

Winter Prey Study Guide

Winter Prey by John Sandford

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



Contents

Winter Prey Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-4.....	5
Chapters 5-10.....	10
Chapters 11-15.....	15
Chapters 16-20.....	19
Chapters 21-25.....	21
Chapters 26-31.....	24
Characters.....	27
Objects/Places.....	29
Themes.....	31
Style.....	33
Quotes.....	36
Topics for Discussion.....	38



Plot Summary

"Winter Prey" by John Sandford is one of a series of books about Minneapolis cop Lucas Davenport. Davenport has left the police department and has retreated to his cabin in the North Woods of Wisconsin. One snowy and bitterly cold winter night, a deputy comes to Davenport's door to ask for his help in solving a crime.

A sociopath named "The Iceman" goes to the family home of Claudia and Frank LaCourt, kills the entire family and burns the house to the ground. The man is looking for a photograph of himself with a young boy, one that was published and could ruin him if discovered. The LaCourt's daughter, Lisa, had a copy and showed it to her parents. The boy in the photo had been found dead.

Davenport comes on the scene and meets the sheriff and the deputies. The sheriff deputizes Davenport as the small town sheriff does not feel capable to handle a multiple homicide. Davenport has a reputation as being one of the best homicide cops in the business.

On the scene, Davenport meets Dr. Weather Karkinnen, county coroner.

Davenport teams up with the sheriff and deputies and begins to work the case. The task of eliminating suspects is tiresome work. One of the main persons of interest is Father Phil Bergen, the local parish priest, who was seen leaving the general vicinity of the LaCourt house less than two minutes before the fire was called in to 911. Bergen asserts his innocence.

The Iceman is involved in a sex ring involving children. The boy in the photo had to die after he sent the photo into a porn publication. The other people involved in the group include the boy's father, a local married couple, and a single man. When things start to get rough, the single man and married couple vanish.

The Iceman is involved with one of the young girls in the sex ring. The girl will do anything the Iceman asks.

The Iceman knows that Weather Karkinnen must die because she is the one person who will be able to identify him from the photo. All attempts on Weather's life fail.

Father Bergen is the next to die because his innocence threatens the Iceman's freedom. If Davenport figures out how the fire was set, Bergen would be off the hook and the Iceman would be caught.

Davenport and the rest of the team devise several different ways to flush out the Iceman. Putting one of the members of the sex ring in jail does the trick. The Iceman kills the other man and decides to make a run for it.

Davenport gets a clear copy of the photo and Weather identifies the man by severe burns on his leg. The man is Duane Helper, the only full time fireman.



The Iceman and the yellow-haired girl have a stand off with the cops then head for the woods. The cops track them and there is a final confrontation. The Iceman runs into the woods where he is shot in the back. The Iceman is convinced he can still go on.

Davenport is shot in the throat by the yellow-haired girl and nearly dies. Love interest Weather is on hand to save Davenport's life.

The Iceman is prepared to give himself up to the police when he is eaten alive by coyotes.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

"Winter Prey" by John Sandford begins at the man known as the Iceman riding through the woods on a snowmobile. It is winter and bitterly cold, even though the Iceman is completely encapsulated in weatherproof gear. It is snowing and the Iceman is making his way through the woods and onto the lake, almost by instinct, looking for landmarks that might guide him to his home. The Iceman is obsessed with time, wondering if there is enough time to ensure that his plan has worked. The Iceman has killed once before and although he attempted to make the murder look like a suicide, it had failed. The murder was successful enough to eliminate the Iceman as a suspect. The Iceman approaches an unidentified house carrying a simple corn-knife to ambush his unsuspecting prey.

The focus shifts to the LaCourt's house which borders the lake and is relatively isolated from its neighbors. Snow was falling rapidly, foretelling of a severe Wisconsin blizzard. Claudia LaCourt is standing in the kitchen washing dishes when Frank, her husband, enters the house. Claudia asks Frank if he still intends to speak to the sheriff. Frank says he will even though the conversation will cause nothing but trouble. Frank had spoken to Russ Harper about the incident and was greeted with open hostility. Claudia begs Frank to let it go but Frank insists that something has to be done. Claudia wishes she had never seen the picture.

As Claudia ventures out into the garage, she thinks about the picture. The picture was printed on cheap newsprint and was very poor quality. In the photograph was Jim Harper, a local boy, who was naked. Beside, Harper was an adult man, naked and fully erect. There was no mistaking Harper's identity. However, the man's head was cut off in the photo, making it nearly impossible to make his identity known.

Claudia goes into the garage and stokes the wood stove. While Claudia is loading oak splits into the stove she senses the presence of an intruder. Claudia looks around the yard but sees nothing. Still, she feels a sense of foreboding as if some sense of evil is within her reach. Claudia runs into the house and tells Frank about the presence in the yard. Claudia wants to call 911, but the storm is practically on top of the town and no one will be able to come, simply because Claudia has a feeling about an intruder. Frank takes Claudia seriously as she is not one to panic or overreact and it is clear that his wife is terrified. Frank decides to go out into the yard to investigate. Claudia insists that he take a gun.

Frank LaCourt walks out into the yard and looks around. Frank checks the garage and begins to walk up the path when he encounters the Iceman. The Iceman is equipped with a gun but decides to use the corn-knife to split Frank's skull. Frank falls to the ground, dead.



The Iceman approaches the house still obsessed about time. The killer can see Claudia LaCourt in the window and is intent on killing her and the LaCourt's daughter so that the picture can be retrieved.

The Iceman goes into the house and Claudia immediately senses something is wrong. Claudia stands in the kitchen holding a Smith & Wesson .357 but never has a chance to use it as the Iceman shoots her in the forehead. Lisa LaCourt comes out of her bedroom, calling for her mother.

Chapter two begins with Lucas Davenport arriving at the LaCourt house. In the air there is the smell of death, something that smells like a pork roast due to the fire. The house has been set on fire and cops and fire rescue units are on the scene. The wind is harsh and clearly escalated the fire that charred the LaCourt's bodies.

Lucas recalls another fire in winter in Minneapolis. There was an apartment building attacked by gang bangers trying to execute a rival. The gang used Molotov cocktails to start the fire. There was a woman upstairs, running an illegal day care and while she managed to throw all of the kids out the window to safety, the woman burned to death. Due to Lucas's connections in the drug community the gang bangers were sent to Stillwater, where they would serve time for multiple homicides. The thought of catching the bad guys makes Lucas smile. A sheriff's deputy approaches Lucas and takes him to meet Sheriff Carr.

Sheriff Sheldon "Shelly" Carr stands looking at the house in complete shock while the firemen take the time to fight the blaze. The deputy, Henry Lacey, introduces Davenport to the sheriff. The sheriff says that the small town has never seen anything like this. Davenport was in the area and hoped he could help. Davenport and sheriff take each other's measure. Sheriff thinks Davenport is rough looking and Davenport is surprised by the sheriff's mild manner. Davenport's touch is a raw nerve when he asks why the mobile crime scene unit has not arrived. The sheriff says they are delayed by the snow and that the deputies are trying to move along. The sheriff tells Davenport there are three dead and leads him to the house.

The first victim, Davenport encounters is Frank LaCourt. It is obvious that the man's skull has been cut open, yet it is difficult to say why his face has been mutilated. The cops surmise that he was attacked by coyotes. The winter has been extremely harsh and the animals are on the verge of starvation. Davenport notes that there are snowshoe tracks leading down to the lake, and makes a note.

