
BASED ON HUNDREDS
OF EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS, THE
DEFINITIVE ACCOUNT
OF THE MURDERS OF
FOUR UNFORGETTABLE
COLLEGE STUDENTS BY A
COLD-BLOODED KILLER

The Idaho Four

*An
American
Tragedy*

James
Patterson

Vicky
Ward



The
Idaho
Four

An American Tragedy

James Patterson
and Vicky Ward



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I couldn't wrap my head around—there can't be this kind of evil in our midst... I just couldn't bring myself to do it, to think that. There's no way. This person *can't* be amongst us.

—Evan Ellis, *Morning News*,
Pullman Radio (Washington)

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LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

Authors' Note

This book reads like fiction, but none of it is made up. Every detail in these pages has been meticulously sourced through interviews or has been factually documented.

Bryan Kohberger has been charged with murdering Ethan Chapin, Xana Kernodle, Maddie Mogen, and Kaylee Goncalves, who became known as the Idaho Four, on November 13, 2022. His criminal trial is set to begin in August 2025. Of course, he is innocent until proven guilty.

The book does not offer a view on what the verdict will be. Rather, it is the story of four tragic murders and the impact of the crimes on a small American town.

This book could not have been written without the help and support of hundreds of people, including the 320 individually interviewed (some many times) by Vicky Ward.

We'd especially like to thank the victims' friends and family for giving us so much precious time, hospitality, and insight: the Chapin family and Hunter Johnson for sharing about Ethan; the Goncalves family for sharing about Kaylee; Ben Mogen and Kim Cheeley, aka Deedle, for sharing about Maddie; and the Alandt family—Karen, Matt, and Emily, Xana's best friend—for sharing so much about Xana.

Moscow, Idaho, police chief James Fry, now retired, generously gave his time and shared his insights on dealing with the most horrific crime of his career amid worldwide media scrutiny. Importantly, he did this without discussion of any of the specifics of this case and investigation, per the gag order put in place by a local judge. The

supporting details are drawn from public documents, including court records—and from elsewhere.

Thanks also to Cathy Mabbutt, the Moscow coroner, and retired police officers Paul Kwiatkowski and Brannon Jordan.

At the University of Idaho, thank you to dean of students Blaine Eckles as well as to Kelly Quinnett and Bruce Pitman.

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Above all for introductions to Moscow, Idaho, residents and culture, thanks go to psychologist Dr. Rand Walker. Without him, none of this would have been possible.

Much appreciation to those who opened the doors of the city of Moscow: Mayor Art Bettge; Pat Greenfield, owner of Bucer's coffeehouse; Christ Church pastor Doug Wilson and his son Nate Wilson; Marc Trivelpiece, owner of the Corner Club; and attorneys Mike Pattinson and Wendy Olson.

For invaluable insight into the Pullman, Washington, perspective, thank you to Washington State University police chief Gary Jenkins; former Pullman mayor Glenn Johnson; Pullman Radio host Evan Ellis; and WSU alumni Ben Roberts, Cassie Handziak, and Deola Adetunji.

For a sense of Kohberger's life in the Poconos, thanks to Mark and Jack Baylis, Connie Saba, Josh Ferraro, Chad Petipren, Brittany Slaven, Jesse Harris, John Gress, Bob Himes, and Casey Arntz.

And for taking us into the online community of their University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook group page, thanks to Kristine Cameron and Alina Smith.

Here is the story of the Idaho Four, their young lives cut short by unspeakable violence. It's an exploration of a complex criminal investigation—and a timeless portrait of the worst and best in us.

—*James Patterson and Vicky Ward*

PROLOGUE

One

*Wenatchee, Washington
November 13, 2022*

Chief, we've got a bad situation."

James Fry, the God-fearing chief of the Moscow, Idaho, Police Department, picks up the call from Captain Tyson Berrett informing him of a mass homicide: four murders at 1122 King Road.

Berrett has the inside track. Ava and Emily, two of the kids in the group sitting outside the rental house, work at the football stadium. The Kibbie Dome is under Berrett's purview, so he knows them well.

It's Sunday, and Fry is about an hour into the four-hour drive back from an overnight visit with a friend in Wenatchee, Washington, 150 miles east of Seattle. Whatever has happened, whoever the victims are, it already feels too close for comfort.

In the passenger seat, listening, is Julie Fry. The chief's whip-smart wife of thirty-odd years also happens to be the newly elected Latah County clerk. Chief Fry will later say he should have let Julie drive, but now it's all he can do to absorb what Berrett tells him.

Four young people, likely UI students, stabbed in their bedrooms? In their beds? In a residence that's part of a large cluster of student housing right on the campus line? And no one heard a thing?

Fry's put in thirty years on the force. The common assumption about small-town police chiefs is that they have no experience with murder, but this is not Fry's first brush with homicides on campus.

In 2007, when he was still a sergeant, he worked on three homicides in just one year. One involved a University of Idaho student, David Boss, who was shot by a former classmate. In 2011,

as a lieutenant, Fry oversaw the investigation of another university tragedy. That summer, psychology professor Ernesto Bustamante, who had a history of mental illness, fatally shot Katy Benoit, a twenty-two-year-old graduate student he'd previously dated, outside her home, then later turned the gun on himself.

Even so, Fry already knows that this one is different.

He knows this is going to test the department in an unprecedented way. He also knows that this is too big for Moscow to handle without help. In a rural area like this, there's a general view that it's all hands on deck.

He's going to need support from the state. Probably the FBI.

But first things first...

It's not his job to run point at the scene of the crime. When he was a detective, which was not so long ago, he headed up investigations, but now he's chief, and chiefs who get in the way of their teams can really screw things up. His role today is to stay in close touch with his officers, provide whatever support is needed.

Part of leading, Fry believes, is trusting and delegating. But Fry knows that when adrenaline is running high, anyone can forget things, so he rattles off a punch list to Tyson Berrett, realizing from experience that his captain is out in front of him.

"Have you reached Bill?" he asks, referring to veteran county prosecutor Bill Thompson, who has never lost a case. In their parallel careers, the chief and the prosecutor have worked every crime scene together. They meet every single day at eight a.m. Fry's belief in Thompson—the only prosecutor in Idaho who has ever won a murder conviction in the absence of a dead body—is unwavering.

"On his way," Berrett says.

"Forensics?" The two forensics officers, Lawrence Mowery and Andrew Fox, are Fry's appointments. "State?" A scene as big as this needs help from the Idaho State Police forensics team, based in Lewiston, about thirty miles south of Moscow.

"On their way."

"Who have you got there?"

Berrett tells him that Mitch Nunes was the first officer on scene.

And at this, Fry blanches. "My heart broke," he said later. His

thirty-seven-man department runs like a family. Twenty-two-year-old Nunes is like a son to Fry, a baby.

He knows that his youngest officer will never be able to erase from his mind the horrific crime scene that he's just witnessed. That he will be forever altered. And Fry will need to find Nunes—and his wife—the resources to cope with the trauma.

Mental health is not something that was discussed when Fry was a rookie, and he believes that was a mistake. PTSD, according to Fry's longtime ride-along partner and best friend, Paul Kwiatkowski, lingers as he sorts through memories that won't dim.

Fry is going to take care of his young officers and their families. Make sure they feel supported.

Speaking of...

"Has the university been notified?"

"Affirmative."

"Where's Brett Payne?"

Two months prior, Fry promoted Brett Payne, a thirty-two-year-old cop and military veteran whom he hired in 2020, to detective corporal—a new position in the department that Fry created for a reason.

Ordinarily, detectives are the higher rank of sergeant. But Fry had been faced with a specific set of challenges—he had to run a small department at a time when applications for jobs in law enforcement were dwindling (this was shortly after an officer in Minnesota had been convicted in the death of George Floyd). The chief decided to free up some of the sergeants to learn the administrative part of police work—how to actually run a department, pay bills, budget, and so forth.

Which means today, Fry realizes, Payne will be the one to lead this investigation. Organize the department into teams.

Talk about diving into the deep end.

Tyson responds that yes, Payne is on his way to the crime scene. He'll get there at around four p.m.

Which will be ahead of Fry. He presses harder on the gas. And dials a number.

"Rand," he says into the phone to Dr. Rand Walker, a local

therapist who has counseled his officers before. "I need you to be on standby."

The rest of the drive is a blur of staccato calls.

Chief Gary Jenkins—the head of the Washington State University police over in Pullman and former chief of the Pullman PD—phones.

"Do you need backup from us?" Jenkins asks.

The two departments often tag-team. Moscow's last convicted murderer, John Lee, had in fact been caught on the run by the officers in Pullman.

But Fry is cautious. In 2015, they knew who the murderer was.

This time they have no idea.

Fry is aware of the importance of locking down an investigation, keeping information on a need-to-know basis to stop leaks that could jeopardize it.

He and Bill Thompson are completely in sync on this. Thompson never speaks to anyone about an investigation until he gets to sentencing—and even then, he keeps it short.

And there are too many unanswered questions right now. It's not safe or prudent for Fry to involve another team.

"Not yet," Fry tells Jenkins. "I'll keep you posted."

Berrett's shared with Fry that a knife sheath was found in one of the rooms. It's imperative this doesn't get out.

Somewhere, there's a maniacal murderer on the loose who is almost certainly watching their every move.

Who in God's name could have done this? Fry wonders.

And again he presses harder on the gas.

One good thing about being the police chief is that no one is likely to arrest him for speeding.

But at that, Berrett shuts down. "I'm not going to say anything else."

After years of dealing with these guys, Ellis knows better than to push. But questions race through his mind. *Are we talking murder? Are we talking guns? What are we talking about?*

Holy hell, he thinks as he walks away. He calls Chief Fry.

"Chief, Tyson's going with 'No threat to the public.' Are you sure? The university is saying shelter in place."

Fry is quick to answer. "We are going with 'no threat.' That's what we've got right now."

There's a pause.

"Hey, Evan," Fry says, speaking to his friend as much as to a journalist. "Tamp this down."

Fry doesn't want chaos on the campus. That isn't helpful to anyone. The police are going to need calm and order so they can get to witnesses and proceed with their investigation.

Fry knows that people *are* just as safe now as they were twenty-four hours before the murders. Common sense, not just his years of training and experience, tells him that when someone comes for you in your bed with a knife in the middle of the night... it's personal. Whoever did this is not likely to strike again randomly.

What Fry can't explain right now is why *four* victims were knifed and why two other roommates were not. But he knows that there will be an answer. And they will find it.

They always do.

He hasn't had an unsolved case once in his years of being a cop.

Ellis knows that Fry and Berrett are as good at their jobs as any cops you'll find anywhere. Better, probably, because there's a pride and sense of ownership that comes with policing a small town, something that likely doesn't happen in the big cities.

But Ellis also knows that the police are going to have another problem while they're hunting for whoever stabbed four students to death in their bedrooms.

And he's worried that these cops, as good as they are, aren't prepared for this aspect. Namely: publicity.

Everything about this crime—the age of the victims, the proximity

of the house to the school, the fact of there being four of them, the fact that they were in the safety of their own beds, the fact that there appear to be survivors in the house, the fact that this is Moscow, safe little Moscow—all of this means that this story is going to be *big*.

Way bigger than the town's mass homicide in 2015, when John Lee, the troubled son of a beloved local couple, shot and killed his adoptive mother, his landlord, and a restaurant manager and injured one other person.

Way bigger than the sordid saga of Katy Benoit and her professor.

Bigger than the two Wells brothers gunning down a member of the Vandals football team. And bigger than Charles Capone strangling his wife and dumping her body in the river.

The Moscow cops are going to face questions from journalists who don't know them. Journalists who will ask, not unreasonably, how the police can be certain the public is safe if they don't have a suspect in custody.

That's why he's pushing here.

But in all his years of reporting, he's never gotten in the way of an investigation. And he's not going to start now.

So he taps the live-stream button again on his phone.

"All right, Evan Ellis with you, back again at the scene of a homicide investigation in Moscow. We're near campus; you can see the unit here where the investigation is taking place, eleven twenty-two King Road. And we've got the police tape here around the scene." He tells his audience that Captain Tyson Berrett of the Moscow Police Department specifically said that there was no threat to the public right now, although the University of Idaho had sent out a campus-wide alert telling people to stay away from the area and shelter in place. "The key here," he goes on, "is it's Moscow Police Department investigating, they do not believe this case represents a threat to the public at this time, and again that's different from what we've heard from the University of Idaho on their alert." It's possible, he says, that the university is being overly cautious, and he reiterates that the police are saying there is no threat to the public at this time. "What exactly that means, you can

speculate,” he says. “We’re not going to necessarily do that. Homicide investigation here again in Moscow, King Road. Here is new Greek Row, right back here. University of Idaho campus here.”

Ellis’s hand is shaking. So is his voice.

In this moment, he and Geoff Crimmins are the only members of the media there.

But he knows that within hours, that will change, and he worries that the police narrative he has repeated several times—that there is no threat to the public—will change as well.

Chapter 51

*Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022*

Jeff Kernodle is headed on the long journey back to his home in Arizona after family weekend. He's feeling justifiably elated.

It hasn't been a straightforward path, parenting his two daughters, Jazzmin and Xana. Their mom, Cara, has been in and out of jail for years. When Jazzmin and Xana were little, Jeff got full custody. It was not easy being a single dad, juggling children and a job. And, more recently, a move from Post Falls, Idaho, to Arizona.

But he and his daughters are as tight as can be. And his daughters are tight with each other.

He smiles when he thinks about the fact that they are just fifteen miles apart, Jazzmin at WSU, Xana at UI. Two beautiful young women, full of life, laughter, hope. And love for each other.

Jazzmin is a rising senior, studying business marketing and digital technology. Xana has mentioned wanting a career in digital marketing, or maybe sales, but she's always been the more carefree of the two. The one who laughingly has always said she has no plans for the future.

But Jeff noticed this past weekend that she's changing.

She wanted him to meet her boyfriend's parents, Jim and Stacy. Nice people.

She's never had a serious boyfriend before, and Jeff can tell she's nuts about Ethan. So nuts she's thinking about a future with him.

Why, though, did she not phone earlier? He'd thought they might have brunch today, but he didn't hear from her, so he hit the road.

His phone rings.

It's Jazzmin. She's crying.

"Dad, you need to turn around."

His heart drops.

"Meet me at Xana's house" is all she says.

When he gets there, it's cordoned off and swarming with police officers.

Jeff tells them he's Xana's dad, and an officer asks if he and Jazzmin can please follow him to the station.

When they get there, they are ushered into a room where an officer gently tells them there have been four victims of a homicide—and that Xana is one.

Jeff is speechless. What can you say to such a thing?

There aren't words.

Just tears and agony.

Chapter 52

Rathdrum, Idaho
November 13, 2022

It's lunchtime and Steve Goncalves is exactly where he likes to be on football Sundays: In his living room in front of the TV watching the Seahawks game, surrounded by his noisy family.

He moved to Rathdrum, Idaho, because he wanted to make life easier for his wife, Kristi. The cost of living was cheaper; the state was safer than California.

He wanted her to quit her job as an accountant at Chevron and be a full-time mom if she wanted to. She didn't—because that's Kristi for you. Independent, strong, a great role model. She'd decided to become a teacher.

Steve's a proud girl dad. Four of his five kids are daughters. But they all love football. Their cousin Bryce is hoping to get recruited by a college team.

An extra bonus today is that his eldest daughter, Alivea, will soon be home for Thanksgiving. She lives in LA, where her husband, Robbie Stevenson, works in postproduction on the series *Ted Lasso*.

But that morning there was a scare. Steve just discovered he has Ramsay Hunt syndrome, an inflammation of the facial nerve caused by the chicken pox virus. Alivea is twenty-two weeks pregnant with her third child, and Steve is worried about possibly being contagious, so he and Kristi are on and off the phone to Alivea, figuring out if it's safe for her to visit.

So when they call Alivea yet again, she doesn't sound surprised to hear from them. But then Kristi says, "I think something's

happened to Kaylee.”

They were not expecting Kaylee back from Moscow until Tuesday; she had gone to show Maddie her new Range Rover and hang out with her friends. But Kaylee’s younger sisters, Autumn and Aubrie, have been getting strange calls from Kaylee’s friends about police being at King Road. Something weird is happening there. An unconscious person. Then there’s a Vandal Alert about a homicide. They try Kaylee. It goes to voicemail. They try Maddie. It rings but no answer. They try Jack. No answer. But they start to see photographs of the King Road house coming online. It’s surrounded by police tape.

The Goncalveses are flummoxed. Where are the police? Why hasn’t anyone said anything to them? Alivea phones Maddie’s mom, Karen Laramie, to ask if she’s heard anything. Karen says she’s already on her way to Moscow. She, too, has received alarming messages, but nothing from the police. She promises she’s going to bring both girls home.

But Karen doesn’t get to the King Road house. The police reach her when she’s almost to Moscow and tell her to go to the police station.

The Goncalveses, meanwhile, are sitting, waiting, hoping, praying that Kaylee and Maddie are okay. It’s another few hours—between four and five p.m.—before the police show up on their doorstep to deliver the shocking news that Kaylee is dead and so are Maddie and two others. When Steve and Kristi ask how and why, the officers have no answer.

After they leave, Steve heads upstairs to the bedroom he shares with Kristi. He shuts the door and weeps. Tears of shame as well as grief. He’s the family protector. He moved here to Idaho to keep his family safe. And he couldn’t protect Kaylee and Maddie.

When Kristi tells her the news, Alivea goes numb. And then she takes control of the things she can.

She tells Robbie they need to get into the car with their two kids and drive through the night—twenty hours—to get to Rathdrum and

her parents.

She doesn't want to fly because she doesn't want to be trapped with strangers in an airport. She wants to work while Robbie drives. She wants to talk to whoever Kaylee talked to in her last hours alive.

In the passenger seat, she goes into detective mode. Kaylee is on their mother's cell phone plan, and Alivia knows how to pull up her sister's phone log online to see who Kaylee called and who called Kaylee. She phones the people her sister spoke to. And she follows every lead she can find.

By the time she and Robbie pull up in Rathdrum, late afternoon the next day, Alivia already knows a few things:

Kaylee was at the Corner Club just after one in the morning.

Kaylee called a rideshare driver from the Grub Truck at 1:50 a.m. and she got into the car with a friend. Alivia knows this because she reached the rideshare driver via text message.

She knows that the friend was Maddie, because she was told by the driver that the Grub Truck had a camera on the roof and was live streaming, so she pulled up the video on Twitch and saw Maddie and Kaylee waiting in line.

She knows the two arrived home safely at 1:57 a.m. because she tracked down a neighbor's Ring camera footage.

And she knows that Kaylee's last call that night was to Jack.

Alivia tells her parents she's certain that Kaylee's murderer wasn't someone known to her. Alivia never met Xana and Ethan, but from Kaylee, she knew enough about them, their life, and their friends. She is certain that no one in their group would have done this.

She tells her father that she feels in her gut that whoever did this was a stranger.

The mystery is why.

When he looks back on Alivia's quick thinking, Steve can't help but be impressed by his eldest daughter. He's always been sad that, with her smarts, she didn't go to law school after college; she'd chosen instead to go to Los Angeles with Robbie so he could pursue a career in film and entertainment.

Alivia is fiercely intelligent—she scored 1300 on the SAT—and,

like her parents, she never takes no for an answer. Not from anyone. Kaylee was the same way.

Here she is, pregnant, having driven with her husband through the night, two little ones in the back seat, on a mission to find answers.

Steve makes himself a promise: He will not rest until whoever did this is brought to justice. That is what Kaylee would want. That is what Kaylee would expect.

And Steve will not let the Goncalves women down.

Chapter 53

Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022

This is the worst crime scene yet.

Latah County prosecutor Bill Thompson pulls up close to the King Road house and makes his way toward the police tape.

He braces himself, knowing what lies within its perimeter.

He's never had to deal with a crime this violent and of this magnitude—and Thompson has led the county prosecutorial office for three decades. The previous week was his thirty-year anniversary.

Some anniversary gift! Four students stabbed to death in their beds.

He ducks under the police tape and tells the officer outside he's going to do a tour of the interior of the house.

The officers are deferential, making way for him, trying to be helpful. They revere Thompson. He might look like Santa Claus, with his long white beard and spectacles, but appearances can be deceptive. To the cops, Thompson is the epitome of the adage "iron fist, velvet glove."

At this point, he's a legend.

If, in thirty years of being Latah County's lead prosecutor, an elected position, Thompson has lost a case, no one can remember it.

He has no intention of letting this one blot his record.

Whoever did this will pay for it.

Thompson makes his way up to the main level, where he sees Xana and Ethan, and then to the upper level, where he sees Maddie

and Kaylee.

He also sees the knife sheath beside the bed that Corporal Payne and the others had noticed earlier.

That's going to be a critical piece of evidence, if there is DNA on it.

Whoever did this made a mistake.

Thanks to the popularity of public genealogical websites like Ancestry and 23andMe, forensics can now take the smallest piece of DNA and construct an entire family tree around it in a method called investigative genetic genealogy—IGG for short. It's a game-changing scientific development for investigators.

Leaving the knife sheath might be the murderer's only mistake. Time will tell. There's no sign right now of a murder weapon, of prints. But they are just starting.

Thompson is confident they *will* find the perpetrator. They *will* find a motive. What he doesn't know is how long it will take.

But Thompson is patient. He prides himself on his patience.

His most famous case was that of Moscow automotive repairman Charles Capone. In April 2010 Capone's estranged wife, Rachael Anderson, vanished. Her body was never found, but Thompson was nonetheless able to convict Capone of her murder. Because he waited. And waited. For two years—until an accomplice who'd helped Capone strangle his wife and throw her body, wrapped in a tarpaulin, into the Snake River started talking. Ultimately, he became Thompson's star witness and testified as to exactly what had happened.

