the identity Mail has been using and where his house is, Sherrill insists on going with him to the location via a helicopter. When they land, Sherrill moves around

the back of the house and watches for Mail to attempt to escape. When Mail does come out of the house through a coal chute, Sherrill confronts him. Mail shoots Sherrill in the leg, causing a break in the thigh bone and a severed artery. Sherrill is rushed to the hospital where doctors are able to save her leg.



Objects/Places

Abandoned Farmhouse

John Mail keeps Andi Manette and her daughters captive in the basement of an abandoned farmhouse on his property. Mail bought the property under an alias, preventing the police from finding the property immediately.

Red Paint

John Mail painted his van with water soluble red paint before he kidnapped Andi Manette and her daughters. This paint washes off in the rain and covers Andi Manette and one of her daughters, causing witnesses to believe they have been injured in some way.

Engagement Ring

Deputy Chief Lucas Davenport spends most of the novel carrying around an engagement ring intended for his girlfriend, Weather Karkinnen.

Nail

Andi Manette and her daughter, Grace, spend a great deal of time during their captivity attempting to remove a nail from a wooden beam in their small prison in order to use it as a weapon. Eventually they are able to free the nail and Grace uses it to stab John Mail in the eye.

Springs

Andi Manette and her daughter, Grace, remove two springs from a mattress provided to them by their captor to use as tools and weapons. Grace uses one of the springs to remove a nail from a wooden beam. Andi uses both springs to attack and stab her captor, John Mail.

Cistern

John Mail throws Andi's daughter, Genevieve, into a cistern with the intention of killing her. Genevieve manages to make a hammock out of her coat and survive for four days hanging from a protrusion on the side of the cistern wall until Davenport arrives and rescues her.



Game System

John Mail provides Andi Manette and her daughters with a game system while he holds them captive.

Mail's Clues

Mail gives several sets of clues to Lucas over the phone. The first set of clues leads to a doll in an oil barrel that suggests one of Andi Manette's daughters is dead. The second set of clues tells Lucas that a woman named Crosby has been murdered as well as the idea that Mail has set up a booby trap for someone close to the investigation. Mail uses Bible passages as code in the second message.

George Dunn's Real Estate Development Company

As Andi Manette's estranged husband, the investigators visit his business and investigate his employees while searching for his kidnapped wife and daughters.

Andi Manette's Psychiatric Partnership Files

Police investigate the patients that have been seen by Andi Manette and her partner, Nancy Wolfe, since they began practicing, hoping to find the identity of the kidnapper. While investigating these files, police find inconsistencies in Manette and Wolfe's compliance with the law in regards to known child molesters.

Bit & Bridle

Bit & Bridle is an abandoned western feed store where Mail lures Dunn and investigators in the hope that they will trigger a booby trap that will end in someone being injured or killed. Fortunately, Davenport recognizes the trap and prevents anyone from being hurt.

Irv's Boat Works

Mail rented a boat from Irv's Boat Works to watch Andi Manette at her home. When Mail's secret informant let him know the police were close to learning his identity through the business's records, Mail firebombs the business.

Davenport Simulations

Davenport Simulations is a business Davenport started when some games he created took off and he became involved in computer games. Davenport uses his business to lure Mail out into the open, nearly catching him in a perimeter set up by the police.

Manette Trust

Police investigate the possibility that Andi Manette was kidnapped in order to provide someone a large windfall through a trust set up by her father's company that pays out monthly to Andi and her father.

Van

John Mail owns a van that he uses as his sole source of transportation during and after the kidnapping of Andi Manette and her daughters.



Themes

Mental Illness

Andi Manette is a psychiatrist. Andi sees many patients on a daily basis, specializing in criminal behavior, such as child molestation. When Andi is kidnapped along with her two young daughters, police immediately begin to focus on her patients. In Andi's files at her practice police find several cases in which Andi mentions patients attempting to flirt or make passes at her and still others in which Andi failed to report an active child molester. However, the police cannot find a patient whom they can believe is the man behind the kidnapping.