The next victim to be examined is Lisa LaCourt, who has been mutilated. Finally, Claudia LaCourt is discovered in the kitchen. A fireproof curtain had covered the woman's face showing the bullet hole in her forehead. Davenport runs through the list of obvious questions from financial and marital problems to ex-spouses. The family had no obvious problems or enemies.

Davenport meets the County coroner, Weather Karkinnen. Weather tells Davenport and the deputies that the girl was mutilated before she died, that the killer had sliced off



the girl's ear. The sheriff asks Weather if she had heard anything about Davenport when she worked as a surgeon in the Cities. Weather says that Davenport has killed a lot of people.

The cops and crime techs do all they can in the house and decided to cover it until the storm passes and the mobile crime scene unit arrives. All adjourned to the garage and gather around the wood stove. The sheriff asks to talk to Davenport alone and surprises Davenport by asking if he is Catholic. Davenport explains that he is not has lapsed. The sheriff says that he recently converted after meeting the local priest, Father Phil Bergen. The sheriff explains that there is an issue with the time frame, regarding the murders. The firemen had spotted father Bergen driving from the direction of the LaCourt house less than two minutes before the fire was reported. Father Bergen is now the prime suspect in the murders and the fire.

The sheriff spoke with father Phil who admitted to being at the LaCourt house. The priest says everything was fine when he left. The timing doesn't make any sense since Frank LaCourt was covered with half an inch of snow which would not have been possible if Father Bergen had just murdered the family and set the fire. The sheriff admits that interrogation is not his forte and asks Davenport to speak to the priest. The sheriff tells Davenport that the priest is honest to a fault and there is no way he would kill the LaCourts. The sheriff deputizes Davenport.

Chapter three reverts to the Iceman after the murders. The Iceman was not able to find the photograph. The man questioned Lisa LaCourt but the girl didn't know what had become of the photograph. The voice in the Iceman's head told him to run away, that time is running out. The Iceman recalls other times when he should have run away, but stayed to fight. A series of events in the Iceman's childhood are recalled from schoolyard fights to the time the Iceman warned his mother to never touch him again or he would kill her while she slept. The Iceman also recalled the day when Jim Harper told him about having the nude photo published. The Iceman became enraged and killed the boy.

The Iceman's main concern about the photograph is that one person would be able to identify him even though his head is not in the picture. Weather Karkinnen would be able to reveal his identity to the police. The Iceman decides that Weather must die.

Weather is driving from the LaCourt house toward home when she notices a snowmobile racing alongside her Jeep. Weather is distracted by thoughts of Davenport and gives little attention to the sled. Weather asks herself why she was so rude to Davenport, and admits to herself that she is attracted to the cop. The snowmobile catches Weather's attention once again when she realizes they are coming upon a retaining wall. If the snowmobile does not slow down, it will slam into the wall, killing its driver. Weather taps the brakes on the Jeep to warn the snowmobiler and eventually the Iceman understands. The assassination attempt has been foiled.

Chapter Four finds Davenport and the sheriff driving away from the LaCourt house. Davenport thinks about how he came to stay in the cabin in the North Woods. A brutal



manhunt in New York had exhausted him and when Davenport returned to Minneapolis he found nothing but work and boredom. On an extremely frigid night in January, a sheriff's deputy showed up at Davenport's cabin and asked for help.

Davenport and the sheriff go to the rectory to meet with Father Bergen. The men question Bergen about the murders. Bergen sticks with his story that the LaCourt's were fine when he left the house. The sheriff tells Bergen that his Jeep had been spotted on the road from the LaCourt's. Davenport begins to question Bergen and asks for specific details to make sure the priest was at the LaCourt house. Bergen's story checks out but the time frame still does not work. Considering the time and the sighting, Bergen had to be the killer. However, it makes no sense to Davenport why Bergen would admit being at the house if he had killed the family.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Lucas Davenport is at a place in his life, where he is unsure what to do with his time. Davenport had become disillusioned with the Minneapolis Police Department and no longer wanted to put up with the politics and bureaucracy. The last manhunt in New York exhausted Davenport and he needed a break. During the break Davenport realized there must be something more to life than working for money and retreated to the North Woods cabin for peace and quiet. Davenport spent his days skiing, running, and chopping wood to build up his strength. Although the Davenport had a new fully equipped office in Minneapolis, he had not going back to the Cities since September. Once at the LaCourt house Davenport realizes how much he misses police work.

Davenport is surprised by the mannerisms of Sheriff Carr. The sheriff is an openly religious man and very mild-mannered. Swearing in the sheriff's presence is highly discouraged and Davenport is amused by the man's use of mild expletives such as "gol-darn."

It is easy for Davenport to slip back into cop mode. Davenport agrees to work on the case as the sheriff feels he is not equipped to handle murders. In a small town like Grant, the most difficult task for the sheriff is chasing down a kid who stole a road sign.

Davenport meets Weather Karkinnen, a local doctor and County coroner. The sheriff is surprised when Weather and Davenport realize that the killer had chopped off Lisa LaCourt's ear.

Davenport worries about the sheriff's affiliation with Father Bergen. Davenport questions Bergen as he would any other suspect and the sheriff finds it somewhat hard to take. Davenport worries about the fact that Father Bergen is the sheriff's priest and wonders if it will affect the investigation.

The Iceman is clearly suffering from mental problems. The man was abused as a child and began to strike back in his early teens. The Iceman's mother did nothing to help her son. The Iceman congratulates himself on the murder of Jim Harper and although the police figured out that it was not a suicide, the Iceman is above suspicion.



The Iceman knows that he must kill Weather so that she cannot identify him from the photograph. The assassination attempt on the doctor fails when the Iceman forgets about the retaining all and is forced to let Weather go.

Having been raised in the cities, Davenport is a fish out of water in Grant. The small town is filled with small-town attitudes and behaviors. Davenport is by far the savviest cop on the case.

Something about Davenport unnerves Weather. The woman finds that she is attracted to the cop and cannot help from hurling insults at him like an elementary school child.



Chapters 5-10

Chapters 5-10 Summary

Davenport goes to the sheriff's office and finds out that the crime scene unit has arrived from Madison. The crime scene techs say that it might take up to two weeks to process the house and Davenport is annoyed that it will take so long.

Davenport meets the other deputies to be working with on the LaCourt case. Among them is Gene Climpt along with Russell Hinks and Dustin Bane, known collectively as Rusty and Dusty.

Father Bergen comes to the sheriff's office and is angry because the entire town is saying he killed the LaCourts. The sheriff assures Bergen that the information did not come from his office and that they have no suspects at this point.

Davenport goes to the local hardware store to interview Dick Westrom, one of the two firemen who reported seeing Father Phil on the night of the murders. Westrom recounts the night's events including the fact that another fireman saw Father Phil driving down the road. Westrom confirms the time of the sighting, further incriminating Bergen. Davenport also discovers that the two firemen are not friends and rules out a conspiracy.

Davenport also questions Duane Helper, the other fireman. Helper confirms the story about Father Phil. Helper also tells Davenport that Bergen is a drunk and that the sheriff has fixed some tickets regarding car accidents.

Rusty calls Davenport at the fire station and tells him to come to the Grant Junior High School. John Mueller, a student at the school has information that could be valuable to the case. Rusty and Dusty tell Davenport about Jim Harper's murder and says that Mueller may have information that could connect the cases. Davenport interviews the kid and finds out about the pornographic photo. Mueller tells the cops that Lisa LaCourt had the photograph and showed her parents. Davenport begins to see a connection between Jim Harper and Lisa LaCourt.