Capone was sentenced to life in prison.

Another famous case was the murder of UI football player Eric McMillan, who was gunned down on campus by two brothers from Seattle, James and Matthew Wells. There was no obvious connection between McMillan and the Wells brothers, but again, Thompson was patient. He wound up indicting not just the two brothers but multiple family members who'd committed perjury to cover up what had happened.

So no one who has worked closely with Bill Thompson—and that includes all thirty-six members of the Moscow PD—considers him

soft.

True, he votes Democrat. Which makes him unusual in a Republican state.

True, he has advocated for the community to create more resources to treat mental illness, saying that this would prevent crime. He'd pushed publicly for this in 2007 after a local janitor, Jason Hamilton, who was known to be mentally unstable, went out drinking, then shot his wife, Crystal, in the head and went on a shooting spree at the sheriff's office, killing a total of four people, including beloved Moscow police officer Lee Newbill, and wounding another deputy, Brannon Jordan, before turning the gun on himself.

And true, he didn't press for a trial in the case of John Lee, a schizophrenic kid who was known to many, many people in Moscow. In 2015, Lee shot his adoptive mother, Terri Grzebielski, a popular nurse practitioner; his landlord; and two more people at the local Arby's. He'd then sped off to Pullman, where cops had made the arrest.

Everyone in Moscow knew and loved Terri. Everyone had watched John Lee grow up. They'd witnessed his mental struggle. So, yes, Thompson had accepted a plea agreement whereby Lee was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

You could argue that that was soft, or you could argue that it was pragmatic. No one believed John Lee was in his right mind when he went on his killing spree.

But this case?

Four bodies? In a student house?

Stab wounds? Rivers of blood? Murders committed in the middle of the night in a densely populated area? With two survivors who, for whatever reason, waited eight hours to call 911?

Thompson knows that the chief will likely agree that the attack was targeted. The two meet every morning at eight. They know each other's thought patterns inside out.

It may take weeks to go through all the stuff on these kids' phones to find the link they need.

But they will find it.

There's always a clue. He and Fry know that from experience.

Back in 2009 a local man, Silas Parks, claimed his pregnant wife, Sarah, had died in a tragic house fire. In fact, he'd strangled her first, then set the fire himself.

James Fry had been the lead investigator on that case, Bill Thompson the prosecutor, and in the end, it was the autopsy of the mother and fetus that gave Silas away: Sarah did not have any smoke in her lungs. And the fetus had petechial hemorrhage in her eyes, an indication of trauma.

Thompson had told Sarah's family to hang tough and let justice unfold, as it surely would.

Now, he watches as the state police forensics team arrives with a trailer full of equipment. When they've gathered all the evidence they need—fingernails, skin scrapings, everything and anything—the police will call the county coroner, Cathy Mabbutt. She's probably already been told to cancel her dinner plans.

Thompson considers if he might go down to the police station where the roommates and immediate circle of friends are being questioned. He needs to learn what happened in the hours before and after the murders. The timeline is essential.

He also wants to ensure that whatever he learns is kept secret. Leaks can kill investigations; they can literally obstruct justice. He never talks publicly about a case until the very end—until sentencing—and even then, he's brief.

Beyond the evidence truck, a crowd is gathering with microphones and cameras.

This one is going to attract more press attention than usual.

Oh, well. They can gather. But they are all going to have to wait.

It's business as usual.

Chapter 54

*1122 King Road
Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022*

It's cold.

Even with the blanket Ava has placed over her shoulders, Emily is cold. She's in shorts. So are Dylan and Bethany. None of them is wearing shoes.

They've been sitting out here for hours now. Crying, freezing, numb.

Captain Berrett gently asks them to go to the police station for interviews.

Emily feels for the captain. She can tell how sad Berrett is to see her and Ava crying like this. They are like daughters to him.

Emily just wants to *do* something.

She's just lost her best friend. She has no idea how or why or who did this.

Her world is in free fall.

She wants to be able to control *something*.

She looks around. She *can* look after Dylan, her Little, and Bethany, who has lost her Big, Maddie. She can give them clothes, protect them as best she can, like a mother hen.

So before driving to the police station, Emily pops into her apartment to get clothes for all of them. And bottles of water, and snacks.

When they get to the station, it feels as if the officer on duty isn't sure what to do. It dawns on Emily that it isn't just her world that's

been rocked.

None of them, not even the police, are ready for a tornado like this.

The friends sit together, mostly in silence. Random people enter and leave. John Hennrich, the director of student care and case management, appears, along with a woman counselor who asks if they want to talk about their feelings.

The group says no. They aren't ready to talk about anything with anyone. They just want to be left alone.

Hennrich assures them before he leaves that the last thing they need to worry about is classes. He'll be in touch with all their professors.

Emily peers downstairs at one point and, with a pang, sees Jeff and Jazzmin Kernodle being led into a room on the first floor.

She intuits that the story is overtaking them. That the news of what's happened is likely to reach their nearest and dearest before they can get to them, thanks to social media.

So she phones her mom, Karen.

"Mom, I'm at the police station, I'm safe, I don't really wanna talk about it, but I'm not gonna have my phone for a while."

Karen is in disbelief. She hasn't seen or heard anything. And Emily wants to protect her from the details for as long as possible.

"All you need to know is that... they're just all gone. And we can talk about it later."

One by one, the friends are peeled off and taken to interview rooms like you see on crime dramas. A room where the tape recorder is going and the window is a one-way mirror.

They never learn who is watching their interviews. They just know they are being watched. They don't know if the prosecutor, Bill Thompson, is there or not. They later wonder if he might have been. He's going to need the answers to the questions they are asked.

Like why, the police want to know, were Emily, Hunter, Josie, and Linden awake so late the night before?

Why would Emily have texted Xana at that hour?

Who exactly did Dylan see?

Why did she think he was a firefighter?

Did he see her when she saw him?

Was he in the house already when everyone got home?

Why does she think the masked man in black walked away from her?

(*Thank God, Emily thinks, the man in black did walk away from her.*)

Is this person now coming for *them*?

After their interviews, the friends determine they are not going to separate. No one wants to go home; for Bethany and Dylan, that's not even possible.

They swear to look out for one another. To protect one another at all costs from whoever attacked their friends.

It's the only positive step they can take when everything else has gone irretrievably backward.

Chapter 55

Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022

Daniel Ramirez, a journalist for the *Argonaut*, the University of Idaho's student newspaper, is getting coffee at the drive-through with the *Argonaut's* editor, Haadiya Tariq, when their phones ping simultaneously with a Vandal Alert warning students to shelter in place.

Ordinarily, this sort of Vandal Alert is issued when there is a moose on campus.

This time it says there's been a homicide.

The alert also tells them to stay away from the King Road area.

So they do what every good journalist would: They head straight for 1122 King Road.

They see the multitude of police cars and the tape. Standing in front of the house, directing the others, is Tyson Berrett, whom they recognize because he's the campus-police commandant.

They ask Berrett for a statement, but he only repeats the Vandal Alert with no further details.

So Haadiya and Daniel head to the *Argonaut* newsroom on the top floor of the Bruce M. Pitman Center to see what they can learn online. The students are conversing on the college-chat app Yik Yak, a kind of anonymous, closed version of Twitter, and there is huge confusion because at three p.m., another Vandal Alert is posted, this one saying that there is no threat to the community.

What does this mean? Daniel and Haadiya can see that the students are confused and scared. Can they really walk around

safely?

The student journalists want to be able to report on this, but what can they say that is accurate?

Conspiracy theories are already flying on Yik Yak. So too are the names Xana, Ethan, Maddie, and Kaylee, but not in such a way that Daniel and Haadiya feel they're reportable.

They are student journalists, yes, but they consider themselves journalists first, students second. They take their job seriously.

On Yik Yak, the consensus seems to be that 1122 King Road is a party house, so a lot of students are suggesting that fentanyl must have been involved.

Maybe, it's even posited, the homicide has something to do with Emma Bailey, who was seen in the Whites, the apartment building next to the house, the weekend before. (The following spring, Emma will be charged with the delivery of a controlled substance in connection with the death of another UI student. Prosecutors will dismiss the case.) Could she have been at the King Road house last night?

At around five p.m., a friend of Daniel's in a Catholic students' group forwards something that Daniel deems the most reliable source so far as to the victims' identities—the students have been urged to pray for the four victims, whose names are given.

Even so, Daniel and Haadiya wait to publish anything until they get confirmation from the police. And they know from bitter experience that it's going to be tough to get much from the Moscow PD.

Haadiya is *still* waiting for the public information officer, or PIO, to get back to her about someone she refers to as "knife guy." A man dressed in black riding a bicycle and holding a knife had harassed a couple of people on Paradise Street back in September. Haadiya had written that up and done a follow-up piece, because the police had issued a report saying he was no longer a threat to anyone but didn't explain why.

Just like she's waiting for answers about the two other campus deaths that have occurred while she's been at the *Argonaut*.

One student died of an overdose, a suspected suicide, in the

spring. The *Argonaut* never wrote about it because the police never got back to Haadiya about it.

Another student, Hudson Lindow, was found dead in the creek in May; sources said it was a direct result of hazing. He'd been made to drink out of a five-gallon bucket and was then abandoned by the people who'd made him do it. Haadiya wanted to report what her sources told her, but with no confirmation from the police, she couldn't. She felt that would be irresponsible.

So now she and Daniel have nothing official to go on regarding what happened at King Road.

Yik Yak, meanwhile, is exploding with all sorts of speculative storylines.

One is that a group of men dressed in black entered the house.

Another is that they were killed by members of a Colombian drug cartel who had known Xana's mother in prison and wanted payback.

Another is that one of the four victims had been about to expose the Greek houses for sex trafficking (the idea being that new sorority members were coerced into dating fraternity members).

Yet another is that they were killed to cover up some kind of hazing sexual assault.

Another is about a love triangle involving Ethan, Xana, and either Maddie or Kaylee.

Every minute, there's a new invented plotline. This is like no story the duo has covered before. They aren't sure of protocol.

Surely it isn't right to start reaching out to the victims' families so soon? Haadiya feels that would not be respectful. She assumes—incorrectly, as it turns out—that other journalists will feel the same way.

That evening, Daniel sees that PBS appears to have a lead no one else does.

A segment on the four homicides in Moscow comes on the news. According to the PBS report, the students were shot.

Daniel and Haadiya look at each other. How on earth can PBS know that? Did the police tell PBS something they are not telling other news organizations? Surely PBS can't have gotten it wrong. Can they?

The two are confused but also beginning to feel an emotion that will become all too familiar in the coming weeks as members of the national media descend on their town and report a barrage of nonsense in the absence of facts.

What they feel is disappointment.

Chapter 56

Troy, Idaho
November 13, 2022

It's dark by the time the police chief gets close to the crime scene.

First, Fry goes home, showers, dresses in his uniform, and puts on his gun, a SIG Sauer P320. A murderer is out there, after all. Then he drives to 1122 King Road, Moscow.

He doesn't imagine for a second that any of these actions will come back to haunt him.

He doesn't yet realize that every move he makes will be fodder for criticism from a press skeptical that a little police department in a little town can find whoever killed Xana, Ethan, Maddie, and Kaylee.

He doesn't yet grasp the snobbery of the coastal elites, who consider Moscow the middle of nowhere and assume the police chief must therefore be inexperienced and inept.

He doesn't yet comprehend that the media is going to hound him so much, he will have to cover his office windows with butcher paper.

He doesn't yet realize that the job of a police chief in the modern era has little to do with the training and experience he's gotten in thirty years on the job, including ten weeks spent at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia, a program for which only the country's very best police officers are selected.

He doesn't yet understand that what he will need over the next six weeks is a PhD in communications. And that is something he is not equipped with.

Fry is thinking about process, the well-being of his team, and

protecting the investigation the way he knows how and the way Bill Thompson wants it.

With silence.

The good thing about having a small department is that Fry trusts his men implicitly. He knows there will be no leaks, whatever they find.

What he doesn't yet know is that in the absence of a real story, people invent fictitious ones.

And that is where the real harm lies.

Chapter 57

Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022

At around seven p.m., the Sigma Chi fraternity house gets a visit from Blaine Eckles, the dean of students.

Sixty-one young men gather in the lodge, their ashen faces tearstained. If ever they needed to feel the comfort of leadership, it's now.

Dean Eckles rises to the occasion. He has no children of his own, and these young men right here—they are his family.

First things first, the dean tells them. He's aware they are the only Greek house on campus that doesn't have a chef, and he knows today most of them will not have thought about buying groceries, so he's got them covered—food, water, milk, are on the way.

Second, he's opened the counseling center 24/7 so its team is available for anyone who needs it.

Third, the Idaho State Police is going to provide round-the-clock security for the house.

And fourth, everyone can just get the hell out of town.

No need to email professors. No need to turn in assignments. "Go," he tells them. "Be with the people you love."

Fifth, he's going to let the fraternity president, Reed Ofsthun, deal with the press however he wants. He advises the group to stay off social media, chiefly to be sensitive to the victims' families.

The release of tension is palpable.

Some of the fraternity members cry openly. These are tough young athletes, but they have never experienced anything like this.

Ethan's frat brothers feel his loss. But they also feel like participants in whatever terrible trauma he suffered.

The back of the frat house has a view of 1122 King Road. So, after waking to what most had assumed would be a lazy Sunday and learning the news, one by one the whole chapter had gathered there, staring grimly across the Lower 40 at the mass of police cars and emergency vehicles, listening to the wailing sirens, fearing the worst as their phones blew up with surreal texts about their frat brother Ethan and about Xana, whom they loved like a sister.

Only last night they'd all been joshing together at the postgame party.

And now? Their worlds were upended.

Most of them watched Hunter Chapin leave the house that morning with Cooper Atkinson. They watched Jayden Shepherd receive a call, after which he turned to them and said, simply, "Ethan's dead."

They received texts about a gruesome killing, blood everywhere.

They watched as, hours later, against the backdrop of a swarm of police officers, the forlorn figures of Hunter Chapin and Hunter Johnson walked back to the fraternity house, packed up some stuff, and headed to the police station.

The fraternity brothers had hugged Hunter Chapin. Told him they loved him. They weren't sure he could even hear, he was so grief-stricken.

Once Dean Eckles leaves, they head to their rooms. Many of them phone their parents and ask them to come get them right now. Others start to load up their cars.

None of them knows what exactly happened to Ethan, their brother.

One of them, David Berriochoa, walked across the Lower 40 at 3:59 a.m. and felt a strange chill as he did so.

It's a chill they all feel now.

Their instinct tells them to run. Get the hell out of Moscow, get as far away as possible.

Run. Run.

Chapter 58

Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022

It's nine thirty p.m. when Jim and Stacy Chapin pull into Moscow.

When she sees Maizie and Hunter, Stacy hugs them tightly. Then Jim does. Stacy has one message for her two surviving children: "I don't know what the hell just happened, but this won't sink us as a family. We'll figure it out. Together."

They head to the police station for a so-called debrief, but the police don't have any information for them that they don't already know. Chief Fry is now on the premises, back from King Road. He and Tyson Berrett sit with the family in a conference room.

The chief is instantly struck by the strength and grace of both Stacy, a statuesque woman with long blond hair, and Jim, her quieter, kind-eyed husband who is dependably by her side, not in front, not behind, but right there next to her.

The worst part of this job is having to deliver news like this to families, and yet Fry is often impressed by the dignity and resilience of the parents and siblings he's gotten to know, some of whom he has forged close relationships with.

Stacy Chapin is special. He can see that. Even now, she's expressing concern about his team, about what they are going through, and offering her support.

He tells her that they will find whoever did this.

He's appointed Captain Tyson Berrett to be the Chapins' point person. They should call him whenever they want, and he will call them every day.

But now?

Strangely, there's nothing for the Chapins to do except go home. And wait.

But they aren't going to drive back home tonight. Jim has already been at the wheel for almost twenty hours straight. So the family heads to the Best Western hotel, where the university has booked a block of rooms.

In the lobby they encounter Emily, Hunter Johnson, Dylan, Bethany, Josie, Linden, and Ava, all huddled together, exhausted.

Stacy hugs all of them, noticing immediately that Hunter Johnson and Emily are clearly in shock. Hunter Johnson can scarcely speak.

"Are you guys all right?" she asks, knowing they are not.

She asks if she can bring them food, water, blankets.

She knows Emily and Hunter Johnson well, and in the absence of their own parents, she steps in. Her years as a school principal have taught her a thing or two about mental health, and she can see that Hunter has been especially traumatized and will need counseling.

She's going to make sure that he gets it; she offers up there and then the same team in Moscow that the police have provided to help Maizie and her own son Hunter, a gesture that strikes everyone as remarkable, given what she herself must be going through.

In the coming days, weeks, and months, many people will marvel at Stacy Chapin's bandwidth and compassion for others in the face of personal tragedy.

Stacy herself will later say that of course she checked on the kids and their families. What else could she have done?

Deep inside, she's lost. But she knows that now, more than ever, she's needed as a mom.

She's always been everyone's backbone. And she's not going to stop now.

In Emily's hotel room, the friends huddle together. They are terrified but also reassured when they hear sirens going on and off all through the night, the police cars circling.

Bethany is withdrawn and quiet, but the rest of them take turns

talking.

Dylan, especially, is in full flow, reliving what she thinks she saw the night before.

She realizes that the man she thought was a firefighter must have been the murderer. So why did he walk away from her? They'd made eye contact.

If he was after Maddie or Kaylee, why did he kill Xana and Ethan? Had he been upstairs all along?

Dylan thinks maybe he was. But how did he get in?

The lock on the back sliding door is broken. Until now, that was quite useful, because their parents and friends knew how to get into the house if they didn't have the code to the front door.

But how did *he* know that?

Emily asks what Dylan did after she saw the killer.

Dylan explains that she raced into Bethany's room and slept there. She says she was scared, yes, but she hadn't wanted to trust her own instincts.

Emily doesn't blame Dylan for telling herself at the time that she was drunk, tired, crazy, hallucinating. But she can see that Dylan—Bethany too—is likely headed into a shitstorm of pointed fingers for not calling the cops sooner.

Emily doesn't blame her Little for bolting herself in with Bethany and falling asleep. She, too, would likely have second-guessed herself in the same situation.

Her maternal, protective instincts kicking in yet again, she decides she's going to do her best to defend Dylan in the coming days.

People come and go at all hours at 1122 King Road, she later explains. "Your first reaction if you see someone at four a.m. just isn't going to be *Oh, here's a guy who has come to murder us*. Common sense tells you, *Oh, it's just someone visiting*."

But common sense is an approach this group has now dispensed with.

Over the next days and months, all they will feel at night, in the dark, is fear bordering on terror, wondering who is out there—and if he is coming for them next.

Chapter 59

Moscow, Idaho
November 14, 2022

It's around four or five a.m., pitch-black outside, but the Chapin parents don't even try to sleep. They just lie on the bed and watch as Hunter and Maizie finally pass out from exhaustion. Eventually, Stacy gets up.

She wants to go for a walk. She needs to do something.

Jim immediately says he'll come with her. He wouldn't dream of leaving his wife alone in this moment.

It's freezing, and they are bundled up. For once this couple doesn't speak. There's no need. They simply stride.

They exit their hotel and head north, toward the water tower and the Kibbie Dome. Past the golf course that Ethan so loved and the arboretum where he went for runs.

They go to the Sig Chi house, like they often do, expecting to be able to turn the doorknob, go in, walk through the house, and go back across the Lower 40.

But the door is now locked. So they walk around the place.

And somehow, Stacy doesn't remember how, they wind up standing outside the King Road house.

All the cars and law enforcement officers—they are gone.

There's just one cop standing in front. It's eerily silent.

Were it not for the yellow tape, one wouldn't know anything had happened here.

"My son is still inside the house," Stacy says to the officer, who isn't sure how to react. In fact, the bodies are no longer there.

They've been taken to Spokane to be autopsied. But Stacy doesn't know this. "I just wanted to see it. I don't know."

There, with the first light streaking the sky, as Stacy holds Jim's hand, she realizes this is it.

This is goodbye to her beloved elder boy, a prince of a young man.

Chapter 60

Rathdrum, Idaho
November 14, 2022

It's completely dark when Jack DuCoeur arrives at the Goncalves ranch house at around nine p.m.

Jack knocks on the door, crying, and when Steve opens it, he is business first.

"Jack, I gotta ask you to roll up your sleeves. I hate to do this, but I've got to do it."

The kid shows him his arms, wrists, and hands. Nothing. No scratches. Nothing that would indicate that twenty-four hours earlier, he was wielding the huge knife that killed Kaylee.

They hug.

Jack walks the family through everything he knows at this point. He shows them his phone and all the missed phone calls in the early hours of Sunday morning.

He thinks he might burst.

He was asleep. Asleep! If only he'd woken up, if only he'd answered, Kaylee and Maddie might still be... he breaks down.

Steve tells him not to go there. There was nothing anyone could have done.

Kaylee and Maddie had done everything right. They'd gotten a sober person to drive them home, then they'd gone upstairs to sleep.

No one could have done a damn thing against someone with a knife in the bedroom.

Steve doesn't want to think about what terror his daughter, or

Maddie, might have experienced.

He will later say that the pain is like a splinter that's wedged deep beneath the surface of the skin. It hurts all the more because he feels as if someone should help remove it.

But so far there's no one out there helping him or his family. At least no one official.

What option does that leave him other than taking matters into his own hands?

Chapter 61

*Moscow, Idaho
November 14, 2022*

Jim and Stacy Chapin continue their walk in the new, cold dawn.

They pass by the Sig Chi house again. At the gate on Nez Perce Drive, they stop, shocked by what they see in the parking lot.

The brothers are leaving the house en masse, flocking like birds caught in the winter snow rushing to head south. When they spot the Chapins, they put down the belongings they're clutching. One by one, the brothers hug them as if their lives depend on it.