At the same time, John Mail, the kidnapper, becomes increasingly violent with Andi as he holds her and her two daughter's captive. Andi is repeatedly beaten and raped. As the days go by, Andi begins to lose control of her own mind, often speaking to people who are not there. At the same time, Andi begins to worry that Mail will grow bored with her and turn his attention on her daughter, Grace. Andi was John Mail's doctor when he was arrested as a teenager for setting fires. Andi is aware of Mail's childhood, the abuse he suffered at the hands of his mother and father, aware that Mail is psychotic. Andi attempts to control Mail's behavior, but she is growing more and more convinced that she will eventually not be able to keep Mail's attention from her daughter.

Mental illness is a theme of this novel for several reasons. The most obvious reason is the mental illness that causes Mail to focus on Andi and to kidnap her and her daughters. Mail has developed an obsession with Andi based on her treatment of him after his arrest at the age of twelve and also because he blames her for the fact that he was sent to a mental hospital rather than juvenile hall for his crimes. Mental illness also comes into the plot when Andi begins to lose control of her own sanity as a consequence of multiple, brutal rapes at the hands of John Mail. When Andi is finally rescued she continues to have conversations with people who are either not in the room or who have been dead for many years.

Greed

John Mail is released from the psychiatric hospital where he was sent after his conviction in several arson cases. Mail focuses on the future by killing a fellow patient for both his life insurance and his name. Mail wants to start over, to disappear and become someone else. Mail's only interest in life is computer games and role playing games. However, when Mail begins getting phone calls from an unidentified woman who once again plants the memory of Andi Manette in his mind, Mail becomes obsessed with possessing Manette and getting back at her for sending him to the psychiatric hospital.



This unidentified woman turns out to be Helen Manette, Andi's stepmother. Helen knows that her husband is having an affair with Andi's partner, Nancy Wolfe, and that it is only a matter of time before he decides to file for divorce. Tower Manette's finances are not as good as they once were and his largest source of income is from the trust fund associated with the business he began early in his career. However, Manette shares this trust with his daughter. Not only this, but Andi's death would allow for the trust to be dissolved and the full amount to be paid out to Tower. Helen believes that if Andi were to die at the hands of Mail, she could claim half this money in the event of a divorce. It is for this reason that Helen encourages Mail to kill Andi and why greed is a theme of the novel.

Obsession

John Mail is a young man who was brutally abused by his parents. Mail was often locked in a closet and beaten. Mail develops a cruel streak as a result of his childhood abuse, finding pleasure in watching people's homes burn. Mail also develops an obsession with sex. When Mail is arrested for the arsons, Andi Manette, a graduate student who is seeking her doctorate in psychiatric medicine, begins visiting him in the prison. Mail develops an interest in Andi sexually, imagining what it would be like to have a sexual relationship with her. Mail begins to think about Andi often, his obsession only increasing when the result of his visits with Andi end in him being sent to psychiatric hospital rather than juvenile detention.

Mail thinks of Andi often while in the hospital, but over time his obsession begins to subside. However, after being released from the hospital, Mail begins receiving phone calls from an unidentified woman who reminds him of his fascination with Andi. This caller tells him that Andi also found him interesting, often speaking about the way he would look at her and talk to her during their visits. This sparks Mail's sexual thoughts in regards to Andi once more. Mail kidnaps Andi and her daughters, using her often to satisfy his sexual desires. However, as time passes, Andi becomes aware that Mail is beginning to pay attention to her eldest daughter, Grace. Mail's obsession with Andi is growing into an obsession with sadistic sexual practices. It is these obsessions that motivate Mail, whose actions propel a great deal of the plot, making obsession a theme of the novel.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person omniscient. The narrator of the novel changes frequently, often from scene to scene within a single chapter. The narrators are often Lucas Davenport, Andi Manette, and John Mail, the main characters of the novel. These characters narrate the novel through the third person point of view, sharing with the reader their thoughts and feelings as they take the reader along in the action of the plot. Through this point of view, the reader can see what motivates John Mail, how Andi Manette's sanity is slowly slipping, and how Lucas Davenport follows the evidence to catch John Mail and rescue Andi Manette.