As Davenport is getting ready to leave the school he runs into Weather Karkinnen. While Davenport is speaking with Weather he spots a yellow-haired girl standing in the classroom door watching him.

Davenport takes John Mueller to his father's office where they discuss the photograph.

Davenport meets the crime scene lab chief, Tod Crane. Crane says that the arsonist used gas-oil premix to start the fire. The fuel had come from the LaCourt's boats and snowmobiles. Davenport tells Crane about the photograph and his suspicion that it was in the LaCourt house. Crane says that several areas with filing systems were set on fire



individually backing Davenport's theory about the photograph. Crane promises to look for the evidence.

Davenport tells the sheriff about the possible connection between Jim Harper and Lisa LaCourt. Davenport suggests talking to Jim Harper's father and the sheriff warns him that Russ Harper is a dangerous man. Davenport tells the sheriff that he has heard rumors that Father Bergen might be gay. The sheriff is horrified and denies the accusation.

Chapter six begins with the yellow-haired girl at home, doing her homework. The double wide trailer is shabby and poorly kept. The girl watches "Wheel of Fortune" while she does her math homework. The girl hears a truck in the driveway and recognizes the vehicle belonging to the man she loves. The man is not attractive and is prone to temper tantrums. The man has hit her and her brother, but always apologizes. The girl, her brother and sister lived in the trailer and the two younger siblings are a part of the man's sex group. The girl loves the man who was willing to teach her the ways of the world.

The Iceman walks into the yellow-haired girl's trailer. The girl tells the Iceman about Davenport being at the school. The Iceman drops his guard and begins to fire questions at the girl. The girl tells the Iceman that she also saw Davenport talking to Weather. The Iceman is suddenly alarmed.

In Chapter seven, the investigators gather in the sheriff's office. The cops had checked out the LaCourts and found everything was fine at home and at work. The Harper-LaCourt connection seems more plausible by the minute.

Davenport begins to dig into Jim Harper's file. The boy had been found hanging from a towel rack a gas station men's room as if he had accidentally strangled himself while attempting erotic asphyxiation. There was a note in the file from Gene Climpt requesting an autopsy. Davenport confirms his suspicions that Climpt is a good solid cop. Climpt makes it clear that he thinks Russ Harper is a worthless human being, and probably knows what happened to his son.

Weather comes into the sheriff's office and speaks to Davenport. Both make awkward comments and Weather agrees to have dinner with Davenport. Over dinner in the pair learns about each other's history.

Chapter eight begins with Davenport and Weather parting at the restaurant. Davenport meets the sheriff at the church. The sheriff says he has managed to get a search warrant for the Harper place. Gene Climpt and Henry Lacey would join in the search. On the way Davenport asks the sheriff about Bergen's drunk-driving tickets. The sheriff confesses to fixing the tickets. Davenport says that the priest had lied about being a good driver and it causes one to question the priest's honesty.

Davenport and the sheriff arrive at the rectory and find father Bergen drunk. Davenport continues to question Bergen, and it is obvious that Bergen is under great deal of stress. Davenport asks Bergen if he has any sort of relationship with the two firemen.



Bergen says the Dick Westrom doesn't like him and he doesn't really know Helper. The people who made the 911 call have already been eliminated as suspects. The sheriff calls Bergen's AA sponsor. One of the deputies calls and says that the Mueller kid is missing. Davenport blames himself thinking that questioning the kid at school was a bad move.

Davenport and the sheriff go to the Mueller house where a search party is being formed. The Muellers rail at Davenport for his part in the kid's disappearance. The sheriff tells Davenport to leave.

Davenport, Lacey and Climpt go to the Amoco station owned by Russ Harper. Harper is not at work and the deputies go to the house. Along the way Climpt and Lacey tells Davenport about Harper's arrest record for fighting in bars and minor involvement in drugs. Davenport also finds out that Harper has regained his rights and is allowed to carry a gun.

The deputies formulate a plan to rattle Harper. Davenport tells Climpt and Lacey that he does not intend to do anything to injure Harper, but they should act as if he would. Playing the crazy cop always works for Davenport. Harper is immediately hostile and Davenport is equally hostile and overly aggressive. Harper is clearly unstable and vacillates between being threatening and hostile to being curious. Eventually, the deputies search the house. In the basement Davenport finds a Polaroid of Jim Harper and a woman performing fellatio. The deputies question Harper and begin to rough him up when Lacey steps in to stop them. Climpt sends Lacey out to the truck and Davenport and Climpt cause Harper some pain before leaving the house. Climpt and Davenport appreciate each other's style.

Lacey observes that the Polaroid is the same type used for the photograph of Jim Harper and the unidentified man. It is obvious that someone took the picture as the angle is too high to be shot from a tripod.

Chapter nine begins with the deputies riding back into town. Davenport confides in Climpt that it may be his fault John Mueller is missing. Climpt reassures Davenport that there was no way he could have known what would happen. Davenport says he has dealt with psychos before and should have known better. Suddenly Davenport realizes that Weather may be in danger.

Davenport and Climpt go to Weather's house. The house is dark and Davenport is fearful that something has happened to the doctor. Weather finally answers the door and Davenport is relieved to see that she is safe. Davenport tells Weather about the missing kid and that she may be in danger. Climpt offers to send someone to keep an eye on Weather. Davenport says he is going to camp out in Weather's guest room. Climpt begins to tease Davenport about hitting on Weather because she is a fine looking woman. Climpt asks if Weather might date him even though he's an old man. Davenport realizes that Climpt is teasing him and must admit to himself that he is smitten.



The investigators regroup at the sheriff's office. John Mueller has not been found and Climplt surmises that if the boy is outside he is dead. Even without the wind chill factor it is 28° below zero and there is no way anyone could survive being outside for very long.

Davenport says that Weather might be in danger. Davenport believes that the killer has seen him talking to Mueller and Weather and it has put both of them in danger.

The sheriff calls in one of the workers in the office who identifies the woman in the photograph with Jim Harper.

Chapter 10 reverts to the Iceman, who is suffering from insomnia. The Iceman hears three vehicles pulling into the parking lot of the fire station. The Iceman gets out of bed and goes downstairs to see who is at the door. It is Russ Harper, Andy and Judy Schoenecker, and a man named Doug. Harper is hostile and demands to know if the Iceman killed the LaCourts. The Iceman denies it repeatedly and the voice in his head tells him to kill Harper. Harper tells the group that Davenport and Gene Climplt roughed him up earlier in the evening. Harper talks about being afraid of getting caught for having sex with juveniles. The Schoeneckers say they are leaving for Florida. Andy says that they have no intention of telling the police anything and want to get out. Doug tells Harper that they have no worries with Sheriff Carr, because he is incompetent. Perhaps something unfortunate should happen to Davenport.

The Iceman begins to worry about being caught. Russ Harper might make a good fall guy so he should not be killed. The Iceman thinks about John Mueller's body in the snow and decides it is time to take action again.

Chapters 5-10 Analysis

Bergen continues to act like an innocent man wrongly accused. The stress of the investigation is getting to the priest and it is not surprising that he has picked up the bottle. Bergen's AA sponsor is angry because Bergen had not had a drink in more than a year.

Davenport's interviews with the firemen are not helpful. Both swear to seeing Father Bergen right before the fire was called in and serve as each other's alibi. Davenport is still puzzled over the time frame and how to make it all fit into place.