Everyone here knows Stacy and Jim, because Ethan and Hunter were the lifeblood of the house. Even when Ethan was barred from living on the premises, he'd made a point of showing up to help with recruitment during Rush Week, working harder, putting in longer hours, than any of them.

For the worst of reasons, the dean has cleared campus. Though Thanksgiving break, to which they have all been looking forward, is coming early, none of them has any idea what the future holds—or if they'll ever return to this house, to this school.

"Their moms had called them home," Stacy later said. "They were broken, all of them."

This moment of togetherness, of solidarity in the face of fear and shock, is a foreshadowing of the way Stacy Chapin will handle the loss of her son in the weeks and months to come.

She will fight to unite the living when she cannot bring back the dead.

That morning, early, it isn't just the Sig Chi brothers who are

packing up. There is a mass exodus out of Moscow despite the snowstorm that is descending.

The kids who were hunkered down in the Best Western all go home. Classes are canceled. Anyone who can leave, does.

Stacy and Jim go back to the hotel.

They, Maizie, and Hunter pile into the Chevy Tahoe and begin the winding two-and-a-half-hour drive up the hills to their second home in Priest Lake. Thanksgiving is always their last visit of the year to this house. The weather makes it too dangerous to get here in the freezing months.

Even now, it's hairy. Snow is blanketing the roads, and it's not clear what's streaming more, the white flakes outside or the tears rolling down the faces of the car's passengers.

Jim later can only remember that his mind was anywhere but on the road.

Just outside of Coeur d'Alene, before the steep climb up into the mountains, they hear sirens. Of all things, they are being pulled over.

Jim rolls down the window when the state patrolman approaches.

"It was our son that was one of the kids who was killed," he says.

The officer blinks. "I'm so sorry," he says. There's no mention of whatever driving infraction Jim might have committed. "Just get there safely," he tells Jim.

Stacy is taken aback.

("It was a profound moment for all of us," she later said. A reminder that there was good in the world and that they needed to focus on the living.)

Jim grips the steering wheel. And starts the engine.

They head on up, up into the mountains, to be alone with their grief.

Chapter 62

Moscow, Idaho
November 14, 2022

Canceling classes for the rest of that week doesn't prove to be straightforward.

Provost Torrey Lawrence canvasses his senior administrators, including dean of students Blaine Eckles and the head of the faculty senate, Kelly Quinnett, before making the decision that classes will be offered remotely—but also optionally—all the way through Thanksgiving.

Quinnett is the outspoken head of the drama department, and her husband, Brian, has already started a new routine of walking her down the ten-foot garden path from her office to her car. Quinnett doesn't hesitate before rendering her opinion: *Of course* students shouldn't have to show up to class in the wake of a trauma like this. A number of the parents agree. They want the school to cancel classes all the way to Christmas.

But Eckles is worried that a large number of students, who have already paid for their housing, don't have the ability to go anywhere else. He's concerned that those students, especially the ones who never met Xana, Ethan, Maddie, and Kaylee, might blame the university for depriving them of the education they have already paid for.

One of these unlucky students is Alex Salvador, a recruited tennis star from Spain.

When not attending classes, Alex divides his time between practicing on the UI courts and traveling to intercollegiate matches.

The serious athletes at UI don't have the time or desire to join Greek life, effectively separating their campus experiences from that of the party kids.

But now, Alex and three tennis teammates—all on scholarships, all from Europe—are holed up in their shared apartment just three minutes from the King Road house. They'd once or twice fleetingly dropped in at parties there, but now they can think of little else but the gruesome fate of the four victims.

"Then it really hit me," Alex said.

As the town empties of the students who can easily drive home, Alex and his roommates find themselves confined indoors once the sun goes down, at around four p.m. They each buy handguns. Lock their door. And spend sleepless nights mostly peering out of their windows into the darkness, seeing just the blue lights of police cars endlessly circling the streets.

No one wants to venture onto streets where a murderer might be lurking.

"We were not safe there," Alex said, then refined his words: "We *thought* we were not safe."

Fear isn't the only emotion they feel. They are confused by seemingly conflicting directions from the administration: They can take their classes remotely, but in some cases, people don't have to take them at all.

As Alex reflected, "It was a mess."

A stone's throw from Alex and his roommates, Ben DeWitt, who had been in Xana's high-school class, is also staying put. As a features writer for the *Argonaut*, DeWitt has work to do.

Like many University of Idaho kids his age, he packs heat. He knows that it's legal to conceal and carry in Idaho—just not on campus. Even though he has a gun, DeWitt pushes his couch against his apartment door at night. An extra precaution.

Over in Pullman, Evan Ellis is in his studio by himself during a

commercial break from his broadcasting. A hard-bitten journalist, he still locks the studio door.

"I've never done that before," he said. "That's how uneasy it was. I had this weird gut feeling, and I came to this realization: What if this animal is still here?"

Doug Wilson, the gray-bearded pastor of Christ Church, a conservative evangelical congregation of around three thousand, goes to get his car keys fixed and learns the local locksmith is overwhelmed.

"The guy told me that people who never locked their doors were coming in and ordering locks installed," he said.

Wilson is used to being treated with some hostility by his neighbors, but even he has never experienced a mass panic like this.

Dr. Rand Walker, a trusted local therapist whom Chief Fry has put on standby to treat his traumatized officers and their families, is observing rare and frightening instances of the six-degrees-of-separation connections among the town's residents. The fact that everyone in Moscow knows everyone else has morphed overnight from a source of comfort to something deeply unsettling. Neighbor suddenly mistrusts neighbor. Friend mistrusts friend. Customer mistrusts vendor. People are shutting themselves in. Hiding from one another.

Walker is hearing from his patients, from townspeople, from members of his own family, that suddenly the connectivity between them all feels toxic. Walker's son Kristian, a former UI student, knew the victims. His girlfriend is the daughter of the owner of the Mad Greek, where Xana and Maddie worked. Now the restaurant is closed, and a handwritten placard is in the window:

We are closed temporarily to mourn the loss of two staff members. We will update FB on status of store soon. Please keep all the family and friends of yesterday's

victims in your thoughts.—MG Family

It's all too close to feel comfortable. Because who knows who among them is the murderer?

For Jeff "Smitty" Smith, the owner of Moscow Bagel and Deli, the sudden emptiness has an immediate economic consequence. His customer base is almost entirely wiped out days earlier than he budgeted for.

His girlfriend, Sarah Wicks, the owner of Vine wine bar, has a slightly different problem, one she shares with Marc Trivelpiece, her close friend and the owner of the Corner Club: They don't think it's fair to ask employees to work alone behind a bar at night. Who knows who might show up or approach them outside in the dark while they walk to their cars?

Trivelpiece solves this by taking on all the shifts himself. He tells his remaining student workers—a dozen or so have already gone home—to stay away. He's got their backs.

Local lawyer Mike Pattinson's chief concern is his twenty-two-year-old daughter, Lexi, who lives in an apartment at the Bricks, barely fifty yards from 1122 King Road. She lives so close that some of her neighbors reported to police that at around four a.m. on November 13, they heard a scream. They were interviewed down at the police station.

Lexi had been in APhi and found Kaylee to be a generous, thoughtful sister—a "bright personality" Lexi liked so much that the two roomed together during their second semester. They wound up becoming neighbors in their senior year.

Whenever Murphy the pooch wandered into Lexi's apartment, she returned the goldendoodle to Kaylee. Most evenings Lexi walked past the back of the King Road home to get to her car in the parking lot and saw Maddie through her window, putting on her makeup at her vanity. And just a few days before the murders, Lexi played beer

pong with Xana, who, dressed in a yellow jumpsuit, was dancing and hugging every person who walked into the room.

So Lexi is badly shaken.

Her boyfriend puts his hunting rifle under the bed.

Her father tells her to get out of that apartment and come home immediately.

Pattinson has faith in Chief Fry's ability to catch whoever did this. He bets that when the cops get the perpetrator, they'll find a fraternity rivalry or some equally simple motive behind the murders.

But he's worried that the timing of this—right before Thanksgiving—and the brutality of the murders are going to take the cops into a media storm they've never seen before. He's not at all sure that the chief is trained for *that* part. And he's worried about Bill Thompson, who is in the twilight of his career and doesn't get a homicide every day. Certainly not a mass homicide. *He may have to trim that beard a bit for prime time*, Pattinson thinks cynically.

Meanwhile, though, he's genuinely scared of who is out there, just like everyone else.

For the first time in his twenty-plus years of marriage, he does not tease his wife, Marcela, when she bolts the door at night. He's always told her to relax, that she's not living in her native Colombia. "Honey, this is not South America, it's Moscow," he's often said.

He doesn't say it anymore.

Whoever did this is the sick person who skinned the dog.

Claire Qualls, a twenty-year-old student and first responder, was driving back to Moscow from Spokane when she got the alert. *No big deal*, she thought about the 911 alert that all the EMT volunteers get.

Until the news started ricocheting around about the four murders.

Today, she's haunted by them.

Her cousin was close friends with Ethan. And 1122 King Road is just two blocks from her basement apartment, which is at the bottom of a dark set of covered stairs, in what is generally considered the shittiest neighborhood in all of Moscow.

Every time Claire comes home, her thoughts turn dark.

She'll walk down those steps, and he'll attack her, and she'll hit her head on the concrete, and no one will see her lying there, dying...

Claire has never wanted a gun. She doesn't know how to use one, and as a trained first responder, she knows the statistics: The majority of firearm deaths are caused by accidents in the home.

Now, though, she's going to go buy a handgun and she'll ask Katie, her roommate, to teach her how to use it. And her dad is going to come and replace her cheap window that can easily be opened from the outside with a better one.

He and her mom want her to move home. But Claire doesn't want to.

She's not sure their home is any safer.

She's certain that whoever committed the murders is the same sick fuck who skinned her parents' neighbors' dog.

Two nights before the murders, the animal, a pet of close family friends, had been running around in the backyard as usual, but then it had not appeared indoors to eat. Unusual.

The next morning it was found—skinned. In a hunting community, skinning wild beasts is not uncommon. But a pet dog?

Claire shivers.

She's going to get a personal safety alarm and clip it on her backpack and keep it next to her at night. To activate it, you don't need to press a button. You simply pull it apart and it goes off, and its piercing sound rings out until it's put back together.

That way, Claire figures she'll have a fighting chance if someone attacks her on the stairs or in her bed.

Without an alarm, she thinks, poor Maddie, Kaylee, Xana, and Ethan didn't stand a chance.

Chapter 63

Moscow, Idaho
November 14, 2022

It's eight o'clock on Monday morning, not quite twenty-four hours since that first ominous 911 call. The police chief is sitting in his corner office at the station on Southview Avenue talking to Tyson Berrett, getting up to speed on where things stand.

Berrett says he's spoken to Blaine Eckles and asked him to pass on anything that could be useful.

Thus begins a pattern: Twice a day, Eckles passes on details about the four victims—their clubs, classes, professors—to the university general counsel, who passes them on to Berrett. There has to be a wall between them for all sorts of reasons, including protecting students' privacy.

Both Chief Fry and Captain Berrett know they must not tell Eckles—or anyone who doesn't need to know—how the victims died. It's imperative that no one has any inkling of that until after the knife sheath has been properly photographed, analyzed, and sent off to the labs to check for trace DNA.

Privately, the chief grouches when he hears that the university has released the kids to go home. Inadvertently, they've made the cops' lives so much harder.

Officer Dani Vargas is known to be one heck of an interviewer, and yesterday she, Lawrence Mowery, Mitch Nunes, and John Lawrence got the best they could out of those poor, shocked kids, the friends of the victims, before they checked out of the Best Western. But there's not much point in having a great interviewer in

Moscow if the students you need to question are en route to, say, Florida or Texas.

Fry and his team are still trying to get their arms around what they've got at the crime scene.

The Idaho State Police has a crack team of forensic lab rats, and they're headed over now from Meridian, a five-hour drive away. Their mandate is to go over all the evidence for a second time before it's scooped up and shipped off for processing. No one wants any fuckups.

It will take serious manpower and a vast network to sift through it all.

People assume that technology makes a cop's life easier. In some ways, it does. But it might take a whole day just to download the contents of the kids' phones; simply deciphering the data is going to take hours, days, maybe weeks.

Fry looks down at his laptop and sees the sticky-note reminder from the receptionist.

Call back the FBI.

Fry knows he needs to call the feds in. In fact, he'll be screwed if he doesn't, given the mass exodus from Moscow already underway. He'll need the FBI's extra manpower and nationwide reach—and who knows what else.

The nearest Bureau field office is up in Coeur d'Alene, near the homes of Maddie's and Kaylee's families. Fry prides himself on having built up great relationships with both the ISP—the Idaho State Police—and the local federal agents. That doesn't always happen, especially not in big cities like LA and Chicago, where, infamously, pride and testosterone can cause unhelpful friction between the local and federal arms of law enforcement.

One of Fry's federal contacts, Lance Hart out of ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives), had found him an accelerant-detection dog to help solve the Silas Parks case. Five years later, in the immediate aftermath of the John Lee shootings, Hart was ready to help. "I hear the water down there is tainted again," the guy joshed. "What do you need?" What Fry needed was a ballistics analysis. "Send us the stuff," Hart said. And up it went so

the deadly bullets could be analyzed and submitted into evidence. It's a pity, the chief thinks, that Hart is now retired.

Yesterday, Fry saw a guy in an FBI jacket at the King Road crime scene, probably there at the invitation of the ISP, he assumed. It wasn't one of the guys he knew well.

As it happens, that same agent is now standing in the briefing room at the police station with the lead from State, ready for the eight a.m. meeting.

"We've been trying to get ahold of you," the agent says.

"I know," says Fry. "I've been a little busy."

"Need us to come in?"

Both men understand the protocol. The FBI cannot officially assist on a case unless the local police chief explicitly asks them to.

"Yes," says Fry. "And fast."

And with that, the FBI special agent in charge calls his boss, the regional special agent in charge, and the government machinery clicks into gear. The scale and speed of it deserves respect.

In Salt Lake City, Utah, and elsewhere around the country, an operation begins to unfold. Fry imagines dozens of agents leaping onto planes that will bring them to Moscow, Idaho.

In the station briefing room, Fry and Bill Thompson are technically the bosses, but right now they're staying out of the way as three law enforcement representatives—one from the Moscow PD, one from the ISP, one from the FBI—stand at a whiteboard.

With the FBI, the task force is now composed of approximately forty-five law enforcement officers from local, state, and federal agencies. It's a tight squeeze, with a few folks standing at the back, but all eyes are forward as the leads divide them into teams:

Victimology. The officers on this team will assemble a profile of each victim by reaching out to family, friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, teachers—anyone who can tell them who Xana, Kaylee, Maddie, and Ethan were over the past two years. As the adage goes, "In order to know how a person died, you first need to know how they lived."

Interviewers. Detectives Vargas, Lawrence, Mowery, Payne, and

others on this team will reach out and interview anyone who was near the scene of the crime, any possible witness.

Forensics. Fry still doesn't know *how* the guys on this team do what they do, but he knows *what* they are capable of doing: sifting through cell phone data, putting together DNA profiles, analyzing prints and blood.

Videos and local CCTV. Some camera somewhere must have caught something. The analysts on this team know what they're looking for.

Tip management. This team will handle the calls that are starting to come in on the phone number listed in yesterday's press release, all of which need to be answered and documented.

Note-taking. This team will keep a record of assignments, progress, and to-do lists.

No one complains about where they are assigned, setting a tenor that Fry will later point to with pride. The absence of agency infighting is extraordinary in an investigation of this complexity and significance.

Brett Payne is the Moscow PD leader in front of the whiteboard; he scribbles down names from his department. Payne, whose hair is tightly cropped, reminding the room of his former military career, is short, just over five feet, wiry, and tattooed. Payne may be young, but he's whip-smart. Fry hired him in 2020 because he has the talent to be an extraordinary investigator. He's good with details. And *very* good at getting information out of people. Every good detective possesses "the gift of the gab," as Fry refers to this key skill. But more than that, a good detective needs to be wily like a fox.

Payne will do very well, the chief thinks as he watches him dole out responsibilities.

Even so, this job is going to be the challenge of his career. Of all their careers.

Braggadocio is not Fry's style, but there's no disputing that the chief himself is a damned good investigator. One time he got a written confession out of a pedophile because he suggested, convincingly, that the guy might feel better if he wrote an apology letter to his teenage victims.

Before the first full meeting wraps up, Payne lays out the structure of the investigation. At eight a.m. daily, assignments will be made. Then at around five or six p.m., they'll regroup. The team leaders want to hear status reports from everyone in the room. No detail is to be held back.

After the briefing ends and they all head off, Fry calls in one of his captains. Anthony Dahlinger is an experienced officer and the likeliest to succeed Fry as chief. When Fry double-checks on whether Dahlinger is comfortable taking on the role of public information officer, the captain says of course, even though this is not an area he's had training in.

As busy as he's been, Fry would have to have been blind not to notice the hordes of press assembling in Moscow. They cram into the area around the King Road house like bees around a hive. His inbox is blowing up with media requests.

Fry ignores them all for now.

He is well aware that anything the police put out in the media, they are putting out to the suspect as well—and to a potential jury pool. The biggest mistake a police chief or sheriff can make, Fry believes, is to overshare.

Yet it happens all the time.

In 2017, the state police superintendent spoke during his press conferences directly to whoever had killed two teenage girls in Delphi, Indiana. Fry found this tactic inappropriate and possibly damaging to the case and vows to do things differently.

Fry shakes his head and goes back to work. He'll get to the press when he's ready. They want a story, but they will have to wait.

He's got an investigation to run.

Chapter 64

Moscow, Idaho
November 14, 2022

Someone in a uniform needs to get in front of a mic, now!”

Art Bettge, Moscow’s mayor of just eleven months and two weeks, can scarcely believe he’s having this conversation—this *fight*—with the city supervisors. And with Bill Thompson, who was his neighbor for twenty years. And with James Fry.

How the heck has a former USDA biochemist with expertise in local agriculture found himself arguing about the need for law enforcement to handle the swarm of press in Moscow? He has never thought much about the business of the Moscow Police Department beyond looking at its budgets.

This is *not* what he’s trained for or what he anticipated when he ran for mayor. He was elected on two main civic concerns: repairing Moscow’s roads and infrastructure in the face of state legislative budget cuts and locating a new water source for the town before its aquifer runs dry. “I can talk your ear off about wheat,” Bettge later said. “But I’m not good at standing up in front of the press.”

But now he’s found himself in the middle of complete public chaos. There are helicopters hovering overhead, sniffer dogs on the college campus. Even a biochemist can see this situation could be ruinous to his beloved town.

“We look ridiculous,” he says to Thompson. He points out that all the police have said publicly is that there is no threat—yet the place appears to be overrun with “cartoon security.”

The public is getting impatient, as are some of the victims’

families. And the press is taking notice. “The lack of information” about the case, wrote reporter Katie Kloppenburg for Boise State Public Radio on November 15, “has frustrated people who say the community needs more specific answers.”

The mayor doesn’t doubt that the chief and county prosecutor will bring whoever did this to justice. He knows how good they are at their jobs.

But right now, Moscow has a public-perception problem. And a safety problem. Crazy rumors—including one about a Colombian drug cartel being involved in the murders—are running rampant. As Moscow’s number one public official, Bettge cannot just ignore this. It’s a great irony that last week he signed off on the wording for a recruitment ad for a crisis communications adviser. But it hasn’t yet been posted.

So he keeps phoning, pestering people, barging into meetings of the city supervisors and yelling. And he keeps demanding the same thing.

He wants a guy in uniform to say something that sounds clarifying or at least slightly reassuring into a mic.

But Bill Thompson and Chief Fry won’t budge. Thompson even warns: “Don’t say anything, Art. You’ll misspeak and mess everything up. You aren’t trained for this.”

The city supervisors are telling Bettge the same thing. Ordering him, even, not to speak.

And yet everyone, including the *New York Times*, is reaching out to him for comment. And Bettge is the mayor.

He needs to make a call. He needs to say *something*. He needs to assure people they can walk around safely, albeit cautiously, which is what Fry and Thompson seem to think. But they want to take their time saying it.

Time is what they don’t have.

The *New York Times*, he thinks, is surely a safe place to give an interview. And so he does it. He’s careful. He gives context.

But in the article, the context has disappeared, and there’s just one startling takeaway:

MOSCOW, Idaho—Four students at the University of Idaho were found dead near campus in what a local official described on Monday as a “crime of passion.”

Art Bettge, the mayor of Moscow, Idaho, said in an interview that the authorities were still investigating what had transpired but that the case was being treated as a homicide. He said the authorities did not believe that there was a “perceivable danger to the broader public,” but he declined to say how the victims had been killed or whether a suspect was at large.

“With a crime of this magnitude, it’s very difficult to work through,” Mr. Bettge said, adding that the police needed time to piece together what had transpired. “The overall assessment is that it’s a crime of passion,” he said.

Oh God, Bettge thinks when he reads it.

A crime of passion? He knows immediately that, far from soothing people, this could fan the flames of the rumor bonfire. He’s achieved the exact opposite of his objective.

“I developed a great dislike for national media very rapidly,” he said of that experience. “I tend to talk in paragraphs and they lift bits out of the middle of paragraphs, those sons of bitches.”

Art Bettge correctly guesses what the reaction of Bill Thompson and James Fry will be.

The police chief calls up the city supervisor and tells him, “Could you please tell the mayor not to talk? Or I will—and it would be better coming from you.”

Chapter 65

*Pullman, Washington
November 14, 2022*

They've got to say something... They've got to say something...
They're looking incompetent...

Evan Ellis isn't just working his sources; he's watching the coverage of them.

It's not good.