The point of view of this novel works because the shift between narrators is clear and easy to follow. The changes between characters allow the reader to see all sides of the plot, from the eyes of the criminal, the victim, and the cop attempting to solve the crime. This allows the reader a full view of the crime, not just the limited view that would be available if the only narrator was, for example, Lucas Davenport. The point of view allows for a rounded narration that adds suspense to the novel. The point of view works well for this type of novel and presents a better narration than a reader might find if the point of view were restricted to one narrator or written in first person.

Setting

The novel is set in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The setting of this novel seems unusual as most novels of this genre are normally set in cities like Los Angeles or New York City. However, Minneapolis appears to be similar to these larger cities in that the same crimes that take place in those larger cities also take place in Minneapolis. The immediate difference a reader might notice is that Minneapolis is surrounded by farm land that provides for the criminal in this book a place to hide from the police. Also surrounding Minneapolis are many small towns and highways that the criminal uses to escape the clutches of the police. Minneapolis is a Midwestern city that would appear on the surface to be less sophisticated than a city like Los Angeles, but the criminal and the police chasing him remind the readers that Minneapolis is as vulnerable to crime as any other city.

The setting of the novel, while somewhat unusual, is appropriate to the novel. The setting of Minneapolis might at first seem to be a mild, Midwestern city, but soon the reader forgets about this reputation and begins to get a sense of darkness that a similar crime set in a city like Los Angeles might imply. Despite the rural areas around the city, Minneapolis appears to be like any large city, filled with the same dangers and risks. The setting does not take away from the darkness of the crime committed in this novel. In fact, the setting seems to enhance the darkness of this crime because the criminal is so familiar with his surroundings that he is able to hide from police much longer than the

reader might believe possible. The setting of this novel works well with the plot, leaving the reader feeling satisfied with the overall impact of this setting.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in modern English. The language of the novel is clear, simple English that is often enhanced with slang common to modern speakers. The novel does not use a lot of foreign words, but does include slang that is common with people who like to participate in games, especially role playing games. The criminal of this novel is one of these types of people, therefore the slang of the people with whom he spends a great deal of time is important to the development of the plot. There is also some slang words in the novel that are used to describe police procedures.

The novel's language is appropriate to the characters and the plot being developed in this novel. The use of slang common to gamers is important because not only is the criminal featured in this novel a gamer, but the police detective hunting him is a game designer. Therefore the language of this novel works because it is appropriate to the characters within the novel. The language of the novel is not complicated and does not impede the reader's understanding of the plot developments, therefore it works well for this novel.

Structure

The novel is divided into thirty-six chapters. The chapters are neither short, nor long. Most of the chapters average about twenty to thirty pages each. The chapters themselves are divided into sections, each new section denoting a change of scene or narrating character. The novel is told both in dialogue and exposition with some internal dialogue that expresses to the reader the thoughts and motivations of the characters. The novel is told in a linear fashion with few flashbacks, allowing for the reader to easily follow the time line of the plot development.

The novel contains two main plots with several subplots. The major plot of this novel centers around the kidnapping of Andi Manette and her two young daughters by a former patient of Andi's, John Mail. As Andi and her daughters are held by this man, Lucas Davenport, a deputy chief with the Minneapolis Police Department, searches through clues with the hopes of finding Andi before she and her daughters are killed. At the same time, Lucas struggles with his feelings for his girlfriend, Weather, and whether or not he is ready to give up his bachelorhood and marry her. Several subplots support these two main plots, including one about Andi's struggling marriage and her father's financial woes.



Quotes

"John Mail didn't know about old-style machinery—chokes, priming bulbs, carburetors, all that. He knew diodes and resistors, the strengths of one chip and the weaknesses of another. But in Minnesota, boat lore is considered part of the genetic pattern: he had no trouble renting a fourteen-foot Lund with a 9.9 Johnson outboard." Chapter 1, pg. 1

"The rain was cold, but more of an irritant than a hazard. If it had come two months later, it would've been a killer blizzard, and they'd be wading shin-deep in snow and ice. Marcy Sherrill had done that often enough and didn't like it: you got weird, ugly phenomena like blood-bergs, or worse." Chapter 2, pg. 12

"The Homicide office resembled the city room of a slightly seedy small-town daily." Chapter 4, pg. 37