Davenport feels as if there has been a significant break when he learns about the picture Lisa LaCourt has in her possession. The killer seems to have a motive. Davenport is somewhat unsettled by the poor yellow-haired girl who is intensely watching as he speaks to Weather in the hallway.

Although Davenport is a first rate investigator, he is completely oblivious to what is happening with Weather. This amuses Weather. Over dinner, the pair gets to know each other somewhat and share their general histories. Davenport begins to realize something is going on when he is stricken with fear that Weather may be in danger from the killer.



The deputies' trip to the Harper house proves to be beneficial in several ways. It is clear that Climpl despises Harper, who had no problem selling his child as a prostitute. Davenport quickly comes to the same conclusion, that Harper is a slimy, morally corrupt excuse for a human being. Climpl and Davenport enjoy causing Harper pain although it cannot make up for what the man has done.

Davenport finds a photo of Jim Harper with a woman, who is later identified as Judy Schoenecker.

The confrontation between the group and the Iceman convince the killer that something must be done. The Iceman is an accomplished liar and manages to appease the group although no one is completely convinced of the man's innocence. The Iceman decides it is time to act and he must kill Weather before he can get away.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary

Davenport goes to Weather's house and just falls asleep when the doctor wakes him as she is getting ready for work. Davenport offers to get out of bed but the sheriff is sending a deputy to escort Weather to work. Weather tells Davenport that John Mueller has not been found and they both know that the boy is dead.

Davenport takes a shower while he mulls over the case. Suddenly Davenport realizes that he has been vain in thinking that people were in danger because of him. It seems unlikely that Father Bergen would be mixed up in a sex ring and suddenly Davenport realizes that he could have been visiting one of the LaCourt's neighbors.

Davenport goes to the sheriff's office and asks about the neighbors. Three of the neighbors are single men. Davenport asks the sheriff if he knows the men, if any of them have ever been married or attends mass. Davenport tells the sheriff about his suspicion that Bergen may have been visiting one of the gay neighbors. Lacey says that his wife knows one of the men and she thinks he might be gay.

Davenport returns to the LaCourt house and learns that the crime scene techs have found a slug in the wall. The gun found on the scene was not used to kill Claudia LaCourt.

Davenport can't help but think about Weather and tells himself not to mess it up.

Crane tells Davenport how the fire started. The killer splashed premixed around the bottom of the water heater and stuffed a rag soaked with the premixed across the water heater's burner. The water was turned on just enough so that it would drip. When the water in the tank ran out the burner would light to heat more water, setting the rag on fire. Davenport realizes that this could explain the time discrepancy. Crane says there is no way of telling exactly how long it would have taken to empty the water heater.

Davenport calls his friend Elle, who is a nun as well as a fellow game freak. Davenport asks if she can find out any information about Father Bergen. Elle says she will think about it but cannot make promises since the inquiries could get her into trouble with the church.

Davenport calls a burglary specialist from Minneapolis to ask where the LaCourts' may have put the photograph. The specialist tells Crane that the most common place to hide something in plain sight is around the refrigerator. The specialist is right and a charred piece of paper is found underneath a refrigerator magnet. Only part of the photo is legible and Davenport examines the rest of the piece including a bad joke printed at the bottom. Crane says that almost anyone could publish a paper like this at home.



Davenport and the sheriff interview one of single men who live by the LaCourt house. The man turns out to be innocent but the inquiries have damaged his reputation enough that he will have to leave town.

Davenport meets Climpl at a restaurant and together they go to the Schoeneckers' house. Climpl is ready to break down the door when Davenport goes searching for a house key. The house is empty. The men find empty cartons for a Polaroid camera and a video camera. The house has been winterized and all of the videotapes are gone. Davenport searches the daughters' room, believing that one of them must have left something behind. Climpl finds the financial records including credit card slips in takes them in order to trace the family. Davenport finds a phone number tucked into a Bible. Davenport calls the number and finds that it is a sex abuse hot line.

Chapter 12 begins with Davenport arriving at Weather's house for dinner. In addition to dinner and conversation, the pair discusses the case.

Weather tells Davenport about Gene Climpl and his tragic past. Gene's wife was running a bath for their baby and got called away to answer the phone. The baby climbed into the tub and died from being scalded in the hot water. While Gene was making arrangements at the local funeral home, the wife committed suicide.

Davenport is almost asleep in the guest room when Weather wakes him. Weather says she saw a headlight from a snowmobile and also hears noises outside. Weather has a rifle and Davenport picks up his .45. Davenport tells Weather to call the police. The phone is dead and they know that the wires have been cut. Someone knocks at the door and tells Weather that there has been an accident and she is needed. Weather starts to head for the door and Davenport pulls her down. Weather starts toward the door again and a shotgun blast comes through the sliding glass doors. Davenport shoots back but the man gets away.

The sheriff and deputies arrive and the sheriff tells Davenport that Father Bergen is not home. The priest's snowmobile is in the garage but his car is gone. The sheriff has people out checking the bars.

Weather refuses to leave the house and someone comes to board up the window. Davenport pulls the sheriff aside to speak to him about the case. Davenport also wants the sheriff to know that he has been sleeping in the guest room, not with Weather.

Chapter 13 starts with the Iceman taking off across the lake from Weather's house. The Iceman had been surprised by returned fire, but knew that he had to get away. The Iceman begins to run through his options because he knows time is running out. The killer thinks about taking off and going to the Northwest Territories or Alaska where he would never be found. The Iceman decides that he needs to stay to kill Weather.

The Iceman goes to the yellow-haired girl's house.

Chapter 14 finds Davenport coming awake to a ringing phone. Irritated, Davenport goes to the kitchen to answer it. Davenport snaps at the person on the other end of the phone



and discovers it is Elle. Elle tells Davenport that he has another message on his machine. The sheriff's secretary had given the nun the number at Weather's house. Elle tells Davenport that she spoke with Bergen's friends, and he is definitely not gay. Since one of the friends was Bergen's confessor in college, the fellow priest would certainly know.

Davenport checks the machine and finds a message from the sheriff, who says John Mueller is dead. Davenport wakes up Weather, and they go to the crime scene. Much like Frank LaCourt, John Mueller's face is mutilated from an attack by coyotes. A medical examiner would have to confirm manner of death.

Crane tells Davenport that they got hit on the newspaper photograph. A cop from Milwaukee called to say he may know the publisher by the embellishments used in the type. Davenport calls the cop who works in sex crimes. Davenport and the cop make plans to meet.

Sheriff tells Davenport that Bergen has been found and confessed to his congregation that he had been out drinking and begs for forgiveness.

Davenport meets Domeier, the cop from Milwaukee. Domeier takes Davenport to meet the man who publishes porn paper. The publisher says he does not have the original photos or paste-ups, that he shreds everything when he is finished with it. The cops managed to get a copy of the newsprint photograph, which is poor quality.

Chapter 15 starts with the deputies looking at the photograph. No one is able to identify the subject. Weather looks at the photo and agrees that there is no way to identify the man from the poor quality picture. Weather tells Davenport that she is sure Russ Harper knows about sex ring.

Davenport begins to scheme about how to make something happen. The sheriff knows people at the radio station and the newspaper and Davenport thinks that might be a way to leak information to the public. Meanwhile, the police could arrest Russ Harper for child pornography.

The sheriff and Davenport go back to see Bergen. Bergen sticks with his story about the LaCourts.

Russ Harper is arrested for child pornography. While the way to jail Davenport tells Harper that someone will testify to get immunity, suggesting that Harper be the one to talk. The attorneys discuss Harper's bail and the man is furious that he must sit in jail over the weekend.