A TV segment on the evening of November 14 from reporter Rania Kaur on Spokane–Coeur d'Alene KXLY Channel 4 is typical:

"At the home where the students were killed, a bouquet of flowers rests on a rock right at the front. Joanna Perez was among the students who dropped off a bouquet and teddy bear at one of the memorials," Kaur said.

Perez said that Ethan was in the same college program as she was. "He was kind of, like, in some of my classes. And some of my friends knew him so it just kind of hit close," she said.

"As Moscow police continue their investigation," Kaur said, "Perez is grappling with what happened."

"It's just, like, scary and frustrating," the student said, "because we want, like, answers to what happened, but they're holding back a lot of information from us."

Ellis dials Thompson for the umpteenth time.

For once, the prosecutor picks up.

"Bill, you've got to get ahead of this. You've got to say something. You've got to give a press conference. It's coming down hard."

Thompson is calm. "I know. We're working on it."

That in itself is shocking to the reporter. In thirty years, Bill Thompson has never made any public remarks about an investigation until it was over.

Ellis pushes on, asking the pertinent question that *everyone* is asking.

"Can you explain to me how we're supposed to say there's no threat to the public when obviously you haven't arrested anyone?"

Thompson is still calm. "I can't explain that right now. But there isn't." The prosecutor pauses. "You just have to trust me."

The reporter is frustrated. "Bill, you can understand how this doesn't seem to make sense."

"I understand. I understand your frustration, but I can't explain it to you either off the record or on the record."

Ellis knows the prosecutor well enough not to push this any further. He understands that Thompson has his reasons for everything he does.

But all the other journalists racing into Moscow from New York and everywhere else, spilling out of the Best Western, the Monarch, and the Hattabaugh hotels—they don't know these people the way Ellis does.

They don't know a damn thing about this place.

It would be easy for an outsider to underestimate Bill Thompson just by his appearance. At first glance, he has the look of an old-fashioned gold prospector.

Ellis is worrying about more than simply getting this story. He starts to wonder about whether the story has the potential to destroy the very people who ought to be driving it.

If the prosecutor or the police chief doesn't speak quickly, other people—people who know nothing—will create an alternative narrative. What happens if the public starts to *believe* the wrong narrative? If they start to feel the prosecutor and the chief don't know what they are doing?

Ellis shakes his head.

That would be a very bad outcome indeed.

Chapter 66

Rathdrum, Idaho
November 15, 2022

Alivea Goncalves is sitting in the home office the family calls the “yellow room” at her parents’ ranch house in Rathdrum, Idaho, hunched over her laptop. The shelves are piled higgledy-piggledy with boxes.

She keeps looking impatiently at the clock.

What’s the holdup?

It’s now the afternoon after she got to her parents’ house, and two days after the police knocked on their door and delivered the chilling news of Kaylee’s murder but absolutely no details. She had walked in feeling like she was already behind.

Jack DuCoeur is sitting with her parents, clearly in shock. She feels terrible for him and not just because of the shock. She knows he’d never hurt Kaylee, but there’s nasty speculation about him flying around on social media. Some people are suggesting that drugs were involved and that Kaylee and her friends deserved to be murdered. Alivea wants to do whatever she can to put an end to this narrative. She wants to tell the world that they were good kids, that they’d done everything right, and that she can feel in her gut that whoever did this was unknown to them.

Her parents still don’t have a contact at the Moscow Police Department, so at around noon Alivea had gotten hold of a detective, Lawrence Mowery; he’d asked her to put all her findings from Kaylee’s call log into a secure electronic file and send it, which she did.

Alivea expected the police to take a little time to verify it all, but she can't understand why it's now hours later and not only are the police saying nothing about the information she gave them, but they are still putting out the wrong time that Kaylee and Maddie returned to the King Road house. "It diminished us," she later said.

Time, Alivea knows, is of the essence in murder investigations. It'd be good for the public to know the details of Kaylee's last hours so they can start phoning in tips. It would also be good if the police shared anything they knew about what happened to Kaylee with the family, but the Goncalveses are just as much in the dark now as they were two days ago. It's beginning to feel as if the family is being iced out. And it's also starting to feel like the only person bringing in information is Alivea.

Alivea particularly hoped that the police would publish the video she'd found on Twitch of Kaylee and Maddie ordering food at the Grub Truck.

The video shows her sister standing on the sidewalk at around 1:30 a.m., Maddie beside her. Speaking slowly and haltingly, Kaylee orders: "I think I would like the... um... the... carbonara."

On the video, Alivea noticed a group of guys standing behind the girls, chatting, and another group off to the side. Maddie recognizes one of the latter, wanders over, and embraces him affectionately.

But in the group behind them, one of the guys, whose face is obscured by the light gray hoodie he's wearing, seems to be watching the two girls quietly.

And when Kaylee and Maddie walk off to get in their rideshare, he breaks away from his friends and goes after them. It's not clear from the video footage why.

Alivea has already discovered who "Hoodie Guy" is. He's called Jack Showalter, and he is in the same fraternity as Jack DuCoeur.

She's told the police this and she's hoping they will post it to get answers from anyone who saw the girls and the group they were with that night.

So again she looks at the time. Afternoon is turning into evening.

Why isn't the video up on the Moscow PD Facebook page yet?

She hits refresh again. Still nothing.

She knows that the police need to protect the investigation. Of course she does.

She understands how police investigations are run and how the media works. But the more people out there looking for this murderer, the quicker he—she feels it's a he—can be found and brought to justice. So she's frustrated.

And then someone—it takes her a while to learn it's the mayor of Moscow—gives an interview calling what happened a crime of passion.

For Alivia, this is a tipping point. It presents a completely misleading picture of Kaylee and her friends.

She is not going to sit idly by while all this misinformation gets out there and while the police continue to tell her family nothing.

By early evening, Alivia makes a decision. It's time to take control of the narrative. It's time to tell the public who Kaylee really was, and it's time to spur the public into action to help find the killer.

She's going to start talking to the press.

The first interview she does is with Hayley Guenther, a local TV reporter for an NBC affiliate station in Spokane. Seated in her parents' living room on their black leather sofa, her face white with tiredness, Robbie by her side, Alivia makes a direct plea for the public's help.

"I would say if you know anything, if you think anything, if you heard anything, if you saw anything, just call it in," she says. "I know it's important to protect family. It's important to protect friends. And I know that those ties of loyalty are strong, but you should be scared. And this isn't someone that should be protected. So if you noticed odd behavior, if you noticed something in the shared bathroom trash can, if you noticed a weird smudge on the fridge after your roommate came home late, call it in. Any injuries, anything at all. Because, worst-case scenario, the police talk to them and they get to go home. If they have nothing to hide, then you just did your job. Call it in anonymously."

She feels better afterward. She's doing her part; she's upset that the police don't seem to be doing theirs. It feels too slow, too little, too late. "If I can't sleep at night, how can you, Chief Fry?" she asks

herself rhetorically. She wants people to know how frustrated she and her family are.

So she speaks to Steven Fabian of *Inside Edition*, airing her vexation with the police. "We're not getting any answers, and we're *not* going to settle for that."

Chapter 67

*Priest Lake, Idaho
November 15, 2022*

Everywhere Stacy looks in the house at Priest Lake, she sees memories of her beloved dead son.

From the deck behind the kitchen at the back of the house, she can see the twelfth hole of the golf course. To the front, headed down a slope to the pond, is the thirteenth. How many times have she, Jim, and the kids roared with laughter coming over that hill, a few drinks worse for wear, mindful to aim their balls to the left side of the slope?

It's a tight-knit community out here, and everyone knew Ethan.

One of the neighbors affixed a cross to the front door, one of the many acts of kindness that will flood the Chapins in the next few days and weeks, none of which Stacy will forget.

In the afternoon, she and Jim head out into the snow for a walk, partly to catch their breath, but partly also to talk about how best to support Hunter and Maizie.

They are in the woods when their phones start to ring and ring with unknown callers.

Weird, Stacy thinks. She wouldn't have expected cell reception out here. But also, who, outside of family and law enforcement, wants them so badly?

It turns out that almost every news organization in the world wants them.

In the next hours and days, all four Chapins are besieged with voicemails, texts, DMs, and emails from journalists of every stripe.

Stacy later said: "It would be easier to list who did not contact us. Literally everybody. Everybody. Every news organization. CNN, Anderson Cooper, the *Today* show, *Good Morning America*... All of the Idaho stations... It was crazy."

They make a family decision: They won't talk to anyone.

It's a plus, they discover, that they bought the Priest Lake house relatively recently, because no one can find them in Idaho databases.

That night, Stacy and Jim lay awake again. One a.m.; two a.m.; three a.m. They check in with each other every hour, on the hour, and rise early to put on a pot of coffee and walk again.

The phones start ringing early, and not just with media. They get a call from the funeral home back in La Conner. Their friend Kirk Duffy runs it. He has a relationship with Cathy Mabbutt, the Latah County coroner.

He's on his way to Spokane, which is where Ethan's body has been taken for the autopsy.

He tells them they need to pick a date for Ethan's funeral service. Stacy and Jim choose the following Monday because that gives them enough time to be ready but also enough time for the students who come to get back to their families for Thanksgiving.

Maizie and Hunter still have their social media on, and Tuesday morning is when Stacy becomes aware of the rumors on TikTok in the wake of a new police press statement with information that an "edged weapon such as a knife" was used to kill her son and the other victims and that the weapon has not been located.

Social media is also rife with rumors that Ethan was part of a love triangle. Maybe drugs were involved. Maizie is so upset, she uninstalls TikTok from her phone.

It's in this moment that Stacy temporarily forgets her grief.

Instead, she feels a blazing anger. "I don't mind telling you, I went out of my fucking mind."

Nobody gets to defame Ethan. *Nobody* gets to speculate like this about her son. She doesn't know where this is coming from, but she's going to stop it.

Fortuitously, Priest Lake friends and neighbors Evelyn Allison,

Ethan's ex-girlfriend, and her mother, Kim, who worked in broadcasting in Spokane, knock at the door.

Stacy asks Kim for help. She wants to call up one media organization and do one press interview, preferably with a local journalist whom they can trust.

A young woman named Conner Board at King Five, Seattle, is the journalist she selects.

Kim acts as director. She sets Stacy and Jim up in chairs in front of bookshelves in the living room and positions Stacy's laptop so that they all fit in the frame.

And the interview begins. It lasts around ten minutes. Stacy and Jim look alternately shell-shocked and tearful throughout as Board gently questions them about Ethan's love of sports and of people.

Through her grief Stacy is articulate and deliberate.

"It's important for us to get Ethan's story out," she says. "We don't really want anybody else representing him and it's hard to have people speaking on his behalf, so we think it's best for us to do this."

She continues, "I mean, the reason we've agreed to do this is there's some misinformation out there. And that's been hard for us and that's why we as a family talked about it and agreed to do this because the things that are being said are a hundred percent not true. There's not drugs involved. There's not some weird love triangle... All of the kids were just really good, great kids."

Not long after they are done, Stacy hears tires crunch on the driveway. It's Emily and Hunter Johnson. They've driven up from Post Falls, having spent the night with Hunter's mom.

They are clearly still in shock. Emily whispers that Hunter Johnson has not spoken for twenty-four hours.

Stacy phones Karen Alandt, Emily's mom, who is at the Alandt family condo in Mexico. "I just want you to know they are here and they are safe," she tells her.

But are they okay? Clearly not, Stacy thinks.

The young couple's plan is to fly to Mexico to join Emily's parents. Stacy is worried that isolation will worsen their trauma, not ease it.

This is a moment they all need the comfort of one another. That

afternoon and evening, the group huddles in the living room, talking, remembering Ethan.

Hunter Johnson relaxes and, to Emily's relief, speaks. He and Hunter Chapin go down memory lane, at one point getting out their phones and comparing their text messages with Ethan on that last awful night.

Early that evening, the group drives down to Hill's Resort to find food. The team there has heard the news and welcomes them with open arms and group hugs. Stacy captures the moment on her iPhone.

She'll take all the comfort she can get.

She knows the coroner will call at any moment with details she doesn't really want to hear. Details as to how her son died.

She knows from Kirk that the autopsy is taking longer than expected.

It's possible that Ethan could be transported tomorrow, not today, from Spokane to Mount Vernon for his funeral service.

Her son will be on I-90, the same road that the family has to drive.

As she lies in bed that night, Stacy shudders, already worrying about tomorrow.

Pray to God, she thinks, we don't wind up overtaking Kirk's white Suburban. Other drivers won't know it, but she will:

It's Ethan's hearse.

Chapter 68

*Moscow, Idaho
November 16, 2022*

Chief Fry reads through his script one more time before heading to the podium in the police conference room.

He and Thompson have gone through the boundaries of what he *can* say again and again.

The key thing he is *not* going to tell the media (and, indirectly, the perpetrator) is that they've got the knife sheath found next to Maddie and that it has been booked into evidence and gone to a laboratory for analysis.

His job is to keep the mob happy.

So he puts his game face on and pats Bill Thompson on the back, and together they head into the room of panting press.

Chief Fry has never done a live press conference before, much less one in front of the national media. He makes sure the rest of the "PR team" is flanking him before he begins introductions. Beside him and Thompson are UI president Scott Green, provost and vice president Torrey Lawrence, Dean Blaine Eckles, Latah County sheriff Richie Skiles, Latah County chief deputy Tim Besst, and head of the ISP, Colonel Kedrick Wills.

Each one of them has been advised either by counsel or communications teams or both as to what to say and what not to say if questioned.

Eckles's wife, Shelley, begged him not to say something aggressive like *We are gonna get whoever did this*.

The assumption they are all going on is that the guy is watching.

Is it possible he's even in the room?

Evan Ellis is shocked to see Thompson up there. Bill Thompson *never* attends press conferences. Does the rest of the media realize the gravity of the situation that this implies? Ellis looks around at the stony faces. Probably not.

Fry begins the substance of his spiel, mangling the pronunciation of *Chapin* and *Goncalves*.

His news nugget is not really anything new. And he knows it. It's simply that the four victims were stabbed and that law enforcement hasn't found the weapon. There also appeared to be no forced entry into the home.

Fry confirms what everyone already knows. The ISP, FBI, and Latah County Sheriff's Office are all helping with the investigation.

Then he drops the powder keg in the room.

"We believe this was an isolated targeted attack on our victims. We do not have a suspect at this time, and that individual is still out there. We cannot say that there's no threat to the community, and as we have stated, please stay vigilant, report any suspicious activity, and be aware of your surroundings at all times."

He knows that come the Q and A session, there will be pandemonium.

And there is.

He gets the same question put four different ways from four different reporters.

"You guys have said repeatedly that there's no threat to the public," one of them says. "Why did you say that and why are you changing your mind?"

Fry rewords his answer four different ways, knowing as he does so that each one sounds worse than the one before.

The first: "In these cases, we take the totality of the things that we see and they're very dynamic, right? And they're very big and there's a lot of information and we try to take that information and some of what we can't share with you, correct. But we try to take that information, we try to make the best educated decision we can... so we at that time believed that there was not a threat."

The second: "Like I said, we took the information that we had at

the time, but we do need to be aware the individual is still out there. We need to be vigilant."

The third: "Like I said, we take the totality of the situation. We try to make the best bit of information we can with everything that comes in, and then we make our decision off of that. So at this time, I'm not going to expand upon that."

The fourth: "We still believe it's a targeted attack, but the reality is, is there's still a person out there who committed four horrible, horrible crimes. So I think we got to go back to there is a threat out there still, possibly, we don't know."

It's brutal. He knows this is not going well. Understatement.

Over in Pullman, Mayor Glenn Johnson, who has a PhD in communications from WSU, watches and shakes his head. He says, "James is a nice guy; he got overwhelmed, I think."

When he hears about that, Fry thinks that the criticism is both fair and unfair.

Fry is just trying to do his job. And his job, until now, has been to catch the bad guys, not to feed stories to the press. But he's learning the hard way that, apparently, feeding stories to the press is now a major part of his job.

Irritatingly, there's the inevitable question about Art Bettge's statement.

"The mayor has called it a crime of passion. Is there any indication that that's true?"

"We're looking into every aspect of this. I'm not going to speculate whether it's one thing or another..."

His audience can see how uncomfortable he is. Worse, his audience isn't confined to this room. This is being beamed to TV screens around the country. His own mother is watching.

Someone brings up the Twitch video, mentioning that the Goncalves family has verified Maddie and Kaylee are in it.

Fry tries to sound a lot more patient than he feels.

"We are aware of that video and it has helped. It gives us a time and space where we know that two of our victims were, and that helps us a ton and we'll continue to follow up all leads that we can and continue to gather those."

And, inevitably, the questions about the two surviving roommates come thick and fast.

Why was there such a long delay before they called? Are they suspects? Then one reporter refers to them as witnesses.

They are now in dangerous territory, Fry knows. Bill Thompson will be bristling.

Protect the investigation. Protect the investigation.

"I don't think I ever said that they were witnesses. I said they were there."

When he gets the question about whether he's interviewing boyfriends, it almost comes as a relief. For once, he's got a strong answer.

"I will tell you, we are looking at everyone. Every tip we get, every lead we get, there's no one that we're not going to talk to. There's no one we're not going to interview. There's no one that we're not going to look into and we're going to do our due diligence. We're going to make sure that nothing goes unturned and that we do everything we can with the assistance of all the resources we have to get a final answer."

What Fry doesn't realize is that the country's true-crime internet mob will now take it upon themselves to "look into" anyone and everyone connected to each of the four victims, and those people will now have to deal with not only shock and grief but also an online onslaught of hate mail, trolling, and worse.

They will begin to fear not just the darkness of night but daylight and social media too. Some nutters will even accuse *Fry* of being the murderer. He's highly visible.

By the next afternoon, Chief Fry sees at least ten FBI agents scurrying around.

"Do I know you?" he asks when one of the female agents introduces herself.

"No, sir," she replies. "But I've seen you on TV."

Chapter 69

Puerto Aventuras, Mexico
November 18, 2022

Emily ought to feel relaxed by the azure water and the hot sun, but instead she's wired. She's glued to her phone.

Someone has texted her a link to a YouTube video on 4chan showing old TikToks of her and Hunter Johnson. The self-described internet sleuths are suggesting that Emily and Hunter committed the murders after some sort of drug deal went bad and then left the country.

She wonders how the heck anyone knows she's out of the country.

Then she realizes.

It must be someone who saw her Snapchat.

The night they got to Mexico, it was Hunter's birthday. They'd gone out for tall, strong margaritas. Emily had taken a selfie of the two of them, exhausted, hugging, their green drinks visible on the table. Without any context, it might have looked like a regular vacation pic. She'd posted it to Snapchat because she wanted Hunter to feel appreciated.

It backfired.

Immediately Emily makes her social media accounts private, something she never imagined she'd want to do. She'd never understood why people even bothered to have private accounts.

But now the dark corners of the internet are full of fingers pointed at the small group of friends who sat on the curb outside 1122 King Road on that Sunday. Commentators are guessing which

of them committed the murders.

There's speculation about Emily and Hunter, Dylan, Bethany, Jack DuCoeur, *and* Jake Schriger, Maddie's boyfriend. And after the release of the Grub Truck video, there's speculation about the young man in the hooded sweatshirt who appeared to follow Maddie and Kaylee to their rideshare. Hoodie Guy is Jack Showalter. Emily learns that he's a Delt whom the older Pi Phis know.

Even Emily finds herself sucked into the grim guessing game about which of them might be the murderer.

She goes through the list:

Jake? Emily finds that super-hard to believe because he'd been texting them frantically, sounding panicked, when the friends were sitting outside the King Road house. She feels horrible that none of them responded.

Jack DuCoeur? No way. When he arrived at the King Road house, he was clearly as shocked as they were.

Hoodie Guy, Jack Showalter? Emily is hesitant to write him off because she doesn't really know him and some of the older Pi Phis have said that occasionally, when drunk, he can seem belligerent. And at least for now, there's no other strong potential suspect.

It's not Dylan or Bethany. So who?

Emily considers herself thick-skinned. She's never been the type of person to care what others say about her. But here in Mexico, thirty-seven hundred miles from Moscow, she's scared.

Truly terrified. Maybe the killer followed them here to her parents' house?

At night, in the dark, she clings to Hunter Johnson and keeps the bedroom light on. Neither of them walks anywhere alone after sundown.

"The one night of my college life that I wasn't with Xana, someone murdered her," she said.

Was that person trying to hurt *her*?

Is that person now stalking *her*?

Emily's mom, Karen, feels helpless watching the two young adults walk around like zombies, shells of the people they were just a week ago.

She can see that Hunter, mute for much of the trip, is still in the early stages of intense shock, while Emily is trying to mother Hunter, Dylan, Josie, Bethany, and Linden. That's her way of coping.

Karen regularly speaks to Jessica, Hunter's mom, wondering what they can do to put an end to the online bombardment. The advice they receive from Bill Thompson's office is simply not to engage.

But as every day passes, the speculation gets more lurid.

There are posts everywhere of old footage of Hunter wearing zip ties answering the door at 1122 King Road to police who'd been called about a noise complaint. This raises questions online as to whether he was into bondage.

Emily rolls her eyes at this. The truth is so prosaic if one isn't looking for anything salacious. Hunter answered the door to the cops at 1122 King Road because they were in the middle of a game of champagne shackles, and Hunter and Kaylee were the only members of the group of legal drinking age.

Another internet sleuth, Jonathan Lee Riches, makes a YouTube video suggesting that Xana's dad had put a lock on the King Road house's front door the week before the murders because he was worried that Emily threw wild parties there. Emily, it's suggested, is someone the police are looking at as the possible murderer.

In fact, Xana's dad never put a lock on the door of the King Road house.

At her wit's end, Hunter's mom, Jessica, phones Chief Fry.

"Please," she says, "can you do something to stop this? Can you say publicly they aren't suspects?"