"The room was a concrete-and-stone hole that smelled like rotten potatoes. Four fist-sized openings pierced the top of one wall, too high to see through. The openings reminded Andi of the holes that a child would punch in the top of a Ball jar, to give air to his insect collection." Chapter 5, pg. 48

"When he was a kid, he'd torched a house in North St. Paul and had come back to sit on an elementary school embankment to watch the action. He liked the flames. Even more, he'd liked the excitement and companionship of the crowd, gathered to watch the fire. He felt like an entertainer, a movie star: he'd done this." Chapter 10, pgs. 116-117

"The FBI's agent-in-charge had a cleft chin and blond hair; his name was T. Conrad Haward, and he thought he looked like a Yale footballer, just now easing into his prime. But he had large, fuzzy ears and behind his back was called Dumbo." Chapter 12, pg. 128

"That's how they'd come, he thought, looking into the sky for lights, red or white, blinking, swooping, focusing on him. An envelopment." Chapter 13, pg. 133

"Gloria Crosby might have been pretty, but she wasn't: she was unkempt, a little dirty, her face was formed in a frown." Chapter 16, pg. 154

"The weatherman said that the low pressure system responsible for all the rain that had rambled off to the east and was presently peeing on Ohio; additional micturatory activity could be expected in New York by evening, if you were going there. The weatherman said neither peeing nor micturatory, but should have, Lucas thought." Chapter 20, pg. 193



"Then Lucas could see it, the body in black, the feet below it, twisting from a yellow rope at the top of the shaft. The door they had not yet tried went into the receiving dock and the main part of the shaft itself. Dunn broke toward it, hands out to stiff-arm the door..." Chapter 22, pg. 218

"Lucas had to stop her, because he'd realized what Andi Manette knew by instinct: this was where Genevieve was. The doll in the oil barrel was the girl in the cistern; a watery grave." Chapter 34, pg. 306

"And what did Mail's file say? That he was a frantic claustrophobic?" Chapter 35, pg. 314



Topics for Discussion

Who is Andi Manette? Why does John Mail become focused on her? Why does Mail kidnap her and her daughters? Who has encouraged this kidnapping? For what reason has this person encouraged the kidnapping? How does Andi survive the ordeal Mail puts her through? How does Andi's changing mental status reveal itself throughout her ordeal?

Who is Grace Dunn? Why has Grace been kidnapped? What danger does Grace face as her ordeal continues? Why does Grace avoid eye contact with her kidnapper? What is Grace afraid of? How does Grace deal with the ordeal? How does Grace show maturity throughout the ordeal? What does Grace do to her kidnapper at the end of the ordeal? Why? How does this affect Grace mentally?

Who is Genevieve Dunn? Why does the kidnapper take Genevieve away? What does the kidnapper say he is going to do with Genevieve? Does the reader believe him? Do the characters believe him? What clue about Genevieve does the kidnapper give police? Why? Where is Genevieve found? How did the clue lead police to believe Genevieve would be where she was found?

Discuss John Mail. Why does Mail become obsessed with Andi? Why does Mail kidnap Andi and her children? Why does Mail decide to get rid of Genevieve? What causes Mail to feel as though he has to get rid of Genevieve? Why is Mail the way he is? What happened in Mail's childhood that might explain his behavior? Does this occurrence explain everything about Mail's behavior? Why or why not?

Discuss the clues Mail gives the police. Why does Mail give clues to the police? Why does Mail use the Bible? Is Mail religious? How do the police discover the meaning of the clues? What is Davenport's source to figure out these clues? How did Davenport come to use this source?

Discuss Lucas Davenport. Who is Davenport? What does Davenport carry in his pocket the entire novel? Why does Davenport carry this in his pocket? What is Davenport considering about this object? What impact will this object have on Davenport's life? What side business does Davenport have? Is this unusual for a police officer? In what way? How does Davenport use this side business to catch Mail? Is it successful?

Discuss greed. Why do police first assume greed is a motive in the kidnapping? Is it? Whose greed? What is greed? Is greed a common motivation? Why do people kill for greed? What would have happened if Andi had died? Would the greedy person have been likely to get what they had wanted? Why or why not?