The people at the newspaper and radio are eager to help by releasing the stories about John Mueller and Harper's arrest.



Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Davenport is beginning to fall for Weather and is becoming slightly distracted trying to protect her from the killer. It is obvious that Davenport's instincts were correct when he thought Weather would be in danger. The attack at Weather's house proves that Davenport has cause to worry. Weather continues to be stubborn about not leaving Grant.

The Iceman is becoming rattled about the failed attempts on Weather. The man had not expected return fire from Weather's house and assumes that Davenport is guarding Weather, sleeping with her or both.

Crane's discovery about how the fire started makes perfect sense given the confusing time frame. Although the facts could clear Father Bergen, the man has gone missing which makes him look guilty. When Father Bergen finally returns and asks for forgiveness at mass, the sheriff is convinced that the priest is innocent.

The fact that the Schoeneckers left town in a hurry only confirms that they were involved in the sex ring with Harper and the killer. Davenport thinks they will turn up. It is disturbing for the cops when Davenport discovers the sex abuse action line phone number in the girls' room.

The case is taking a toll on the sheriff and Davenport is worried that the man might crack.

Davenport comes to rely on Climplt as his right hand, respecting the man's abilities.

The idea to get the media involved in the case is a good one and will surely cause the Iceman to act.

Elle's news about Father Bergen unsettles Davenport. The cop doesn't want the father to be guilty but something is still not quite right and Davenport cannot put his finger on it.

The starvation of the animals continues to play a significant part in the story as the coyotes and deer are suffering and entering into areas they would typically avoid. The bodies mutilated by the coyotes are difficult to identify on sight.

Domeier proves to be a great help when he takes Davenport to meet the paper's publisher. The man is a slime ball and neither Domeier nor Davenport wants anything to do with him. The man does not offer much help and the cops know that it will be difficult, if not impossible to identify the man from the printed picture.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

Weather is finishing her shift at the hospital and meets with the deputy who will escort her home. It took a while to convince Weather she needed an escort but the cops, particularly Davenport, had insisted.

Weather and Deputy Bruun chat on the way to Weather's house and are fired upon with a shotgun. The Iceman had been stalking them from the hospital and was determined to kill Weather this time. The Iceman begins to shoot and smashes out the windows. Weather hits the floor and Bruun continues to drive, even after he is hit. Bruun is a dedicated and rugged man who will not let Weather be harmed. Bruun fights to keep the SUV on the road and the pair makes it back to the hospital. The Iceman takes off, his mission failing once again.

Weather is unable to tell how badly Bruun is hurt. The deputy loses control of the car when he is unable to make the sharp turn into the hospital parking lot. The vehicle overturns. Weather is severely bruised and Bruun is rushed into surgery. Weather performs the surgery with assistance and the deputy will recover. Weather does not need to be told that if Bruun had collapsed, they both would be dead.

Davenport is somewhat embarrassed that the entire town knows he is sleeping with Weather.

Davenport tells Weather about how his vanity had distracted him. The killer was not after Davenport, he was after Weather. Davenport is not sure why but Weather either knows the killer or knows something about him that could lead to an arrest. Weather has no idea who or what it could be.

Chapter 17 begins with Father Bergen at the rectory preparing Sunday's sermon. The priest is surprised when the Iceman comes to the door. The Iceman is completely covered so no one can see his face. When the Iceman pulls out a gun and reveals himself to Bergen, Bergen is baffled. The Iceman asks Bergen about the LaCourts. Bergen repeats the same story he has told since day one. The Iceman forces Bergen to drink a fifth of whiskey that has been laced with sleeping pills. After Bergen is rendered unconscious, the Iceman goes to the priest's office and writes a suicide note, confessing to the murders.

Chapter 18 covers the finding of Phil Bergen's body. The sheriff believes the suicide note and is devastated and in shock. Crane is on hand when Davenport and Weather arrive and says that the signature on the note seems contrived. Weather agrees with Crane due to the way Bergen is laid out on his bed. Things do not add up. The cops find the priest's sermon and know that Bergen would not have committed suicide a short time after writing the powerful sermon.



Chapter 19 reverts to the Iceman at the yellow-haired girl's house. The girl asks if the Iceman killed the LaCourts. Harper thinks the Iceman did it. The Iceman does not confess to the girl, but she knows he did it. The Iceman teaches the girl to shoot.

Chapter 20 finds Russ Harper in jail, putting up a fight to get out. The sheriff tries to make a deal but Harper believes that the cops have no evidence. The FBI arrives and no one is happy about their presence although Davenport is convinced that he can find something for the feds to do so they will stay out of the way.

Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Weather is resigned to having an escort wherever she goes. Being under Davenport's watchful eye at home is fine since the two have become romantically involved. Weather knows Bruun is an extremist but the man is a good cop and will protect her. Weather realizes that her opinions about Bruun's beliefs have no place in this case.

The Iceman is escalating in his behavior. The man's actions are becoming bolder and at the same time, reckless. The attempt on Weather's life while Bruun is driving her home shows that the killer is becoming desperate. The Iceman is angry that he has failed again and that Weather is still alive. Time is running out and the Iceman must decide to stay or to run.

It is miraculous that Bruun is able to keep the SUV on the road, saving Weather and himself from the Iceman's attack. Weather experiences many mixed emotions about it all, from grief to anger to fear.

The death of Father Bergen is utterly devastating for Sheriff Carr and other members of the parish and community. It is a mortal sin to commit suicide although some believe that it would be understandable considering that most of the people in the town had already convicted Father Bergen in their minds regarding the LaCourt murders. The faked suicide is easily uncovered by Crane, Davenport and Weather. The death is especially puzzling to everyone because there is no apparent motive for the murder. Even Father Bergen was baffled by the reason behind the Iceman's plan.

The yellow-haired girl has no idea how dangerous the Iceman is and how she is placing herself in danger.

The plan to jail Russ Harper was a good one and it worked in the way of stirring up the town.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

Russ Harper is released from jail and must find a way back home. Once at the gas station, Harper finds that the station is closed because the town is angry with him and someone has flattened his tires. Even the local bar refuses to serve Harper.

Harper goes to see the Iceman at the yellow-haired girl's house. The yellow-haired girl and the Iceman strip search Harper and then tied him up. Harper is taken into the woods, where he confesses to killing his own son after having sex with him. The yellow-haired girl shoots and kills Harper.

Chapter 22 begins with Lucas and Weather enjoying a Sunday morning. Before going skiing, Davenport goes into see the Sheriff and finds out that Harper is missing. There is also no sign of the Schoeneckers. Davenport says that they need to work out the remaining knots in the case.

On Monday, Davenport has a conversation with Dan Jones, the newspaper editor. Off the record, Davenport tells Jones that Bergen is most likely not the killer. Davenport also says that the Feds have been called in although no one likes the thought of interference. Davenport and Jones discuss the photo. Davenport says that the original and the paste-up have been destroyed so there's no chance of getting a better copy than the one that was printed. Jones suggests getting the offset negative, something Davenport didn't know existed.

Davenport arranges to meet with Domeier to go back to the publisher's apartment and get the negative. To save time and possibly avoid the oncoming storm, Davenport flies to Milwaukee.

The publisher does not have the negative but takes the cops to the man who printed the paper. The man has the negative and prints a new, clearer copy for Davenport. Davenport notices something strange about the guy's leg and realizes that is why Weather is in danger. Davenport checks with the local medical examiner and discovers that his suspicions were correct. The man had been badly burned and the photo showed skin grafts.