The next day, Fry gives a press conference. He states that the surviving roommates, all the others at the house that morning, the rideshare driver, and the man in the hooded sweatshirt seen outside the food truck are not being treated as suspects.

For twenty-four hours, there is a reprieve online.

But then it explodes again, even worse than before.

Emily and Karen think this is partly because the Goncalves family sat for a TV interview in which Kristi said that the police might have cleared people too quickly, and Steve appeared to agree. Karen and Emily understand that Steve and Kristi want to find the murderer,

but they wish that hadn't been articulated.

It's the first time that the families affected most by the murders disagree as to what the right plan of action is to bring whoever did this to justice.

But it won't be the last.

Chapter 70

Moscow, Idaho
November 18, 2022

Chief Fry is looking at the TV in bewilderment.

He's watching Moscow's coroner, Cathy Mabbutt, his longtime friend and colleague, appearing via Zoom on yet another news program to discuss the autopsy findings.

Cathy, seventy-two, is a local wonder. On top of being the county coroner, she's a public defender *and* a nurse who has worked in the ER for sixteen years.

In 2015, when John Lee shot his mother and two others at an Arby's, she acted simultaneously as a nurse for the wounded and as a coroner. In 2005, when the Wells brothers murdered UI football player Eric McMillan, the judge asked (tongue in cheek) if she could be both their defense lawyer *and* their health-care provider.

She started as coroner back in 2006, and the job had a steep learning curve for the first six months—there were *seven* homicides in the county. On her very first call, she and Chief Fry examined a body that hadn't been found for three days. Fry smeared Vicks in and under his nose, an old cop trick to avoid the smell. But Cathy was a rookie; she didn't know the trick. Eventually, Cathy could bear it no longer and told him she couldn't focus because he had extremely large boogers hanging out of his nose.

So Cathy and Fry go way back. He knows that she knows what she's doing. She understands procedure.

And yet... here she is on national TV.

Fry said later that this was the moment he realized how truly big

this story was, how impossible it was for everyone around him to avoid getting caught up in it. "They say when people riot, they don't even know sometimes what they're rioting for. They just get caught up in the frenzy."

On TV, Cathy is telling interviewers that when she got to the scene at 1122 King Road at around 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 13, she determined that the victims had died from multiple stabbings. She knocks down suggestions of a murder-suicide.

"Most of them just had one [wound] that was the lethal one," she tells NewsNation's Ashleigh Banfield, adding that in each case, the lethal cut was to the chest area or above. Banfield asks if the victims were slashed, and her answer echoes the mayor's comments earlier in the week: "It was a pretty large knife, so it's really hard to call them puncture wounds... it was a stabbing... it has to be somebody who was pretty angry to stab four people to death."

What Mabbutt doesn't say on TV but does say in private, which perhaps explains why she felt moved to speak out, is that in all her years on the job, the scene she found when she got to King Road was "right up there" among the worst. She'd dealt with multiple homicides, but she'd never come across a scene like that, where all the bodies were "right there" together. "And then, just their ages too."

You'd have to be inhuman not to be affected.

But there's plenty about the autopsy results that she shares with law enforcement and the victims' families only. Telling the families the autopsy details—that's the worst part of her job.

For instance, she doesn't say on air that Ethan was stabbed once in the buttocks and once in the carotid artery, but that's what she tells Stacy. (Stacy doesn't want to know anything other than that Ethan died fast and without suffering. She never even reads the autopsy report.)

Cathy doesn't tell reporters that Xana's fingers were almost severed, a sign she fought back hard before dropping to the floor. But that's what she tells Jeffrey Kernodle.

She doesn't tell anyone that Kaylee's wounds suggest that she woke up and struggled. But that's what she tells Alivea Goncalves on

the phone—when, that is, Alivea reaches her, *after* she's seen Cathy on a local news channel. It's the first time Alivea gleans that the killer was likely angry.

Cathy Mabbutt's reports of a frenzied stabbing trouble many locals, too. This is a hunting community. Most people have large hunting knives.

Rand Walker, the local psychologist whom Fry asks to counsel PD members, notices that his friends and neighbors start staring at his arms—and he starts staring back. Who among them has knife wounds? The problem is that many people do. It's common to nick yourself when skinning an elk. Most people return on Sunday nights after weekend hunting trips looking somewhat worse for wear. Until now, no one had thought twice about it.

Blaine Eckles, the UI dean, can't keep this question out of his mind: Was it one of his students who wielded the knife? He's worried because he needs to plan a vigil for some time after Thanksgiving, when the students are back. But by then, he naively assumes, police will have caught the suspect.

But when, a few days into his planning, he asks Moscow Police Captain Roger Lanier how he's doing, Lanier answers: "Each morning I wake up excited and each afternoon I go [home] dejected, because it doesn't feel like they're getting anywhere."

Chapter 71

Moscow, Idaho
November 20, 2022

It's been barely a week since the murders, and the chief has received maybe five hundred emails from strangers about the case. Some good, some bad.

Some are very bad.

One guy, who says he lives in California, writes that he's going to appear in the police station parking lot and take him out.

Then the same guy sends him dick pics.

At night, the chief keeps his twelve-gauge shotgun in the bedroom. He's grateful that two of his daughters are married and have different last names and that the third lives a five-hour drive away.

Another person, who says he's in Florida, starts emailing the chief weekly telling him he will fail and that this is going to be the next JonBenét Ramsey case.

A woman emails and tells Fry that she knows the truth: *He's* the murderer—and he's going to frame someone else in order to look good.

Many people claiming to be in law enforcement write and tell him that he's screwing everything up.

Fry is used to hate mail, although not this much all at once. But that's not his primary aggravation right now.

It's the image building across the country of Moscow being a Podunk little town where nothing ever happens, with a police department that looks like the Keystone Cops. One reporter criticizes

Fry for going home to change into his uniform and get his gun before heading to the crime scene. His longtime ride-along partner, Paul Kwiatkowski, tells him Paul's own brother called from Cincinnati and asked: "What is this rinky-dink cop operation?"

Plus, Fry's now got to deal with all the conspiracy theories out there.

There's one floating around about the victims having been gagged and bound. Another says the police failed to look in the garbage at 1122 King Road. Another suggests Kaylee had talked about a stalker who must be the killer. The murder-suicide story is still making the rounds. Then there are all the accusations being hurled at the surviving roommates and the victims' close friends.

Fry knows that it was a mistake not to come out sooner than he did and say *something*. He inadvertently created an information vacuum, and that's why he now has to spend time he can't spare rebutting some of the crank stuff flying around on social media and Reddit. (Truth be told, he'd never looked at Reddit, didn't even know what it was, until his son told him he was now famous on it.)

This is a learning curve, but Fry's not too proud to admit after that first disastrous press conference that he needs help.

State brings in a public information officer from outside Boise, a guy named Aaron Snell, to act as his coach. From now on, the chief isn't going to utter a word in public without rehearsing with Snell and his colleagues first.

"They would literally drill me for about an hour," he said later. "They worked with me on the fluctuations of my voice... they would act like they were the national press, and they would come at me to see how I would answer each question."

In his head, he's clear on what information needs to stay privileged for the investigation.

The key is not to give any of it away. Which is proving harder than he imagined.

Fry has huge respect for the press. But he doesn't like that the national media, unlike Evan Ellis and the locals he trusts, seem to think they are *owed* a narrative from him, justice be damned: "They think they can have it right now. They want it right now."

Fry doesn't believe that either the press or the community should know everything. That isn't their right. One news organization even called the police station and said they required protection for their crew. "It's in our contract," the guy apparently said. Fry exploded when this was relayed to him. "Well, it's not in *my* contract," he said.

Whenever Fry walks anywhere, he is followed, photographed, and peppered with questions by the press.

He discovers that the media can see through the police station blinds to his computer screen, so he buys butcher paper and plasters it over the station windows.

Why? he asks himself periodically. *Why did I ever sign up for this?*

Fry's mom once asked him that question, and his answer wasn't too profound: "Because somebody's gotta do it, Mom."

But the truth is he believes in public service just like he believes in God.

He and his wife, Julie, share an unshakable faith that gets them through the day. Back in May 2007, when police officer Lee Newbill was killed, Fry was called in to the live shooting, and as he was running out the door, Julie said, "Hey, just one last thing: Come home to me." He got home over twenty-four hours later and asked if she'd slept okay. "I've never slept better," she replied.

He was puzzled. Why hadn't she been worried? "Do you love me?" he'd asked her.

"I do love you," Julie replied. "You've trained your whole life for this day. You have God in control of your life, and either He's going to take you or He is not. I have no control over that. I trust Him and I trust you."

So, yes, now, in his darkest moments, Fry does believe that the Lord has his back. And he trusts his instincts. They are good.

Blaine Eckles asks him if he could maybe throw a bone to the *Argonaut*, the college newspaper, at a press conference. Fry is happy to oblige; he takes questions from the students before he gets to anyone else. They, at least, know how to conduct themselves.

His second press conference, on November 20, focuses on the autopsy results and victims' last movements, and it goes much better than the first. From there, the trajectory climbs steeply

upward.

Snell is happy with Fry's progress. He reminds Fry how much responsibility he bears, justly or not. He tells him, "Because you're the chief, if this [investigation] fails, you'll be a failure. If this *happens*"—if the case is successful—"you'll be a hero."

In other words, Fry is the face of the investigation. Literally.

Fry is usually clean-shaven and even instituted a department policy against facial hair. But this month, he and some officers have been doing a no-shave November to raise money for cancer patients at Gritman Medical Center. Fry planned to shave his beard at the end of the month, but Snell tells him he absolutely cannot do that until there's a suspect in custody. "The nation knows you with a beard," he says, and so the whiskers stay.

The days are so long and busy, Fry's mind almost becomes blank.

He fills eight pages of a notebook with details he might want to remember, even talk about, if one day this nightmare is fully behind him. At night, when he gets home, which is often at around eleven p.m., he pours himself a whiskey—until he starts to worry about the size of the drink he's pouring and wonders if he's headed in a direction he's warned his younger officers and their families about. After that, Fry asks Julie to pour it for him.

At least, Fry thinks, he's gotten the rookies and their families the therapists and support they'll need, something he didn't have when he was their age. The spouses have been educated about the signs of PTSD, what to look for and what help to get.

There's also mundane stuff to do, like filling out purchase orders, buying an extra computer server, having food delivered, carefully monitoring the morning and evening meetings, and signing off on whatever resources are needed to follow leads.

The investigators are spending a lot of time looking at video from CCTV cameras positioned around 1122 King Road, what's commonly called a video canvass.

Footage from a local gas station shows a white car leaving the area in the right time frame, but the face of the driver isn't clear and neither is the model of the car, which seems not to be displaying a front license plate. At first, the investigators believe it's a Nissan

Sentra.

The police have issued a map showing the victims' last movements to the public, asking for anyone who saw anything suspicious to call the tip line; an FBI agent is monitoring all the calls.

It's not unlike the map Fry made for Michelle Wiederrick, the mother of poor Joseph Wiederrick, the student who, in 2013, wandered for eight miles after a fraternity party and wound up freezing to death by the river.

As if Michelle could read his thoughts, Fry receives an unexpected email of support from her. "We are praying for you," she wrote. "I know you are going through a tough time."

Emails like this—from the families of victims in prior cases with whom he has a bond and with whom he has stayed in close touch—are what keep him going.

Chrissy Dove, the sister of Sarah Parks, the young pregnant woman who was strangled to death and then burned in a house fire by her husband, Silas, in 2009, texts Fry a screenshot of him and Bill Thompson on TV: I'm so sorry y'all having to deal with this; prayers for y'all and the families, she wrote.

Fry had found the body of poor Sarah and her unborn baby after Silas claimed she'd died in the fire, but it had taken some time for him to be able to prove the case and for Bill Thompson to pressure Silas into taking a plea deal.

A few days later Chrissy texts Fry again with another photo: You're on Good Morning America... I hate that y'all have to go through this because I'm sure it brings up many more things in your mind.

The chief replies: Yes, the demons have come to life again, but we do it for the victims and their families. That is our reward.

That *is* the reward. He believes it. Fry wants to get whoever did this for the four victims' families.

But all the garbage out there in the press is not helping.

He can see on TV that the Goncalveses are using the media to flush out anything they can. Kristi is on NBC begging whoever did this to come forward. She says openly that she's frustrated with the little news they are getting from the cops. That's because on their

nightly calls from Tyson Berrett, he's got nothing to report. And because, as Alivea will later put it: "We had no one to help us not put our foot in our mouth."

Fry sighs. Each of the families gets the same information, but he's noticing they deal with it differently.

Maddie's mom and stepfather, Karen and Scott Laramie, are quiet, shell-shocked; they let the Goncalves family talk for them. Maddie's dad, Ben Mogen, also stays out of the fray.

The Kernodles stay quiet as well. It's possible they don't want anyone focusing on them right now. On November 19, Kootenai police arrested Xana's mom, Cara Northington, on two charges of drug possession. She'd been clean, working as a waitress, but relapsed following Xana's death.

Stacy Chapin heard about this with a certain amount of shock as well as sympathy for Jeff and Jazzmin. Stacy didn't know that Xana's mom had been in and out of jail her whole life. Ethan never told her.

Stacy assures Berrett and Fry that they have her family's support, no matter how long the investigation takes. "We don't care if this takes you thirty years, we will still believe in what you're doing," she tells Fry. "We'll believe that you guys are doing it right and we're going to support you."

People like her are what make the chief's world go round.

On November 23, Chrissy Dove sends him a note: "I wish I could let the world know how hard y'all really work on cases... knowing all the heart and love that y'all show."

Fry replies: "They will know when we make an arrest. I have lost all respect for the national news and media.... All it does is hurt the families... and gives people false information."

Chapter 72

*Mount Vernon, Washington
November 21, 2022*

More than a thousand kids, friends, and family pile into Skagit Valley College's McIntyre Hall. There are too many to fit in the auditorium. Stacy had no idea there'd be this many. She and her family rolled in the night before and congregated at the Bertelsen Winery.

She's so grateful to her cousin Stuart and his wife, Kathleen. They swept into town and booked a hotel and a vast house to hold everyone and they'd taken care of all the logistics. Kathleen introduced Stacy to a friend who was a PR executive in Boston and who stepped in to act as the gatekeeper between the Chapins and the swarm of media people seeking their attention.

It's been a whirlwind few days for Stacy, and the kindness of people has been as overwhelming as her grief.

She was dreading putting Maizie and Hunter in sleeping bags on the living-room floor of the condo. She longed to be able to tuck her two surviving children in at night in a proper bed, to reassure them in the way only a mother knows how.

Her best friend, Susie DeVries, had intuited this ahead of time. The Chapins arrived to find Susie had bought out the linen department at Bed Bath and Beyond and purchased a pair of inflatable mattresses as well.

That wasn't all. Also intuiting that in the window between now and Ethan's memorial, the Chapins would not have the bandwidth for chats with random people, Susie banned visitors. She also

brought a carload of food and organized a meal train.

Kirk Duffy, the director of Hawthorne Funeral Home and Memorial Park, had brought Ethan's body back from Spokane, as he promised.

He'd also persuaded Stacy and the others to view Ethan in the casket.

The Chapins had been reluctant. Stacy knew from the coroner that the stab wounds that had killed Ethan were below his collar line. But even so... she was afraid of what she'd see.

Duffy had been firm, however. He told Stacy: "I've done this for a very long time and you need to see him."

In hindsight, Stacy knows the funeral director was right. She's grateful.

Stacy tucked a dry sock and, out of habit, a Taco Bell card into Ethan's coffin. "God forbid the guy would go hungry," she later said. She watched, surprised and touched, as Jim added a golf tee.

In front of the massive crowd of mourners at the memorial service, she says that, during the viewing, while she was gazing at her son and the mustache he'd grown and that she hadn't been such a fan of, Hunter had nudged her and said, "You guys know the real reason he has the mustache, right? He watched the new *Top Gun* movie and he wanted to look just like those guys on the sand volleyball court."

Stacy had *not* known that!

She and Jim spent hours working on their respective eulogies.

Jim was adamant that they tell the college kids that they *must* get on with their lives, that they cannot be derailed by this.

Jim has always been a glass-half-full kind of person. He's viewed his life as a blessing, with Stacy and the triplets being the greatest blessings of all. He'd gotten a second chance in the wake of an unhappy first marriage, and he wants to make the most of every moment.

He's the husband and dad who keeps them all going. "It's all good," he tells them whenever they are tired or cross.

If he's ever had a mean thought, Stacy doesn't know about it. She can *feel* how proud he is of her almost every hour. It has always buoyed her.

So when it's Jim's turn to speak, he puts on his Vandals cap and gives the young people in the audience a directive to follow, for Ethan's sake.

His son, he says, "would love for all you kids to get back to school as safely and quickly as you can, to carry on what he was carrying on there. It's very important... that you kids get back after you've healed... We all have a lot of that going on, but I want you to go back."

When Stacy speaks, she says that it's essential that, in addition to celebrating Ethan's personality and life, she needs to clarify how he died and debunk the nefarious rumors swirling around, not just for her own family but to ease the suffering of everyone in the room.

"So we want to speak about what has happened to our son, not about the investigation, but we want you to know a couple of things that make us feel better about what happened that day," she says. "There were no drugs involved; the autopsy cleared that. There were no love—weird love triangles.

"Ethan Chapin was where he wanted to be," she continues. "He'd had a wonderful day and in the end he was staying at his girlfriend's house. I mean, what a great thing, right?... So I mean, that's supposed to make you feel better. I mean, none of us could have changed the outcome of that day. Ethan was asleep when this really tragic event occurred, and we want you to know that no phone call would've saved him. He did not suffer. It went very quickly."

And when Stacy gets to the subject of Ethan's mustache, she uses the levity it causes to make a serious point to the parents in the room.

"I do want to remind you that in the end, those battles don't matter. Hair, mustache—those aren't the battles you pick with your kids. It just doesn't matter. Pick the hard ones."

Stacy mentions that Ethan's and Xana's best friends, Hunter Johnson and Emily Alandt, are watching the service via live stream.

She doesn't mention that they aren't there in person partly because they are afraid Ethan's murderer is coming for them next.

Stacy also doesn't mention the starkly obvious fact that the other three victims' families are not holding public services for their kids

out of fear that whoever did this might attend.

"My wife's biggest fear," Steve Goncalves later told ABC News, "part of the reason we didn't have a funeral, is because she couldn't be guaranteed that that monster was going to not be there."

Unlike the other families, the Chapins are not fearful. Chris Cammock, the local police chief, is a friend. There's a small police presence outside Ethan's service, but that's to cope with the crowd. The question of who the perpetrator was and what he might do next is just not something they think about.

"Nothing can bring Ethan back," Stacy says. Her focus now is exclusively on her living kids.

She concludes her eulogy: "Ethan was an amazing human and we're so lucky to get to call him son and friend. So thank you, all of you. I am not sure what tomorrow looks like in our family. I do know that the four of us will make it. It is going to change the look of what we've had for twenty years, but we'll do it. Ethan would want that for us. He would want that for all of you. He wants that for you kids. He wants that for his brother and sister. And that is what we, if there's anything to take away from this, it's to know that Ethan Chapin would want the very best for all of you no matter what it is....

"It's incredible that a man so young has touched so many of us. May we continue to carry his kindness and his smile through all of our years, and when night skies are clear, wherever you are, look to the brightest star in the sky and send him your love. Certain people feel it. We love him. May he be your guiding light."

Nearly two years later, Stacy watched the video of the service and said, "I wouldn't change one thing."

Chapter 73

*Rochester, New York
November 19, 2022*

It's a cold, gray morning in upstate New York. The sun won't rise for another hour at least.

But Kristine Cameron, assistant principal at a local school, is already awake and sitting in front of her computer screen. On November 19, Cameron and her best friend from high school, Alina Smith, started the University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook group page. It's already become the fastest-growing page about a true crime in Facebook history.

Overnight, 3,000 people have requested to join.

In just a few weeks, it will have 200,000 members.

Many of these are fake accounts, but as page administrators, the duo has learned on the fly that it's essential not to reject people out of hand. It turns out that many of the local kids in Moscow who think they saw something important during the relevant time frame want to report that anonymously. They haven't used Facebook until now, preferring Instagram and TikTok. So they create Facebook accounts with fake names in order to reach Kristine and Alina personally.

The administrators have helped put many of these students in touch with the FBI.

"We had one girl contact us [via her aunt] and talk to us and tell us that she was hanging out with Kaylee and Maddie that day," Kristine said. Alina took the call. "They got ready together, they went to the football game together. They came back and they got ready

together. They went to the Corner Club with the girls. They were hanging out, they were drinking, were having a great time. And then when it was time to go, Maddie and Kaylee left, went to the Grub Truck, and they went and they left and went home." Their house was kitty-corner to 1122 King Road.

"The amount of guilt that you could hear in their voices," Kristine said, "and how they were talking and 'Oh, I wish I would've stayed with them. Oh, I wish they would've come over to our house.'"

Kristine and Alina have founded and administered true-crime Facebook pages before. In fact, they have ten of them. They have one about the 2007 disappearance of Madeleine McCann. Another about the 2021 murder of Gabby Petito. Others about the 2022 killing of toddler Quinton Simon and the 2019 so-called doomsday-cult murders committed by Lori Vallow Daybell and Chad Daybell. And more.

Their goal is to create an audience for a true-crime podcast they hope to start. Alina has had several high-level meetings about it. So far, their pages have attracted a few thousand followers each.

It had been Alina, based in Prosper, near Dallas, Texas, who pushed to create a page about the Moscow murders because she'd seen someone else start a Facebook page and quickly garner 4,000 members.

This struck a nerve with Kristine, who knew the founder of that group and who describes herself as "supercompetitive."