Chapter 23 details Davenport's trip back to Grant, where he shows the photo to Weather. Weather instantly recognizes the Iceman as Duane Helper, one of the firemen who spotted Father Phil coming from the LaCourt house.

Davenport meets Carr and the other deputies at the Sheriff's office. Instead of prematurely grabbing Helper, they decide that it would be best to get Westrom and his wife, to get information and also protect them. The sheriff finds out that Westrom did not actually see Father Phil, only taillights of a truck. Westrom realizes that there was not a



trailer attached and therefore it must have been someone else. All of the pieces are falling into place.

Chapter 24 returns to the Iceman playing cards at the firehouse. Davenport and Climpl go to the firehouse to give false hope to the Iceman while also letting him know that they discovered Bergen had been murdered.

Chapter 25 finds a Wisconsin state trooper staking out the firehouse to see if the Iceman makes a move. The Iceman leaves the firehouse and heads for the hospital. The hospital is all but deserted due to the blizzard.

Weather is to be used as bait to draw out the Iceman but the Iceman goes into the woods behind the hospital where he is followed by Rusty and Dusty. Davenport hears shots.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

Russ Harper gets angry when he has to pay for his deviant misdeeds. Sitting in jail only makes him crazier and seeing the proof of resentment from the town makes it worse. Harper demands to see the Iceman even though the Iceman says it isn't safe. When Harper goes to the yellow-haired girls' house, he believes that the Iceman is taking precautions in case Harper made a deal with the county attorney. It is unclear if the yellow-haired girl understands that the Iceman intends to kill Harper. The yellow-haired girl is giddy with excitement and anticipation and is clearly willing to do anything the Iceman says.

Davenport senses the end of the case is near. If only one of the four or five puzzling details remaining can be worked out, everything will unravel and fall into place.

Dan Jones' innocent comment about the offset negative is exactly what Davenport needs to solve the case. Domeier is more than happy to help out when it comes to nailing one of the people responsible for the publication of the porn paper and to help stop the murders in Grant.

Davenport almost feels sorry for the guy who prints the paper but leaves his punishment in Domeier's hands.

Everything clicks when Davenport sees the sharper image of the photograph. If the man was from Grant and had been injured seriously enough to have a skin graft or any kind of surgery, Weather would have been the one to take care of the man during his hospital stay. It is obvious to Davenport that Weather will be able to identify the killer.

The Iceman knows that there will be at least one cop protecting Weather. The Iceman believes that he is smarter than the cops and will be able to shoot Weather and get away on his sled.

It is surprising that Davenport would permit Weather to be a target.

Rusty and Dusty show their small town curiosity when they go into the woods to find the Iceman. Davenport is incensed when the men ignore his command to drive through only once.



Chapters 26-31

Chapters 26-31 Summary

The Iceman returns to the firehouse and watches television, deciding to wait for Weather to get off work. The killer knows he cannot get to Weather anywhere but at the hospital, when she is walking to her car. The Iceman has only slight concerns about the shooting in that the blizzard will not allow him to use a rifle and a scope. The Iceman will have to get close enough to use a handgun.

The Iceman gets to the hospital and goes directly to Jane's woodlot where he will wait. The Iceman hears Rusty and Dusty on their sleds and thinks nothing of it until they stop. The Iceman realizes that they know who he is and what he is about to do. The Iceman shoots Rusty and Dusty.

Chapter 27 begins with complete chaos at the hospital as an ambulance prepares to drive into the woodlot. Davenport and Climpt check the bodies and find the two deputies are dead.

By this time, the Iceman is eight miles away, being tracked by the Feds who have a tracking device on the Iceman's truck and sled. The sheriff, deputies and feds are all in contact and track the Iceman. Weather, who has disobeyed as usual and is riding with the Sheriff, says that the Iceman is probably at the Harris house.

Everyone convenes at a farm house about half a mile from the Harris house. A couple and their son allow the cops to use the house to make a new plan. Davenport borrows snowshoes and a compass from the family.

The cops get to the Harris house and see the Iceman's sled but no other vehicle. The Sheriff plans to have the yellow-haired girl's sister call the house and warn the girl about the Iceman and to tell her to get out.

Chapter 28 finds the Iceman sitting inside the Harris house with the yellow-haired girl. The Iceman is severely agitated and knows that he has no choice but to run.

In Chapter 29, Carr makes a deal with the Iceman and promises to give him an SUV. Davenport attempts to distract the Iceman so Climpt can get a shot but the plan fails.

The Suburban arrives and Carr delivers it as promised. The Iceman has the yellow-haired girl siphon out the gas and the two take off on the sled.

The Iceman tries unsuccessfully to lose the cops and fails. Eventually, the killer decides that he will have to go on foot. The yellow-haired girl is upset but the Iceman promises to come back for her.



Davenport and Climpt see the Iceman getting away on foot. The cops ditch the sleds and fire at the Iceman. The yellow-haired girl shoots Davenport in the throat and he goes down.

Chapter 30 begins with the Iceman getting shot in the back by one of the cops. The Iceman kept going until he fell into a hole and could not get up.

Weather uses a knife to make a cut in Davenport's throat and it allows him to breathe. Help is on the way.

The Iceman realizes that the cops will not go away and he must give up. After all, it is possible to escape from prison. The Iceman only had to wait until the cops found him.

The Iceman feels a sense of relief when someone touched his arm. The someone turns out to be something - a coyote. The coyotes, attracted by blood, find food. The Iceman screams as the coyotes eat him alive.

Chapter 31 finds Lucas Davenport in the hospital recovering from the gunshot wound. Weather is there and tells Davenport that the Schoeneckers have been found in Baja. The parents are refusing to talk but one of the daughters is telling all.

Sheriff Carr visits to give an update on the rest of the crew. Gene Climpt is holed up in Davenport's cabin and may never recover from the adventure. Harper's truck has been found but there is no sign of the man.

Weather tells Davenport he may be in trouble because it is obvious that he is falling in love with her. Davenport agrees.

Chapters 26-31 Analysis

The Iceman is trying hard not to panic. Against the advice of the voice in his head, the Iceman decides once again to kill Weather before taking off for the Yukon. The Iceman still believes that he can outsmart the cops and that it will be relatively simple to get to Weather and then take off. There is a friend he can go to and if need be, the Iceman can hide out at the friend's cabin or take his SUV. If not, the Iceman will kill the man and make a getaway.

No one ever questions why the yellow-haired girl is still in the house. The hostage situation seems to be real enough that the cops take it at face value. Regardless, the girl is always in the way so that no one can fire.

Sheriff Carr takes a great chance by walking up the driveway to speak to the Iceman. Carr tries to talk the man into surrendering to no avail. Davenport knows that his ploy to distract the Iceman is probably not going to work but must try.

The Iceman is not thinking quite so clearly when it comes to figuring out how the cops are tracking the sled into the woods, despite all of his efforts to escape.



The yellow-haired girl shows naivete when she believes that the Iceman will come back because of love. The only thing the girl will get for total devotion is death.

Davenport is equal parts surprised and embarrassed when the yellow-haired girl shoots him in the throat.

Weather realizes the depth of her feelings for Davenport when he is shot but keeps it together and takes care of the patient. This also shows Weather's professionalism and determination.

The Iceman is the victim of karma when he is attacked and eaten alive by the coyotes. Even at the end, the Iceman seems to feel no remorse for any of the things he has done.

Davenport feels bad for Climp's state but understands what the man is going through.

Although Davenport may return to Minneapolis and police work, Weather will still be in the picture.



Characters

Lucas Davenport

Lucas Davenport is a first-rate cop from Minneapolis. Davenport is tall, dark complected with the beginnings of gray in his hair and deep set blue eyes. Davenport is handsome in a rugged sort of way. Scars on his face add to the mystique. Davenport is in his 30s and somewhat of a loner.

Davenport quit the police force and retreated to his cabin in the North Woods of Wisconsin. Davenport has decided to give up the politics of the Minneapolis Police Department and focus on his other passion - creating computer games. Writing games has provided a small fortune for Davenport and although it's challenging and rewarding, there is something missing. Davenport discovers that going back to police work may be just what he needs to relieve his boredom.

As a cop, Davenport is ruthless and relentless, known for being hard and volatile. Many years as a cop have given Davenport a reputation that both helps and hinders his work.

Davenport seems to have a few close friends. One of which includes Elle Krueger, a college friend who has become a nun. Elle, also known as the Sister Mary Joseph, is a devout Catholic, who lives by the book but is generally willing to help Lucas with his police work.

Davenport tends to keep his own counsel and the only personal information he routinely gives is that he has a daughter.

Duane

Duane "the Iceman" Helper is the serial killer in "Winter Prey." The Iceman is in his mid-30s to early 40s, slightly overweight, with a fair complexion. By all appearances, the Iceman is normal and generally above suspicion. Underneath, there are voices in the Iceman's head that instruct him to kill and destroy. The Iceman refers to the voices as "The Beast." The Beast causes the Iceman to behave irrationally, supposedly out of self-preservation. It is obvious that the man is a sociopath with a troubled history.

The Iceman's main focus is on child porn, with both males and females. The man and a select group of people have formed a group in which they teach minors how to excel at various sexual techniques. The Iceman makes a fatal mistake when he lets one of his students take a photo of them together in the nude. As a result of the photograph being published, the boy dies and several other murders follow. The Iceman begins to panic, which will surely lead to his downfall.

Throughout the story, the Iceman has inside information from his job at the local fire station. The sheriff's office attempts to keep the details of the case from the general



public and is baffled as to how the killer seems to know their every move. It is this inside information that keeps the Iceman safe in the beginning of the story.

Weather Karkinnen

Weather Karkinnen is the local doctor and county coroner for Ojibwa County. Weather it is also Lucas' love interest.

Sheldon

Sheldon "Shelly" Carr is the sheriff of Ojibwa County and heads the investigation of the serial murders.

Jim Harper

Jim Harper is the boy who posed in the photograph with the Iceman and was later murdered.

Russ Harper

Russ Harper is Jim Harper's father, the man who sold his son as a prostitute.

Gene Climpt

Gene Climpt is a deputy sheriff who assists Davenport in the murder case.

Henry Lacey

Henry Lacey is a deputy sheriff who assists Davenport in the murder case.

Father Phil Bergen

Father Phil Bergen is the alcoholic Catholic priest in Grant.

The LaCourt Family

The LaCourt family is the family who comes into possession of the pornographic photo and is murdered.



Objects/Places

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Minneapolis, Minnesota is the home to Lucas Davenport. Minneapolis and its sister city, St. Paul are often referred to as the Twin Cities. Residents often refer to either or both as "The Cities."

Minneapolis is a fairly large city located at the head of the Mississippi River. For Davenport, Minneapolis is home and the site of the police department where he spent many years as a detective. It is also the site of his new offices for the computer gaming company, and location of his daughter, Sarah. Davenport loves the city and all it has to offer, from the Mall of America to the bustling city streets and the endless number of places and things to see and do.

Although Minneapolis is home to Davenport, the man appreciates the quiet solitude of the North Woods, which is why he bought a cabin on one of its lakes. While it is nice to get away, Davenport will surely return to the Cities.

Weather Karkinnen also lived in Minneapolis where she worked as a surgeon before returning to Grant.

Grant, Wisconsin

Grant, Wisconsin is a small town located in Ojibway County, Wisconsin in a region known as the North Woods. The area is rural with many desolate stretches of road. As an idyllic spot for snowmobilers, there are lakes and numerous trails in the woods that run for long distances.

As small towns typically do not have police departments, the law in Grant consists of Sheriff Sheldon "Shelly" Carr and his deputies, including Gene Climpt, Henry Lacey, Russell Hinks and Dustin Bane. There is also a small fire department, with Duane Helper as the only full time fireman. The rest of the firemen are volunteers and part-timers. Weather Karkinnen is the local surgeon and also functions as the county coroner.

The oldest part of the town was built atop a hill which now overlooks a highway and two hundred of the residents' houses. The terrain can be rugged in parts and along with the snow requires most of the residents to drive trucks or SUVs.

Davenport is amused and confused by small towns, where everyone knows everyone else and all they do. Gossip is as valuable as the official news and neighbors can count on one another for help in a time of need.



Ojibway County

A rural Wisconsin County, where the story takes place.

North Woods

Area of Ojibwa County in Wisconsin and site of Davenport's cabin

Weather's House

Home to Weather Karkinnen, a large house located on the lake. Site of an attack on Weather and Lucas.

LaCourt Home

Home to Claudia, Frank and Lisa LaCourt; site of the murders and arson.

Grant Courthouse

Location of Shelly Carr's office.

Fire Station

Workplace and home to the Iceman.

Harper's House

Home to Russ and Jim Harper; location of the pornographic photos.

Church Rectory

Home to Father Phil Bergen and site of the rector's murder.



Themes

Rural Living

Lucas Davenport was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota and has always lived in the area known as "The Cities." Davenport has spent time in other places, mostly for work, but they have always been metropolitan. Rural living is a bit of a shock for a city boy, particularly when it comes to relating to other people. In a city, one can be virtually anonymous. Although Davenport is a well known figure in Minneapolis, he is afforded privacy when necessary. In a rural town, it is almost impossible to be removed from the activities in the town. More importantly, it is utterly impossible to be unknown and to be left out of the news and gossip that is part of small town life.

In Grant, Davenport finds that the lack of conveniences can be somewhat annoying. Living in the city affords one the luxury of going to one of a hundred stores at any time of the day or night, while places like Grant have one hardware store, a couple of gas stations, and a grocery store. For any other necessities, one typically has to drive to a nearby town that serves the entire area.

Davenport is somewhat embarrassed by the whole town knowing his business in regards to Weather. The cop is also concerned about the inexperience of the police and how their relationships with suspects may interfere with the investigation.

Child Exploitation

A main theme in "Winter Prey" is child exploitation. It begins with Jim Harper, being sold by his father to men and women who want to have sex with minors. The father has no moral compass when it comes to his son and the boy's welfare. Russ Harper only cares about money and does not care that he is selling Jim to a group of people who only want sex.

The group of people involved in the child exploitation ring, Russ Harper, Duane "The Iceman" Helper, Andy and Judy Schoenecker, and a man named Doug, believe that they cannot be caught or punished for their misdeeds. The children involved include Jim Harper, the Schoeneckers' two teenage daughters, Ginny Harris the yellow-haired girl, and Mark Harris.

The group tries to convince the children that they are acting as teachers, instructing the kids to perform every sexual act possible with the aim of creating experts. Except for the Schoeneckers' daughters, the other kids seem willing.

The exploitation turns to pornography with the picture of Jim Harper with the Iceman and one with Judy Schoenecker.