"Okay," she said. "We'll do it."

She'd known right away that the Idaho case was "different," in a league all by itself when it came to attracting Facebook followers.

Four victims meant four times the chance that someone might sympathize or connect with one of them. Plus, the victims were particularly appealing. Bright, smart, attractive; "four young people that had their whole lives ahead of them," Kristine said. "And they were so insanely popular and they were on social media and their house was so lively and... they were like the life of the party anywhere."

But the speed at which the page took off shocked even the two administrators. Within ten days, they found themselves interviewed

on NewsNation by Ashleigh Banfield about the findings and discussions on the page around the Venmo activity of the four victims, including one transaction from the sister of a guy Ethan had Venmoed that was time-stamped 3:30 a.m.

Kristine attributes the success of the page to the vacuum created by the police.

In the Gabby Petito case, “you’d see the police [asking], has anybody seen this girl? Does anybody have any videos? Does anybody have any pictures? The police were out asking for public help and assistance, whereas this case was very different. The Moscow police were very tight-lipped. They held all of their information close to the vest.”

Their Facebook page seems to fill the void left in the narrative by the Moscow police’s reticence. On it, no stone appears to have been left unturned based on the few nuggets out there. Almost everyone has an opinion about Hoodie Guy, about Bethany, Dylan, Jake, Jack, Emily, Hunter...

There are so many different theories as to who committed the murders and why that people are getting into fights.

“You had to deal with people [fighting] in real life,” Kristine recounted. “And when I say real life, I mean people going onto other people’s pages, people going into people’s messages and threatening them.”

Somebody on the page phoned Kristine’s employer and accused *her* of being inappropriate online. Her boss called her in: “What did you do? What did you say?” And her boss wanted to see the page.

Another time, she was asked to call the HR department of a guy’s workplace after a woman on the page claimed she was underage and that he (also on the page) was soliciting her. (He was not.)

It has become all-consuming for both of them. Alina is in the midst of getting multiple procedures for an injured back, but she works on the page day and night and gets to know some of the members personally.

Kristine wakes up at five a.m. so she can work on the page before going off to school. Even there, she sneaks in more work on the page, and when she gets home, she doesn’t even try to handle

the house or the kids. She leaves all that to her husband.

There's more to do than anyone might guess. Behind the scenes, Kristine and Alina are flooded with messages and calls from young people claiming to be friends of the victims—and who do *not* want to post.

"So now those people who are talking to us, all right, they're not posting about that. They don't want the fame... They would private-message us and say they would talk to us. They wanted somebody to talk to and they didn't want to talk to police. They didn't want to talk to their other friends. They wanted an adult to talk to, to just go through what they were going through. They needed somebody to talk to. Literally, we were therapists. We were a go-between, between police and the FBI. We were Facebook starters. We were page starters. We were everything rolled into one."

One person is watching all the Facebook chatter with more than idle interest.

On the other side of the country, Alivea Goncalves asks to join the page so she can monitor all of it from her parents' house in Rathdrum. She reads all the frenzied speculation blaming Jack DuCoeur. She reads that people think Kaylee and Maddie had secret OnlyFans accounts. She reads all the theories about Kaylee's Range Rover, about how she afforded it. She reads that people believe her dad, Steve, must be promoting something because he's on TV so often. She reads that there is a rift among the victims' families.

Even though it doesn't seem terribly effective, she appreciates the firm hand that Kristine and Alina try to take as administrators: STOP the name calling, STOP the belittling, they wrote in a post to their tens of thousands of members on December 3.

!!This is a space to discuss and theorize NOT attack other members!! !!You will NOT agree with everyone and most likely will not change their mind so politely disagree or MOVE ON!!
✓ We will no longer warn you. You will simply be removed.

As Alivea reads and reads, an idea starts to form in her mind.

This page could be a great resource. A great place to ask people for tips. A great place to send videos. And a great place to start setting the record straight.

Chapter 74

*Moscow, Idaho
November 24, 2022*

The FBI trailer that will act as the agency's mobile command center pulls up to the Moscow police station on Thanksgiving Day. The truck is so enormous, it looks like it might not fit through the gate. It does. Just.

TV cameras film the arrival, of course.

In this week's press conference, the chief and his team try to strike a more media-friendly tone, even addressing the fake news out there.

"We have heard that Kaylee stated she may have had a stalker. Detectives have been looking into that and to this point have been unable to corroborate the statement, although we continue to seek information and tips," Captain Roger Lanier said, reading from his script, adding that, contrary to online rumors, the victims had not been bound and gagged.

Just a few days later, the team obtains a search warrant for Kaylee's Tinder account.

Kaylee's wounds had appeared to reflect the possibility that she had woken up and tried to either fight off her attacker or call for help and then she was somehow stifled. Broadly, this will make its way into the public consciousness, courtesy of Steve Goncalves, who cites the coroner and blames the police for not sharing more details.

But the public certainly does not know that two days ago, the forensics team sent a sample of the DNA they'd found on the knife sheath to Othram, a DNA sequencing and genomics lab in Texas.

That's because the investigators had run the DNA through CODIS, the FBI's database of fingerprinted individuals, and it had come up empty. So now, using the new methodology of investigative genetic genealogy (IGG) that has sprung up around the popularity of public genealogy sites, Othram will try to build a family tree around it. But the process could take days, maybe weeks.

Investigators have also sent off 103 pieces of evidence, including hair, fingernail clippings, and footprints, to local labs. Law enforcement's interview team has spoken to more than one hundred people so far.

The chief's victimology teams are building detailed profiles of the four victims they are getting to know as well as they know their best friends: Xana, the charismatic extrovert; Ethan, the all-star laid-back athlete; Maddie, the quieter only child; Kaylee, the exuberant go-getter.

At least one of them was a target. Which one? Why?

The chief still hasn't got a suspect, so it's understandable that he doesn't yet have a handle on a motive: "I think you're always looking for the why all the way through your investigation," he said. "Typically, the why doesn't just jump out to you because you have to piece the whole picture together. And really every piece of something that you get, or every warrant you do, there might be a nugget in that piece that gives you a little bit more of a clearer picture. And maybe not, maybe you get nothing out of it. Maybe whatever you put in for didn't give you any fruit at all."

There's one critical development in the case the chief doesn't share with the media.

The team monitoring CCTV cameras is homing in on the white car seen doing three passes around the King Road house between 3:29 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. At 4:04 a.m. it appeared to make a three-point turn near the residence, go back and forth on King Road, then take Queen Road, which had a turnoff going behind the house. The car reappeared at 4:20 a.m. and left at high speed.

Yesterday the FBI vehicle specialist got a better shot and identified the vehicle not as a Nissan Sentra but as a 2011, 2012, or 2013 white Hyundai Elantra.

So, on November 25, the day after Thanksgiving, the chief approves a message to local law enforcement agencies to be on the lookout for this specific car.

Four days later, in the early hours of November 29, over in Pullman, Washington, WSU police officer Daniel Tiengo searches for white Elantras registered at the university.

He sees that one, a 2015 model, belongs to a student named Bryan Kohberger.

A colleague of Tiengo's, Officer Curtis Whitman, spots the actual vehicle in a Pullman student-housing parking lot. He logs it.

But white cars are ubiquitous. So are Hyundai Elantras. So, since this car appears to be a model from the wrong year, the Pullman cops don't pass this up the food chain to Moscow. They don't yet know that the FBI vehicle specialist has in fact now conveyed to his agency that it's possible, given the shape of the fog light and rear reflectors in the available images, that they should extend the date range of the Hyundai Elantra to as late as 2016.

Meanwhile, Fry has got his hands full managing another screwup with the media, possibly even worse than the first. This one's from a surprising quarter.

On November 29, Bill Thompson gave a rare interview to a TV reporter named Brian Entin, a rising star at NewsNation.

Entin and his crew stormed into town like a tornado. Of all the national reporters, he's the one getting access. He's gotten to the Goncalves family and to Aaron Snell. And, somehow, he gets to Bill Thompson. Who made a rare mistake when Entin asked him about the use of the word *targeted*. Some of the students and the victims' families, Entin said, have been frustrated, not understanding what that word meant. Could Thompson explain?

Thompson told Entin in a recorded video interview that *targeted* had perhaps not been the right word to use. He said that investigators believed that whoever did this was still at large and was specifically looking at the King Road *residence*, but they could not yet say who might have been the target. Entin posted the video of the interview to Twitter.

But then, just a day later, Thompson spoke to KTVB's Morgan

Romero and gave a different explanation—he said that one of the *victims* was definitely a target, although he did not specify which one.

Hours later Thompson wrote a letter to Romero walking that back. She tweeted a quote from it: “Investigators do not believe the murders were random, but we cannot unequivocally state the residence, or any occupants, were specifically targeted. I apologize for any confusion.”

Piling onto the bonfire of confusion, Moscow police posted a “clarification” to their Facebook page:

Conflicting information has been released over the past 24 hours. The Latah County Prosecutor’s Office stated the suspect(s) specifically looked at this residence, and that one or more of the occupants were undoubtedly targeted. We have spoken with the Latah County Prosecutor’s Office and identified this was a miscommunication. Detectives do not currently know if the residence or any occupants were specifically targeted but continue to investigate.

Chief Fry knows that the PR damage is done. Under pressure from the media, who themselves are under pressure from the Goncalves family and others to get answers, Bill Thompson misspoke.

All that progress Fry made with Aaron Snell just got undone and more. Thompson’s office puts out a statement saying he will be giving no further interviews.

The image of the Keystone Cops running Moscow has been reignited in the national media, Pete Yachmetz, a security consultant and former FBI agent, tells the *New York Post*. “What is also happening now is the police, by providing imprecise comments, are creating an erosion of public confidence in them... That’s unfortunate because in the end public confidence is needed to solve this crime. The public is very concerned there is or may be a killer in their midst and they see no progress in the investigation.”

The *Post* quotes Steve Goncalves telling Fox News right after Thanksgiving that he was frustrated because the police hadn't spoken to him in three days. "We're the same family that found the original timeline. We're the same family that broke into the phones. We tried everything in our ability." (In fairness, Goncalves has another source of stress he keeps private: The family has been getting threats in the mail and online. Steve is concerned for the safety of his youngest daughters. But when he tells the police this, the reaction is underwhelming. "Tell them to be aware of their surroundings" is the unsatisfactory response.)

When Evan Ellis interviews the chief in the midst of all this, Fry blows off a bit of steam. He tells Ellis that he's discovered the national media, disappointingly, is focused only on the story and money.

But for him, this is not about those things. It's about lives. Four human lives and families.

He doesn't tell Ellis—at least not on the record—what he thinks privately: He has tremendous sympathy for the Goncalves family, but he wishes they would say less to the media. It makes police less inclined to share developments with them. Because the one thing that would ruin the investigation is for someone to know too much about it—and talk about it on TV.

Chapter 75

Moscow, Idaho
November 25, 2022

Christ Church pastor Doug Wilson is ready for the trolls when they come.

For two days after the murders, everyone had been united in shock. But he'd known that wouldn't last. "It took two days for the old fault lines to reappear," he said.

So now he's sitting back and reading the online hate mail linking his congregation to the murders. "We get slandered regularly and so it's just all in a day's work," he said of the speculations and accusations.

Ever since Wilson's father started Christ Church in Moscow, in the 1970s, the institution has been a *bête noire* for the town. Wilson accepted, with equanimity, the seeming local consensus: He and his church are an irritating, possibly even evil, cultlike presence in their midst.

"I know they think I kick puppies on my lunch hour," he said matter-of-factly during one such lunch hour as he sat in his book-lined, windowless office in downtown Moscow, Diet Coke on the desk.

Partly the friction stems from money. The church is so rich that even though it has around three thousand members—perhaps 10 percent of the town's population—it's bought up most of Moscow's prime real estate and filled Main Street with church-owned schools and businesses: New Saint Andrews, the church college; the K-12 Logos School; the Sword and Shovel bookstore; Bucer's coffeehouse.

The church even has its own bar: Tapped.

Wilson knows that most Muscovites refuse to patronize these businesses. He quite enjoys hearing about their resistance, especially one comment: "It's a shame, too, because they've got all the best stuff."

The Kirkers, as members of Christ Church are known—a reference to the church's local nickname, "Mother Kirk"—stand out for their blond Caucasian looks and preppy attire. The men wear button-down shirts and jackets; the women all wear skirts—a distinction that feeds into the perception of misogyny. The liberal town finds the church's attitudes toward women antiquated at best, repugnant at worst.

UI professor Kelly Quinnett remembers a 2019 campus talk entitled "Toxic Matriarchy," given by conservative pastor Christopher Wiley, with a Q and A session moderated by Pastor Wilson, in which Wiley argued that modern society was suffering because women "have basically gotten too much power." Quinnett was livid that they'd hold such a discussion *on* the UI campus.

During COVID, the police and the Kirkers clashed badly, and lawsuits are still flying.

Three of the Kirkers were arrested in September 2020 when congregants gathered outside city hall, unmasked, and sang psalms in protest of the city's mask mandates. Donald Trump even tweeted about it, writing DEMS WANT TO SHUT YOUR CHURCHES DOWN, PERMANENTLY. HOPE YOU SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING. VOTE NOW!

But just a few weeks later, two of Wilson's teenage grandsons, Seamus and his older brother, Rory, who was a scholarship student at Columbia, were detained and charged with multiple misdemeanors for placing hammer-and-sickle SOVIET MOSCOW stickers on city utility poles in the middle of the night. They were dressed in hijabs and flip-flops at the time.

Their father, Wilson's son Nate, a screenwriter, was asleep. But he was phoned, awoken, and then arrested, charged with helping to make the stickers. The charges against him and his younger son were dropped, but the Columbia scholarship student, Rory, wound

up being convicted of one charge of affixing a sticker to a pole.

He's appealed the ruling, and the appeal is on the desk of Judge John Judge. The litigation has cost his family north of six figures.

So as Doug Wilson reads all the news reports criticizing the Moscow Police Department for its handling of the murders, he senses an opportunity. This could be great PR for the church. And very helpful for his grandson's litigation.

He starts to type his weekly newsletter to his congregation.

There are three things to remember. The first is that the police are currently engaged in a crucial task that God has assigned to them, and we should be doing nothing but praying for their success in it.

But then he gets to point two—the opportunity for the litigation around his grandsons.

Second, you are all aware of the fact that it was this same police department that arrested some of our members for singing psalms legally... and lawsuits are in progress. But this is all being pursued biblically and out of true principle, and does not want to unjustly tar those good cops who had nothing to do with it. So if we give way to any carnal gloating or glee over the fact that our police department is now receiving very critical attention from all over the world (which it is), then we have become part of the problem.

Finally, he focuses on the larger PR opportunity the murders offer to the church and the community. It's imperative that his congregants do not screw it up.

And last, we need to take a few steps back and look at the big picture. Our little town keeps finding itself in the

limelight, and it has to be acknowledged that something strange is happening... *Meet the Press* came and did a story on what was happening here in Moscow, tagging our town as the place where the Christian Nationalism thing is going on. And then these sensational murders happened.

When he's finished, Wilson sits back, pleased with his handiwork.

He knows there will be eye rolls in the town, but who cares? The pastor describes himself as having very thick skin.

He regularly invites local law enforcement and other civic leaders to lunch in a back room of the church. They refrain from talking about the lawsuits, but he subtly and unsubtly reminds them of the church's importance in the community.

It's not unhelpful, Wilson thinks, that the church owns the building that houses New Saint Andrews College, which has a CCTV camera positioned above the Grub Truck. He gathers that there's video on it of Maddie and Kaylee walking toward the truck with a guy in a hoodie, talking about someone named Adam on the night of the murders. It's been handed over to the police—a useful reminder to law enforcement of the upside of the church's presence in Moscow. Until recently, that building had sat there empty, no camera. Wilson tells people that Moscow was on a downhill trajectory until Christ Church and its businesses came along.

But Wilson would like to be much more than just an economic solution for Moscow. "Our desire is to evangelize the town," he said.

So the murders, though tragic, are an opportunity for him to step in and preach the need for his church to fill the moral and spiritual vacuum.

The house where the students were murdered, 1122 King Road, was in "a seedy area," Wilson said, "not somewhere I'd want my daughters living"—making the point that seediness, which stems from godlessness, brings about trouble. And, in this case, murder.

Chapter 76

*University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook group page
November 29, 2022*

Kristine Cameron and Alina Smith, the two administrators of the University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook group page, start to notice some unusual posts from a member going by the name Pappa Rodger.

They have no idea who the user is in real life.

His avatar is cartoonish, creepy, seemingly digitally created. It's a profile of a man with graying hair in some sort of military uniform.

Pappa Rodger garners attention very quickly with a startling opinion: Of the evidence released, the murder weapon has been consistent as a large, fixed-blade knife. This leads me to believe they found the sheath. This evidence was released prior to autopsies.

Until now, amid all the theories and speculation on the page, no one has mentioned a knife sheath.

Pappa Rodger gets pushback, and he argues with people who disagree with him.

A user named Dustin Stubblefield responds: Due to the number of victims and assuming each victim was stabbed multiple times I'm sure that there was visible evidence of a [knife] guard. For all we know the investigators on the scene wiped a couple stab wounds clean to look for bruising. I think it's far more logical than finding a sheath. Sheaths are usually attached to a belt.

Pappa Rodger writes back: They don't clean bodies at a crime scene. The amount of blood must have been tremendous.

Stubblefield: Who knows. Finding a left behind sheath seems like a stretch, though.

Pappa Rodger: Why? They are very specific about the weapon but vague about every other detail.

Stubblefield: I think it's more likely they did closer examination on the wounds on scene than you think...

Pappa Rodger: Curious, why are you debating the sheath theory so hard?

Stubblefield: Because who would carry a sheath?

Pappa Rodger: Who would carry a large exposed knife?

A picture of a Ka-Bar knife is posted for everyone to study.

Pappa Rodger: How did the killer hold the knife prior to entering the scene in your opinion?

Stubblefield: I would guess he carried it in his hand from wherever he came from. A knife in a sheath could cause him problems.

Pappa Rodger: Which hand?

Stubblefield: I don't freakin know lol. Why would you even ask that?

Pappa Rodger: So a knife wielding person walked from where? And, entered this house at what point with a large knife in hand?

Stubblefield: How in the hell would I know that?

Pappa Rodger: Do you carry a knife?

Stubblefield: Dude give it a rest. You sound like a psycho.

Members start messaging Kristine and Alina asking who the heck

Pappa Rodger is. Why is he so arrogant? And why is he focusing on the knife sheath?

Kristine and Alina wonder if Pappa Rodger is ex-military, given his strange profile picture and his seeming expertise in crime.

They notice that he posts fairly regularly, sometimes multiple times a day. And his questions and opinions seem to contain a certain macabre insight. Who is he?

I believe the killer(s) came from the high side of the house. They were covered in blood after the attack.

I feel like blood ran down a few places but it has been suppressed. The kitchen was dripping blood but they won't admit it.

Did the killer(s) drive or walk to and from the scene?
Thoughts?

Why did the killer choose a knife as the weapon of choice?

Did the killer stop at 4 victims out of exhaustion, convenience, or lack of knowledge?

Why do we think the dog was spared?

Why did the killer choose that house over all the others in the area?

How long do we think the killer was in the house?

Do we think the killer took anything from the house?

Kristine googles Pappa Rodger to see if there's any clue as to this person's real identity. All that pops up in her search is the incel martyr Elliot Rodger, the twenty-two-year-old student in Santa Barbara who wrote a manifesto and in 2014 videotaped his plans to murder a bunch of people as revenge for all the women who wouldn't sleep with him.

Kristine clocks this, but the connection seems too vague—just the

spelling of the name Rodger—for her to do anything dramatic like report him to the police. But neither she nor Alina likes his arrogant tone or the darkness of some of his thoughts, so they decide to keep an eye on Pappa Rodger's posts.

One reason they are particularly sensitive to the content and tone on the page is that Alivea Goncalves, Kaylee's sister, is in regular touch and has become a contributor. Kristine had reached out to her on Facebook Messenger and Alivea responded with her phone number. A relationship developed between Alivea and the two founders. But there was a bump when Kristine asked Alivea to participate in a Vice documentary about the Facebook page founders and Alivea said no, bluntly.

But Alivea and Alina continued to talk. Alivea has mentioned that she's pregnant but she wants to keep that a secret. There's too much else going on for that to be a focus.

The two have an unofficial arrangement in which Alina passes on any video or tips submitted that Alivea might find useful, and Alivea sets the record straight about Kaylee and the Goncalves family directly on the Facebook page.

No, Kaylee was not on OnlyFans.

No, Steve Goncalves is not promoting any product on TV.

No, there was no "deal" for Kaylee's Range Rover.

No, the family never said this attack was targeting Kaylee.

Finally: No, I do not know who killed her. I wish I did. & I can promise that I will find him & I will know. But I am still getting there piece by piece.

Chapter 77

Moscow, Idaho
November 30, 2022

Dean Eckles chose this date deliberately. The first Wednesday after Thanksgiving is Chapter Day, when Greek life reconvenes on campus. “We knew the fraternity and sorority community was going to turn out massively for this,” Eckles said.

It’s snowing. It’s *really* snowing. Seven or eight inches.

He cannot believe his good fortune. He used the weather as an excuse to move tonight’s candlelit vigil for Ethan, Xana, Maddie, and Kaylee indoors, inside the Kibbie Dome. But the weather isn’t the real reason he made the switch.

Chief Fry told him last week that it would be much harder to secure the venue, maybe impossible, if it was outside. The Kibbie Dome has magnetometers at the entrances. It’s entirely possible the suspect may try to show up. They need to be ready.

So Eckles gave up his vision of an iconic outdoor ceremony and notified the students of the change—but he cited the weather as the reason, not wanting to scare anyone.

Idaho’s governor, Brad Little, is also coming.

Eckles arrives an hour early to go through last-minute checks. He sees a crowd of about thirty young people all dressed alike. Despite himself and the gravity of the situation, he chuckles. They’re undercover FBI agents. “I don’t know who told ‘em to dress like college students,” he said, “but they all looked like lumberjacks... plaid shirts, blue jeans, and boots.”

Still, Eckles immediately feels better. He doubts anyone can get

past this bunch.

He's not yet met any of the victims' families, and soon some begin to arrive.

The Chapins barely make it in time due to the weather. Even without snow, the drive from La Conner to Moscow is a good six to seven hours.

I-90 is closed, so Jim takes Highway 2. "I don't even know why it was even still open. It was just me and a couple of other people on the road," he said. "It's heavy snow. Crazy. I wouldn't want to do that again."

Stacy remembers that other awful drive from La Conner to Moscow just two weeks earlier. And she remembers something else. She wants to make an apology.

"I really chewed out someone on your staff that day," she tells Dean Eckles when they shake hands, recalling the angry phone call.

"I know," he tells her with a smile. "It was me."

The Chapins are ushered through a separate entrance and up to a press box, sky-high, where they can watch the students filing in.

And where they can be surrounded by FBI agents.

From this height, Hunter sees the Sig Chi brothers, all dressed up in coats and ties, walk to the front. He's instantly touched. "I knew my fraternity was coming, but I didn't know how many of them," he said. "But every single person came."

He asks Jim and Stacy if he can go stand with his brothers. They ask law enforcement. The answer is yes, but with a caveat: He has to take his FBI detail with him. A young woman with long, shiny black hair, clad in boots, jeans, and a green plaid shirt, follows him.

The Sig Chi brothers are confused to see Hunter with a stunning woman who does not take her eyes off their friend for even a fraction of a second. His brothers don't believe that she's an FBI agent until she sees they are all looking at her and she flashes her badge. The shocked expressions on their faces is something Hunter Chapin savors. A moment of fun in an otherwise bleak universe.

When the service is about to start, Stacy and Jim head downstairs, agents in tow, and meet Steve and Kristi Goncalves.

Steve is practicing his speech on behalf of Kaylee and Maddie, but

he stops to shake hands. He shows Stacy a photograph on his phone of a man with glasses.

"Have you seen this guy? It's Maddie's dad, Ben Mogen," he says. Steve seems surprised that Ben is there to speak about Maddie. Maddie was raised by her mom, Karen, and her stepfather, Scott Laramie. They had full custody. So Steve has never met Ben.

But Karen and Scott Laramie, grief-stricken, are skipping the vigil. So are the Kernodles. Maddie's grandmother—Deedle, as Maddie called her—later said that she stayed home out of fear.

But the vigil is televised, so even those who are absent can watch. After introductions from Dean Eckles, Stacy Chapin takes the stage. And in her inimitable, articulate style, she finds a way to touch everyone there.

Her message is about life, not death. She draws a portrait of the Chapin family, a family, she says, probably not unlike any of theirs. They play games; they eat dinner together when they can; they listen to country music; they spend their weekends following their kids to various sporting events. She tells the students she's not going to dwell on that awful night. No one can change the outcome. Ethan would want them all to carry on. To keep pursuing their dreams and reaching their goals while cherishing the time they have together because "you can't get it back."

Steve Goncalves is up next. With his wife, Kristi, by his side, he strikes a soft tone as he describes himself as the girl dad constantly amazed by the perspectives of his daughter. He talks about Kaylee and Maddie's friendship, taking comfort in the fact that the two besties died together. But he also makes Kaylee and Maddie a promise: "We're gonna get our justice," he says toward the end.

That night, the Chapins' chief concern is the well-being of the Sigma Chi brothers. Since November 13, their fraternity house has been besieged by media knocking and drones flying overhead. (Even on this visit, Stacy's best friend, Susie DeVries, who has come with them, wakes up in her hotel to find what she later realizes is a member of the press washing her window.) Part of honoring Ethan's legacy, Stacy and Jim believe, is looking after the fraternity brothers he meant so much to.

So Hunter messages the house in a group text that the family is coming over to be with them and they need to put their phones in a basket and pull down the blackout shades. There's money, he says, for pizza and beer.

They gather in the lodge. In the same room where Ethan and Xana spent their last night partying.

Cocooned in a safe space, far from prying eyes and lenses, insulated against social media, the brothers, still in their suits, and the Chapins stay up all night talking about Ethan. Laughing. Some of them get extremely drunk. Some of them cry. Nobody cares.

They are living on borrowed time, safe for just one night to let rip. This is their moment of catharsis, their moment to connect, remember, and treasure Ethan, and they are going to make the most of it.

Chapter 78

*Post Falls, Idaho
December 2, 2022*

The chapel is overflowing with people, many of whom Emily Alandt recognizes but a lot of whom she doesn't.

She and Hunter Johnson are back in Idaho for Xana's memorial service and to get their stuff from Moscow. Emily had refused to go to the vigil at the university. She was too frightened to go to something huge and public like that.

And she'd said no when Jazzmin, Xana's sister, asked her to speak at the second vigil in Post Falls the previous night. It was being live streamed and she didn't want to find herself blowing up even more on social media. Her mom is now following a Facebook page that's a case-discussion board to try and get ahead of all that.

But Emily said yes to Jazzmin when she asked her to speak at Xana's memorial because the family wants to keep that small.

It hasn't turned out small, Emily thinks. Looking around the church, she figures there must be at least a hundred mourners. And there's a side room with another fifty chairs. People are standing because there's nowhere to sit.

Emily sees the Chapins and the Sig Chi brothers. They all look wrecked. It's been a heck of a few days since Thanksgiving. There was the vigil at the school. Then a vigil in Post Falls. And now this. There's Josie and Linden. They are more together now than they were before. Dylan is there too. No sign of Bethany.

Emily doesn't recognize Xana's mother, Cara Northington. Why would she? But Cara is there, out on bail. (She'll be rearrested when

she fails to report to court afterward.)

The service itself is surprisingly religious. Everyone is often asked to pray. Emily hadn't known that Jeff Kernodle was religious, but you never can tell.

When it's her turn to speak, she pulls out her phone. She spent last night writing out what she'd say. She wants it to be real. She doesn't care what people think. Xana didn't care what anyone thought. So this is it. This is her moment to say everything she feels about Xana, her best friend.

And so she begins.

Hi, my name is Emily Alandt. I would like to start by saying how honored I am to be up here getting the chance to speak about someone who I got to call my best friend.

She tells the story of Xana introducing herself to the Pi Phi, explaining that her name is pronounced "'Xanax' without the -x." How Xana was the light and energy source in every room.

I remember the moments. And after all, it is the moments we are left with. For all the moments I have been blessed to share with her, I am grateful. Death ends a life, but not the relationships of that life. We get to keep the moments and relationships. There was a silly sweatshirt she would wear with Eeyore on it and I found a quote from Winnie-the-Pooh... that says, "How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."

Xana's length of life was shorter than any of us could have imagined or wanted, but the depth of her life was grand. You can look at Xana's short life as a success. If you made your life about happiness and the happiness you give to others, then she was successful in what truly matters. May you rest in peace, my best friend, Xan.

When she's done, she and Hunter say their goodbyes to everyone. Then Emily heads with her parents to the airport. They're going back to Mexico for five long weeks. Hunter will come as often as he can.

Emily needs to get far, far away from everyone. She needs to finally sit with her grief. But as she looks back at all her friends, Xana's friends, Ethan's friends, it occurs to her that she'll miss them. In fact, she needs them. And five weeks without them is going to be very tough.

Chapter 79

*Moscow, Idaho
December 15, 2022*

For once, in the morning meeting, the Chief hopes that they might be getting somewhere with the DNA found on the knife sheath.

It's been a meandering process.

Othram labs had checked the sample against DNA in public genealogy databases such as FamilyTreeDNA. Those results had led to "low matches" with four brothers.

The Idaho State Police had reached out to one of the brothers, requesting he give a DNA sample so that Othram could keep working to build a family tree. But he had refused.

So the team had conferenced. On December 10, Idaho State Police had asked Othram to stop work and hand over its findings. The ISP had then turned those findings over to the FBI to take the step of running the DNA profile through GEDMatch and MyHeritage, two genealogy databases which purport not to permit law enforcement searches.

The FBI can legally do this because, as later noted in court records, there is a loophole in Justice Department policy that permits government agencies to use *discretion* when searching data provided to websites that do not have customers' permission to share it.

The chief doesn't know all the details, but it turns out he is feeling optimistic with good reason.

Four days from now, on December 19, the FBI gives "a tip" to Brett Payne. Payne will later say that the name provided is not one

they'd previously associated with the investigation.

The name is "Bryan Kohberger."

Now the investigators can look at Kohberger's vehicle records, which show he owns a white 2015 Hyundai Elantra.

The Moscow team will look at the video they've gotten from cameras around King Road, to see if the white car that appeared to drive around the house several times that night could be a 2015 Elantra. And it turns out that, yes, it could.

And when they do a video canvass in Pullman—where Kohberger lives—for the night of November 13, they can see that at 2:44 a.m. the car is headed north on Nevada Street. But less than ten minutes later, it's headed south on State Route 270, the road that connects Pullman to Moscow.

And when investigators check Kohberger's name in their databases, a police body cam shows that on August 21, a Bryan C. Kohberger was detained in Moscow at a traffic stop—and that the car had a rear Pennsylvania license plate LFZ-8649 that was set to expire on November 30. It had no front plate, which is permissible in Pennsylvania but not in Idaho or Washington. The car they'd captured on video had no front license plate.

Further DMV records will show that on November 18, just five days after the murders, Kohberger registered the vehicle in Washington and received new license plates, front and back, as is required: CFB-8708.

From there, locating the car will be relatively easy. The new plate showed up on a license plate reader in Loma, Colorado, on December 13. And on December 16, CCTV footage put the vehicle in Albrightsville, Pennsylvania, where, according to databases, Kohberger's parents live.

They will also note that Bryan Kohberger's driver's license photograph shows a man with dark hair and dark bushy eyebrows—the description that Dylan Mortensen gave of the masked man she had mistaken for a fireman on the night of the murders.

Obviously, Fry isn't going to start smiling in his press conferences. He'd like to. "I'm not a downer person," he complains to Julie, his wife.

But he's hopeful.

And no one passes on anything to the victims' families.

Chapter 80

*Moscow, Idaho
December 2022*

When Steve Goncalves pulls up to the house of attorney Shanon Gray, he feels so at home, it's weird.

The Grays' house is on five acres outside of Moscow. Like the Goncalves, the Grays have five kids. Like Steve Goncalves, Gray's initials are SG. His license plate is 7GS, a sometime Goncalves family password.

Gray is covered in tattoos and wears a trucker hat. He drives a maroon Mercedes G-Wagen and complains that the Moscow cops are endlessly stopping him because of it. Even before Steve knows anything about Gray's career, he decides he's going to hire Gray to be his lawyer.

He'll later say that it wasn't really his decision at all. "The girls"—meaning Kristi and his daughters Alivea, Autumn, and Aubrie—had already decided. They'd told him the family needed a lawyer because they were worried Steve would go and say something he shouldn't.

"They know I'm willing to break rules," he said. "I don't want to catch the wrong person, but I don't want to sit in a line of five people and wait for my turn to figure out justice." He added, "There are things that we can request and things we can do to get to the truth faster. You have to fill out forms to get this evidence released to you. I don't know how to do that."

Jack DuCoeur's aunt Brooke Miller knows Gray's wife, Tiffany, an Instagram influencer whose account describes the ups and downs of

their large family. Miller introduced the Grays to the Goncalves women, but they sent Steve to close the deal.

Steve applauds the dynamism his girls showed in getting Gray, though he might have gone in a different direction and hired a civil lawyer. Gray is a criminal lawyer.

To Steve, there is much to appreciate about Gray, an unlikely lawyer who cannot let a perceived injustice drop. He feels positive about Gray's "prosecution experience... more experience than Thompson"—specifically "way more murder cases," he said.

"I'll spend as much money as I got to to make sure that we get to the bottom of this," Steve said.

The girls have in fact already thought about how to pay Gray—and a private investigator. To get out in front of any controversy over the Goncalves family online fundraiser that Brooke has advertised on the University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook group page, Alivea posts: By no means do we expect anything at all but for those looking to specifically help with legal and independent investigation fees, this fundraiser has been started for us.

Steve wants Gray, a former prosecutor in the Multnomah County (Oregon) DA's office who's aggressive and "not afraid of a microphone," to go shake some trees to pressure the cops and Thompson.

Steve explains that his frustration with the cops started to build on the third day following the murders, when, thanks to Alivea, the Goncalves family discovered who Kaylee had been in touch with on the phone, had gotten hold of the Grub Truck video, and had been in touch with the rideshare driver, a fraternity house-designated driver.

Steve says he asked the cops: "Do you know about the food truck? Do you know about the Uber driver?" When the answer to both was negative, he says he exploded. "These guys don't even know what the fuck's going on."

The family expected to be interviewed by police. Instead, they received a questionnaire to fill out about Kaylee. They'd also gotten hold of video of the crime scene from a neighbor that the cops didn't pick up from them. And they'd asked the owner of a local vape shop, where Kaylee had talked about a stalker, if he'd given the CCTV

footage of that to the cops. The answer was no. And now it was too late. The recording had looped. So when Bill Thompson appeared to be muddled about whether the house, a victim, or no one had been targeted, Steve snapped.

On December 13, Steve told Fox News Digital he'd hired Shanon Gray because he was frustrated with the police's lack of communication and what he saw as missteps in the investigation.

"I have a lawyer for a reason," he said. The police talk to his lawyer now. "They've messed up a million times," he continued. "But I don't get to say that because what experience does Steve have? He doesn't know. He's just a dad who woke up one day and had his life turned upside down."

Gray started giving TV interviews in which he said he sat down with investigators and Thompson and asked for more transparency and accountability.

When Chief Fry first saw Shanon Gray on the news, he was bemused. *Who is this guy?* he wondered. Most people in Moscow had never heard of him. The more the police chief sees of Gray, on TV and off, the less he trusts him. It doesn't help that back in January, Gray was suspended from the Oregon State Bar for misconduct. (He was reinstated thirty days later.)

Gray moved to the outskirts of Moscow from Portland earlier in the year. In one of life's ironies, he bought the house next door to Nate Wilson, the screenwriter son of Christ Church pastor Doug Wilson and the father of the two boys arrested for putting SOVIET MOSCOW stickers on lampposts in the middle of the night during COVID.

Nate Wilson is completely mesmerized by his new neighbors. Gray's wife, Tiffany, strikes Nate as an "emotional, passionate" person, and he listens raptly to Gray's life story, which includes an earlier career as a bouncer in a bar and a row with the Moscow City Council over a halfway house opposite the junior high school that lacked, he felt, appropriate oversight.

He told Wilson he'd uncovered all sorts of corruption and self-dealing inside city hall, but Nate never gets to the bottom of that

story, partly because Gray is always on the road, defending clients in Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai County. And now Gray is swept up in the murders, because he started representing the Goncalves family.

Gray is, understandably, given his stalemate with the police, very sympathetic about the Wilson family's clashes with law enforcement. Nate remembers finding it difficult, borderline impossible, to trust that the MPD could get anything done.

The chief wants to help the Goncalves family. He wants to get justice for Kaylee.

They are getting closer with the investigation. But the battle lines have been so clearly and aggressively defined by Gray that the police chief feels unable to share much, if anything, with them. It's a shame.

Chapter 81

*Rochester, New York
December 16, 2022*

It's dawn and Kristine is looking at the Facebook page, aghast.

She posted an exclusive video that has news programs calling her constantly; her phone is ringing off the hook.

It shows Maddie and Kaylee on the sidewalk, en route from the Corner Club to the Grub Truck. Hoodie Guy is accompanying them, a little bit off to the side, but it looks as though he's there to help. The two women are not walking entirely steadily.

Kaylee asks Maddie: "What did you say to Adam?"

Maddie replies: "I told Adam everything."

Everyone on the Facebook page and in the media is now fired up about the identity and role of Adam.

Oh God, Kristine thinks. This is not good. Not good at all. The opposite, in fact, of what her intention had been.

The point of posting the video was to show everyone that Hoodie Guy—Jack Showalter—apparently had good intentions that night, not bad. She wanted to provide much-needed context to the Grub Truck Twitch video in which he seemed to stare at them and follow them for no reason. This new video showed there was a perfectly good reason: He'd been walking with them all along.

The video had been given to police soon after the investigation began by someone who worked at Saint Andrews, but nothing was released to the public. Kristine had gotten this video from a man who did not want his name out there or his connection, via his girlfriend, to New Saint Andrews College, the building on which the

camera perched.

The source had followed the online mania and the speculation about Hoodie Guy and wanted to help clear his name. At first he'd wanted Kristine to show a still, but they ultimately decided that the best choice was the simplest: just play the video.

Prior to posting it, Kristine sent the video over to Alivea Goncalves. It turned out that the family knew who Adam was.

He's Adam Lauda, a close friend of Jack DuCoeur—and Maddie and Kaylee. The former high-school basketball star bartends at the Corner Club.

The video has gone viral because of the mention of Adam.

"Who Is Adam?" That's the headline run by major media outlets—including Fox News and *Inside Edition*—and it's the topic of numerous posts on the Facebook page.

Marc Trivelpiece, the owner of the Corner Club and Adam's boss, is livid.

Not just because he's gone overboard to protect Adam and all his employees from media intrusion but because weeks ago police interviewed them all, and they figured the way to protect the investigation was to stay quiet.

He knows at once where this video came from: New Saint Andrews College, the school founded and owned by Christ Church. Which makes him even madder.

"They like chaos," he said of the church. "Anything that can get the people who are dead set on being in Moscow to loosen their grip and make it easier for their people to come in, they're going to do it."

Appearing on Fox in a split screen with Shanon Gray on December 17 is Steve Goncalves, who surprises Kristine by saying, "We've had that film for a while."

Even so, she's glad he's doing this interview to set the record straight about Adam.

"I believe the business reached out to us directly after they had given it to the police," Steve says, though his attempt to calm the waters once again roils Kristine, who'd thought she had an exclusive.

The video, Steve says, "was kind of comforting to us because it's

just two girls having a good time, talking about, you know, asking about their bartender, just being girls on their way to the Grub Truck... We did the obvious due diligence and looked into that, and it was pretty clear that this individual was not a part of the investigation as far as a suspect."

Phew, thinks Kristine.

But even as the speculation about Adam is dying down, another problem appears: Pappa Rodger. This Facebook page is meant to be a place to discuss the murders, not rant.

His posts continue to needle other members. It's not just his arrogance. It's some undefinable feeling of aggression. He keeps making snide comments like Why is proof so hard for you?; Help me help you; Maybe you should consider post-secondary education?; and Do you have emotional issues?

On December 14, he posted about law enforcement: Fight me... LE is no closer to solving this than they were 30 days ago?

Two days later: The killer has a sexual dysfunction. Thoughts?

And in another instance of seeming overconfidence, of possibly having peculiar insight into the case, when he was asked how long he suspected the killer was in the house, Pappa Rodger answered: 15 minutes.

On December 22 he posted: The killer is not in the victims immediate circle.

And on December 24 someone asked: You think the assailant has left the area?

Pappa Rodger replied, Likely.

Sitting in his office at the police station, Chief Fry is interested in following this. The team has appointed an investigator to track all the social media discussions about the case, including the Facebook page.

By now the police have a good idea of who their suspect is.

And Pappa Rodger is right. The suspect is *not* in the victims' immediate circle. And, yes, he has left the area.

The question for the investigator is: *Why* is Pappa Rodger right?

Is it because he knows the suspect?

Or because he *is* the suspect?

Chapter 82

*Moscow, Idaho
December 19, 2022*

It's evening when Brett Payne gets the phone call from the FBI suggesting that a "Bryan Kohberger" might be worth looking into.

It's the call he and the team have been waiting for. "The DNA from the knife sheath was the one thing we had that we thought was a very strong piece of evidence," Payne will later say.

The next morning, via Microsoft Teams, the FBI walks him through how they constructed the family tree and why they believe Kohberger should be looked at. Payne doesn't know much, if anything, about investigative genetic genealogy. He's never used it before, so he finds the details they give him "above [his] head."

But that doesn't matter. What matters is that the tree includes the Kohberger family, based in Pennsylvania.

On December 23, the investigators have enough information for Payne to apply for a warrant to pull Bryan Kohberger's phone records to check the location of the cell towers pinged by his phone in the early hours of November 13.

Payne learns from AT&T records that Kohberger's cell does indeed appear in the broader area early that morning:

2:42 a.m.: Network near Pullman picks up the cell phone near his house, heading south out of Pullman

2:47 a.m.: Phone disappears from the network

4:48 a.m.: Phone reappears on a network covering I-95

south out of Moscow

5:30 a.m.: Phone shows up on the Pullman network again

9:00 a.m.: Phone appears to leave the Pullman network

Between 9:12 a.m. and 9:21 a.m.: Phone shows up on the network around 1122 King Road

9:31 a.m.: Phone is back on the network covering Kohberger's home in Pullman

In fact, the phone, when they retrieve it, will also show that an hour later, around 10:30 a.m., while he's still at home, Kohberger takes a strange mirror selfie in what appears to be the bathroom in his apartment; the bare shower rod, empty towel rack, and white tilework are visible in the background. His dark hair damp, he's grinning and giving a thumbs up, his face deathly pale. He's wearing over-ear headphones and a clean white dress shirt, buttoned all the way to the top.

In order to see if Kohberger had stalked the King Road house or anyone in it, Payne and the team get another warrant and review earlier records of the phone's calls as well as its locations. Since Kohberger opened the account in 2022, the phone appears to have been close to the King Road house on at least twelve occasions. All except one occurred late at night.