Trust

Trust is a strong theme in "Winter Prey." The Sheriff must trust in his deputies' abilities to do their job as they must trust in the sheriff. Together, they put their trust in Davenport when they realize that the serial murders are beyond their scope.

As a seasoned cop, trust is not something that comes easily to Davenport. This can be seen in the reserved way the detective behaves with the sheriff and deputies until he gets to know them. It is a big step for Davenport to put his complete trust in Gene Climpt.

Sheriff Carr struggles with trust when it comes to Father Phil Bergen. Father Phil is Carr's priest and therefore instills trust in the parishioners. However, when it seems like Bergen might be a suspect in the LaCourt murders, Carr's trust may cause him to overlook vital facts and evidence. This complete trust and faith in Bergen confuses and worries Davenport.

Weather Karkinnen grew up in Grant and seems to have complete and total trust in the town and its people. Weather's openness allows her to begin to earn Davenport's trust, something that is difficult for the man to give. Davenport shows complete and total trust after Weather saves his life by cutting his throat open so that he can breathe after being shot by the yellow-haired girl.

Weather returns trust to Davenport when he reveals that he may return to the Cities but wants to continue their relationship.

The members of the sex ring trust one another until the very end when the Iceman begins to panic and kills Harper. The trust cannot combat the fear within the Iceman.



Style

Point of View

The point of view used in "Winter Prey" by John Sandford is third person omniscient. The use of third person in this particular work allows the reader to have complete insight into the actions of all characters, to go between various scenarios, and be privy to the thoughts of the characters particularly that of the Iceman, who hears voices in his head.

Sandford has spent many years as a crime journalist. The experience as a newspaper reporter shows the complete attention to detail that can only be seen in the third person. The use of third person as opposed to first person often takes away from the individual character experience but in the case of "Winter Prey," Sandford manages to fully capture the character of each person as well as the character of the small town. Sandford manages to capture the internal thoughts of the characters through third person that is often not possible. This is especially important with the Iceman, who often forms his actions using the voice in his head referred to as "The Beast."

Sandford also manages to work in a newspaper reporter who has information valuable to the police. The information is delivered in an off handed way, surprising Davenport. The point of view allows the reader to get a sense of the situation as a whole, not limiting the narrative or dialogue by relying on first person.

Setting

The main setting used in "Winter Prey" by John Sandford is Grant, Wisconsin. Grant is a small town located in Ojibway County in the North Woods. The area is rural and rugged, ensuring that all of its residents are well prepared for frigid weather and blizzards.

The town is like most small towns in America in that everyone knows each other and everything that goes on in the town. Neighbors watch out for one another and help when needed with no questions asked. There is a sense of safety in the small town, which is completely shattered when the murders begin to occur.

Lucas Davenport has to get used to being in a small town after living in Minneapolis, where he was born and raised. The concept is strange but not altogether unpleasant. The people are not backwoods but are not as experienced as Davenport in matters like homicide.

Other settings in the story include various locations in the town, including the houses belonging to the LaCourts, Harrises, Weather, and Harper. Also mentioned are the church rectory, the sawmill, and various outdoor locations from the lake to the woods. There is also mention of Davenport's cabin as well as references to the hospital where Weather works.



Sandford pays particular attention to the weather in relationship to the setting. For example, Sandford details the terrain and snow when the Iceman is riding dangerously fast through the woods. The frozen lake and image of deep snow drifts also lend an air of authenticity to the story.

Language and Meaning

"Winter Prey" by John Sandford contains a great deal of dialogue between the characters. Sandford manages to use some regional phrasing as well as everyday jargon that would be found in a small town. Sandford's work as a crime reporter is clearly revealed in the work as the author explains many aspects of the crime scenes as well as police procedure. However, this is done in such a way that it is not overly technical. Sandford refrains from using an excessive amount of technical terms. When the author does refer to technical terms, procedures and items, there is always an explanation that accompanies the term.

Additionally, Sandford fully expresses the personality of each character through their use or misuse of speech. One example can be found in Sheriff Carr. As a devout Catholic, Carr tries not to swear nor does he permit it in his presence. Instead, the sheriff is likely to use terms like "gol-darn" whereas other cops are more likely to use saltier language and expletives. However, when the sheriff is upset, he lets the expletives fly.

That language regarding computer systems dates the work to a degree; however, unless one is intimately familiar with the current systems and applications, it would not be readily noticed.

Structure

"Winter Prey" by John Sandford is a work of fiction. The book is 338 pages in length, separated into 31 chapters. The shortest chapter is four pages in length; the longest chapter is 55 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is 11 pages.

The chapters tend to switch back and forth between the characters and the narrative. This also occurs within the chapters where the sections are separated by page breaks. In chapter 1, for example, the chapter begins with the Iceman in the woods on a sled. The page breaks and leads into the introduction of Claudia LaCourt. The next two breaks switch back and forth detailing happenings at the LaCourt house, one involving Claudia LaCourt; one involving Frank LaCourt.

Chapter 2 is designed in the same way, with several sections introducing the rest of the main characters, including Lucas Davenport, Sheriff Shelly Carr, various deputies, and Dr. Weather Karkinnen.

The majority of the chapters are designed with page breaks in order to separate the narrative from the dialogue as well as to separate one scene from the next or a change

in perspective. There are exceptions with some of the shorter chapters. Those particular chapters focus on one specific person or incident without any breaks in action or dialogue to warrant a page break.



Quotes

"In a storm, and especially at night, Claudia LaCourt's house seemed to slide out to the edge of the world."

Page 7

"The Iceman was befuddled by the mechanics of the assassination; if he'd had a sense of humor, he might have laughed."

Page 47

"When you're a cop, you're always running into rich assholes that treat you like some kind of servant."

Page 105

"You keep thinking, if I can just clear away the last thing, if I can just make it through next Wednesday or next month or through the winter, then I can get my life going."

Page 106

"The slights and the insults of the day would keep him awake for hours, plotting revenge; and there were few days without slights and insults."

Page 142

"Harper had a craziness, a killer feel about him: scars on his shiny forehead, lumps."

Page 144

"The crew had found a badly deformed slug in the kitchen wall. Judging from the base and the weight, allowing for some loss of the jacketing material, the techs thought it was probably a .44 Magnum."

Page 155

"The window exploded, showering the room with glass, and a finger of fire poked through at Weather."

Page 179

"The gunfight had surprised him, but not frightened him."

Page 185

"Bergen was lying face up on his bed, his head propped on the pillow, his eyes open, but filmed-over with death."

Page 238



"For what I've done, I will be punished; but I know the punishment will end and that I will see you all again, in heaven, cleansed of sin."

Page 239

"They wanted to believe that the troubles were over, that the case was solved."

Page 244

"His voice rose to a near-hysterical pitch, but the gun never left yellow-haired girl's head."

Page 314

Topics for Discussion

Do you think Davenport's vanity regarding the victims hindered the investigation?

Do you think Grant will ever be able to recover from the serial murders?

How do you think the murder of Father Bergen will affect Shelly Carr and the Church?

Do you think the yellow-haired girl's childhood led her to the volatile relationship with the Iceman?

What might have happened if the Shoneckers' daughters had reported the sexual abuse?

Do you think Shelly's reluctance to accuse Father Bergen stemmed from blind faith, a cop's instinct or both?

Do you think Sheriff Carr's grief hindered his ability to complete the investigation?

Do you think the Ojibwa Sheriff's Office would have been able to solve the case without Davenport's help?