So, finally, the puzzle is coming together.

Now it's time to find a way to prove the very compelling, but still circumstantial, theory that Bryan Kohberger is their man.

The simplest and most obvious way to do this is to check his DNA and see if it matches the DNA on the knife sheath.

The FBI reaches out to its Philadelphia field office.

Plans for a surveillance operation in the area are set in motion.

The chief knows better than to count his chickens. But this year, Christmas feels more bountiful than he had dared hope. He even manages to take the whole day off to be with Julie and the family.

And because he's feeling optimistic, he writes back to his emailer in Florida, the one who tells him this will be unsolved like the

JonBenét Ramsey case:

"I want to wish you a merry Christmas. God bless you."

The guy writes back: "You better hope God blesses you because if not, you're going to go down in history as one of the worst."

We shall see, thinks the chief. *We shall see*.

Chapter 83

*Rathdrum, Idaho
December 28, 2022*

Alivea, Steve, and Kristi Goncalves are seated together on their black leather couch, tissues in hand. A large photograph of Kaylee hangs behind them.

They are giving this in-depth interview not to a reporter from a news network but to a cybersleuth from New York, Olivia Vitale, a brunette in her twenties.

They've chosen Olivia rather than a journalist from an established news network, Steve says, because, in going through Kaylee's TikTok, he learned that Kaylee watched Olivia's interviews under her moniker "Chronicles of Olivia."

Could this be a sign that Olivia is the chosen one to find whoever killed Kaylee?

"It feels like... this is Kaylee-approved... And if that can play a role in solving this crime, then that makes it a lot better. That helps with the process of healing," he says on camera.

Toward the end of the interview, Alivea explains that she has taken it upon herself to be the Goncalves family's own cybersleuth. Her mother, Kristi, tried for a week to follow University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook group page but quit because it made her too upset. But Alivea understands what a treasure trove—a hive mind of research—exists online.

Alivea speaks slowly and emphatically to the camera: "I'm in every group I can be. I monitor every post. Because what if he slips up there? What if he's *in* one of those groups? What if he says

something that's a little too close, that gives me a bad feeling? That's why it's a long shot, but it's what *I* can do. *I* can take that time. I can read these posts. I'm physically capable of doing that. So I will."

Alivea devotes all her waking hours to the work, because who knows what—or who—she will find.

The same day that the Goncalves film with Olivia Vitale, the chief and his colleagues field a query from NBC about a Texas-based self-described psychic and TikTok cybersleuth.

Ashley Guillard, creator of "Ashley Solves Mysteries," has now posted hundreds of videos accusing University of Idaho associate history professor Rebecca Scofield of orchestrating the murders.

Professor Scofield has never met any of the four victims. She and her husband and young children were in Portland, Oregon, when the murders occurred, but this doesn't matter to Guillard, whose "evidence" is based solely on her "clairvoyant" insights.

She keeps posting that Scofield had had, at some unspecified time, a romantic relationship with Kaylee, and when she was jilted, she hired a hit man to prevent the affair from ever coming to light. Guillard identified the hit man as Jack DuCoeur.

Scofield hired a lawyer in Boise, former US attorney Wendy Olson, who wrote twice to Guillard asking her to cease and desist with the lunatic claims.

But the psychic doubled down and posted even more.

On December 21, Scofield sued Guillard for defamation. The suit claimed that her family's safety had been put at risk.

So, today, NBC is on the phone to the police, asking if Scofield is, in fact, a suspect.

By now Fry, Snell, and the communications team know better than to bother squawking in disbelief when the crank questions come.

They give a measured statement: "At this time in the investigation, detectives do not believe the female associate professor and chair of the history department at the University of

Idaho suing a TikTok user for defamation is involved in this crime.”

“I know I said at one point, ‘There are no dumb questions,’” Fry later said. “But I was wrong. There are.”

Chapter 84

*Pullman, Washington
December 28, 2022*

The WSU police chief, Gary Jenkins, is finishing up for the day when he sees that James Fry is calling his cell phone.

"Can you meet at our police department?" Fry asks.

Jenkins and Fry are old friends. Jenkins was recently reassigned to WSU, but prior to that, he ran the Pullman Police Department for twelve years.

It's highly unusual for Fry to be as secretive and tight-lipped as he's been about the Idaho Four, as the victims are coming to be known, but the chiefs have helped each other out on dozens of cases. Jenkins knows what his friend is trying to prevent: somehow tipping off the murderer.

So, as he drives over to the Moscow police station, he assumes Fry's holding a second multiagency briefing, similar to the one where they asked for help searching for the white Hyundai Elantra.

But when Fry meets Jenkins at the front door of the station, the WSU chief senses this is different.

Jenkins follows Fry upstairs and into the conference room and sees a sea of faces. He realizes the entire team of investigators is gathered there, waiting for him.

What they are about to tell him, Fry says, is completely confidential, not to be shared even with his agency.

In that instant he realizes why he's there.

They've found whoever did this.

And this person is at WSU. On his turf.

His heart sinks.

Brett Payne says, "We think we know who the suspect is, and he's in WSU housing."

And then he says his name: "Bryan Kohberger."

Odd name, Jenkins thinks. But it's an odd *familiar* name. It rings a bell, and then it comes to him.

"I know that name," he tells the people in the room.

He sees astonishment on their faces.

"I think I interviewed him for an internship position when I was Pullman chief. I probably have his résumé and cover letter in my files."

He goes straight back to his office and sends them over.

Payne and the team receive them, and their contents make it straight onto Payne's draft affidavit, the one he'll submit providing evidence to justify an arrest warrant for Kohberger. It already contains what the police have discovered about the path of the Hyundai Elantra, Kohberger's cell phone records, and what Dylan Mortensen saw that night.

Payne now adds to it the following:

Pursuant to records provided by a member of the interview panel for Pullman Police Department, we learned that Kohberger's past education included undergraduate degrees in psychology and cloud-based forensics. These records also showed Kohberger wrote an essay when he applied for an internship with the Pullman Police Department in the fall of 2022. Kohberger wrote in his essay he had interest in assisting rural law enforcement agencies with how to better collect and analyze technological data in public safety operations. Kohberger also posted a Reddit survey which can be found by an open-source internet search. The survey asked for participants to provide information to "understand how emotions and psychological traits influence decision making when committing a crime."

While Payne is writing, Jenkins is sitting in front of his computer, already running his to-do list through his mind. He's getting ready for what he'll say when he's allowed to share what he knows and for when his team gets the green light to write the warrants for the Moscow team to search Kohberger's home and office.

Thank God he'd spoken to the guy in charge of camera security along Stadium Way, the main street in Pullman.

Soon after the murders they'd agreed it might be worth holding on to the footage of the night of the murders beyond the regular retention of sixty days.

He sees in his databases that the Pullman cops pulled over Kohberger in October. And he now sees that his guys, Officers Tiengo and Whitman, had identified the car a few weeks back.

WSU's community is going to freak out when Kohberger is arrested. Jenkins knows this. He's got a team of counselors on standby for the cops; he'll almost certainly have to offer their services to the university.

He goes back to his database. What else was there about this guy that was missed?

There was a break-in near his apartment reported recently. Wasn't there some story about a student being followed to her car?

What else?

His train of thought is interrupted by his phone. It's Fry, thanking him for Kohberger's résumé and cover letter. "No problem," says Jenkins.

"Oh, and Gary, one more thing," says Fry, letting out a small chuckle: "Aren't you glad you didn't accept his application?"

"More than you know," replies Jenkins.

Chapter 85

*Albrightsville, Pennsylvania
December 27, 2022*

G*et in. Get the garbage. Get out. Don't be seen.*

Don't be seen.

The FBI surveillance team can tell Kohberger is skittish. And that he knows what he's doing.

It's pitch-black, freezing.

The agents are cloaked by night and by the dense woods of the Poconos. It's the time when most people are sound asleep, particularly in the dead of winter.

And yet, astonishingly, at four a.m., Bryan Kohberger walks out of his parents' house, carrying garbage and wearing nitrile gloves. He dumps the bag in his neighbor's trash can. Then scurries inside.

But a few hours later he's back out again, gloved and depositing more garbage in his neighbors' trash cans.

Back and forth. He carries out bags several times in the hours to come. Always wearing gloves.

The agents are ahead of him, though. They know time is of the essence.

In the early hours of the morning, they fish the garbage out of the Kohbergers' bins and the neighbors'. According to the law, once trash is placed in a bin or on the curb, it is public property. They fly it to the Idaho state lab.

By December 28, they've got what they need.

They alert Pennsylvania's state police, stationed at Stroudsburg, to be ready.

Bryan's DNA was *not* in the trash. He must have worked overtime to ensure that. But his dad's DNA is.

And his dad's DNA shows a likelihood of his being the father of the person whose DNA is on the knife sheath—a likelihood that, according to the lab, would not be shared with at least 99.9998 percent of the male population.

That's enough for Payne to finish his probable-cause affidavit, sign it, and walk it over to the courthouse for the signature of Judge Megan Marshall.

From there it's emailed to Pennsylvania.

Justin Leri and Brian Noll, two veteran troopers in Pennsylvania's Criminal Investigation Division, fill out the paperwork they need to get a judge to sign the arrest warrant and the other seizure warrants. At 4:35 p.m., Judge Margherita Patti-Worthington of the Monroe County Court of Common Pleas signs them.

Now it's go time.

The Pennsylvania State Police Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) gets ready for a night raid.

Chapter 86

*Rochester, New York
December 29, 2022*

It's 7:10 p.m. and Kristine is hunched over her laptop watching Pappa Rodger cross a line.

He writes to one woman: Please elaborate you attention whore.
And to another: You are full of donkey excrement.

Kristine has asked a friend, Deb Cully, to oversee the page when she and Alina are busy. Deb's technical title is page moderator. She calls Kristine. "This guy's going crazy," she says. Deb has had to delete four of his posts in the space of a few minutes.

Kristine tells Deb to go ahead and ban him.

"We have strict rules about name-calling other people, belittling other people, swearing at them, or trying to meddle in their real life," she said.

But when you ban someone, you delete the footprint of all their posts.

This is not something that worries Kristine in this moment, but later she will wish she'd screenshotted absolutely everything he ever posted before they banned him.

An hour later she sees that he's created a new Facebook page, called Moscow Idaho Murders Anything Goes.

It's a collage of Instagram photographs, chiefly from Maddie's account, although there are a couple of pictures of Kaylee.

Oh, well, Kristine thinks. Pappa Rodger is trying to compete with her. Let him try!

But the next day he goes dark. No posts. Nothing.

When Kristine looks at her Facebook messages to find their correspondence, she sees the messages are gone, as is his creepy picture.

Now, *that* is weird. That doesn't need to happen after a ban.

She doesn't know if he deliberately styled himself after Elliot Rodger or what his deal was.

On December 30, the news bursts onto TVs around the country: The police have made an arrest. In Pennsylvania.

When Kristine compares the features of the guy in handcuffs on her TV screen to the profile picture of Pappa Rodger, she sees an uncanny resemblance.

And she starts to wonder...

Was he right here under her nose all this time?

Is Bryan Kohberger also Pappa Rodger?

Chapter 87

*Albrightsville, Pennsylvania
December 29, 2022*

The emergency response team readies the explosives, the flash-bangs they'll use for "dynamic entry." It's the only way to handle dangerous arrests.

"You've got to protect the team," Fry said. "It's all about creating a diversion."

He did his part to divert Kohberger by giving a short statement earlier that evening in his office. On camera he announced that 1122 King Road would be visited by a cleanup crew on Friday to deal with biohazardous material. He also thanked the public for the tips—almost twenty thousand had come in. His entire statement took one minute.

If Kohberger was watching—and chances were, he was—he'd have no idea from the chief's grim expression and matter-of-fact delivery that outside his window, around forty highly trained members of the Pennsylvania State Police SWAT team are getting ready to enter his parents' house.

Fry, on the other side of the country, knows from personal experience exactly how this is going to play out.

Back in 2011, Fry's ride-along partner, Paul Kwiatkowski, stood on a ladder looking into a room at the Best Western hotel where a UI assistant professor of psychology, Ernesto Bustamante, was holed up with six guns; he had just shot dead his student Katy Benoit, with whom he'd had a romantic relationship. The cops wanted to get inside the room before he could shoot himself or someone else.

They had shot canisters of gas through the window to persuade him to come out. Kwiatkowski's goal was to explain what was going on and calm the professor down.

But with no warning, the SWAT team threw a flash-bang through the front door into the gas, temporarily blinding Kwiatkowski and almost knocking him off the ladder. The chief climbed up the ladder to rescue his friend, who recovered.

But Bustamante had killed himself by the time the cops got into the room. That was not ideal.

So Fry knows the playbook they'll likely use in Monroe County.

The team in Pennsylvania would use flash-bangs as a distraction. They'd likely throw one through the front door or run a diversionary device through, say, the back window or the kitchen. The combination of the loud bang and the bright light usually stunned the occupants and gave the team time to get into the room.

The team in Pennsylvania wound up doing more than this to guarantee access. It was later determined that they'd blown out several windows *and* several doors.

They find Bryan Kohberger awake, dressed in shorts and a shirt. He's standing in the kitchen wearing medical-type gloves putting trash in ziplock bags.

They surround him at gunpoint, zip-tie his hands, and stuff him in a police car.

Then they ransack the house and his car for anything and everything covered by the warrants.

A few hours later, Kohberger is sitting in the Monroe County jail. He's been swabbed for DNA. After initially waiving his right to counsel and agreeing to speak with law enforcement without a lawyer, he'd changed his mind and asked for one.

At approximately 7:15 a.m. local time, Gary Jenkins accompanies the Moscow PD team with warrants to search Kohberger's apartment in Pullman and his office on campus.

And at one p.m., James Fry ascends the podium at city hall. With Bill Thompson behind him on the left, he's finally able to say the words that he hopes will deliver the knockout blow to his numerous critics.

"Last night, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, detectives arrested twenty-eight-year-old Bryan Christopher Kohberger in Albrightsville, Pennsylvania, on a warrant for the murder of Ethan, Xana, Madison, and Kaylee."

Later that night, Fry's Florida emailer writes: "We'll see if you got your right guy."

Fry wonders if this guy will still be skeptical once Kohberger is in custody in Idaho and he's read the probable-cause affidavit.

Because if ever a document demonstrated good police work, Fry thinks, this is surely it.

PART FOUR

On the Run

Chapter 88

Moscow, Idaho
November 13, 2022

The drive west from Moscow to Pullman on Route 270 can take just minutes.

On the back roads, it can take hours.

When Brett Payne's affidavit became public, it explained the police's belief that Bryan Kohberger took the circuitous route.

According to the affidavit, after the murders, Kohberger's Elantra left Moscow, headed south toward Genesee, then turned west to Uniontown—which is not so much a town as a shack surrounded by miles of cornfields.

If WSU kids have been drinking in Moscow and don't want get pulled over by the cops, they'll risk the back roads, well known to be deserted during the day, unlit at night, and treacherous with snow and ice in winter.

But Rand Walker, the Moscow therapist, opined that to someone who has committed murder, the road's most dangerous facets could become conveniences. He suggested that a person could toss a murder weapon into the surrounding snow-covered fields, and the chance that anyone would find it was negligible.

That early morning, according to Payne's affidavit, it took Kohberger over an hour to make his way back to Pullman—fifty minutes longer than it took to drive the eight miles on 270.

But he stayed home for less than four hours.

At around nine a.m., according to Payne, he left Pullman and returned to Moscow.

Not just to Moscow, but to the very scene of the murders.

Every criminologist knows that the more emotional the crime, the more likely it is that the criminal will revisit the scene.

Kohberger's phone pinged on the 1122 King Road network between 9:12 and 9:21 a.m.

It was the last time that the cops saw his phone use the Moscow cell network.

And then, the cops believe, he went home.

His cell phone records showed him arriving back in the Pullman area at 9:32 a.m.

But Kohberger wasn't done driving for the day. Not by a long shot.

Just three hours or so later, his cell records suggest, he made the forty-minute trip from Pullman to Clarkston, Washington, via US Highway 195, where cameras saw him at Kate's Cup of Joe coffee stand and then, at 12:46 p.m., at the Clarkston grocery store, Albertsons, where he purchased unknown items and left at 1:04 p.m.

Students of local crimes—and Kohberger was most certainly one of those—knew that Clarkston was a good place to throw things into a river.

Twelve years earlier, Charles Capone strangled his estranged wife and threw her body into the river. It was never found. Bill Thompson got the conviction only after an accomplice talked.

Next, Payne wrote, Kohberger returned to the country roads he had been driving the night before.

His phone pinged in the rural backwoods of Johnson, Washington, two hours from Lewiston, between 5:32 and 5:36 p.m. Then it vanished from the network for two and a half hours, from 5:36 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Payne didn't account for what happened in those hours.

But Kohberger's defense attorney, when he got one, wrote in court papers that the police never found the murder weapon, nor did they find any of the victims' DNA on his clothes or in his car.

In fact, the knife sheath appears to have been his only mistake.

Gary Jenkins said, "From what I've heard of his activities

afterwards, he was pretty sophisticated in knowing how to get rid of DNA and whatever else he needed to do.

"I don't know if he went to Lewiston, but he certainly did a lot of driving around."

Chapter 89

*Pullman, Washington
November 14, 2022*

Ben Roberts has his mind on end-of-term exams, so he barely notices that the spot where Bryan Kohberger usually sits in class in Wilson-Short Hall is empty today.

Ben's head is filled with projects and deadlines. Plus, he's just bumped into someone in the financial technology program who has news of four horrendous homicides over in Moscow. University students stabbed in their bedrooms in the middle of the night.

That's completely horrible, Ben thinks.

He tries to put it out of his mind. Goes back to focusing on his classwork.

But later, members of the cohort, and Ben, will think hard about Bryan's absence that day and what it meant.

They clocked it because they decided they needed to create a paper trail, a record of what Bryan said and did. Just in case something unexpected happened. If he were to lodge a complaint against one of the professors, for instance.

"We all felt he was creepy," Ben said, "but harmless."

Bryan is weird. But he's not *evil*.

But the next day and the day after that, Ben starts to see a slight change in Bryan. He becomes a bit lighter, more animated. Ben ascribes it to the end of term coming and the "filters" coming off. Something about his appearance is a little looser. He's grown stubble.

Ben also hears that Bryan's grading of the undergraduates'

papers is changing dramatically.

Everyone—women included—starts getting high marks. Bryan stops writing essays on their essays. Some of the students are shocked. But also relieved.

Ben hears the gossip, but he doesn't pay too much attention to this at the time. None of the cohort does; their focus is on exams and grades. They came here to get graduate degrees so they could find good jobs. Ben assumes that's what they all want.

Bryan must too.

But when Ben thinks about it, he realizes Bryan doesn't talk much about his plans for the future.

Still, Ben assumes he has them.

Why wouldn't he?

Chapter 90

*Pullman, Washington
November 17, 2022*

Some of the WSU kids have skipped town early for Thanksgiving.

The murders over in Moscow have freaked everyone out.

So the receptionist at the medical center is glad when one of them, at least, keeps his scheduled appointment.

The kid's name is Bryan Kohberger.

He comes in in a North Face jacket. Tall, thin, pale. Eyes that bug out.

He's a talker. Goes out of his way to chat to all the staff. Charm them. He stands out.

The receptionist doesn't usually remember anyone's name, but she'll remember Bryan's. Her boss doesn't usually comment on any of the patients, but even she says, "He's so nice and charming."

The receptionist agrees.

Before he leaves, Bryan schedules an appointment for next spring.

"See you then," she tells him.

She and her colleagues will look forward to that.

Chapter 91

*Pullman, Washington
November 18, 2022*

So what do you think about the murders in Moscow?"

Peggy at the state department of licensing in Pullman is making small talk with the tall, thin WSU student at the front of the line who has come to exchange his Pennsylvania plate for two Washington plates for his white Hyundai Elantra.

His name, according to the forms, is Bryan Kohberger.

She and her five colleagues regularly make small talk with their customers. They pride themselves on running a government outfit that's got some character. They allow pet dogs to run around. They don't want their customers to have a run-of-the-mill experience just because it's vehicle licensing.

They want the experience to be memorable, fun even. They've got a reputation they are proud of.

So Peggy doesn't hesitate to get into the murders with this guy in order to pass the time.

"Horrific, isn't it?" he replies.

She later says that there was nothing out of the ordinary about their conversation.

He's as happy to chat as she is. Frankly, it makes people feel better about what happened to blow off steam together. It's a productive coping mechanism.

The guy says he's as shocked as they all are. Nervous, too, that the murderer is on the loose. He wants to know what she thinks. Who would have done that? Is the murderer among them? What

about what the cops said?

It's such a perfectly normal exchange that, given the circumstances, Peggy doesn't think twice about it.

But then, after he's arrested, when she sees his face on TV, it hits her.

The guy she had that perfectly normal chat with about the murders was changing his plates.

To try to get away with it.

She can hardly believe it.

Chapter 92

*Pullman, Washington
December 2, 2022*

At 1:45 p.m., Rose Perez, a local hair stylist, sees that one of her regulars, Bryan, is coming in for his usual: "skin-fade thirty-five-minute hair appointment."

No big deal, she thinks.

Bryan has always been nice. Polite. He started coming to her in July. Since then, he's popped in every few weeks and become one of her regulars.

He left her a voicemail yesterday asking if she could fit him in the next day. She was able to see him at Powers Barbershop, just off the main street in Pullman, where she works most days.

So today he shows up, and as she clips using the scissors and the blade, they talk the way they usually do. She learns he'll be heading home to Pennsylvania for Christmas soon. But he plans to be back in January.

It's a routine visit on a routine day.

But in four weeks, Rose won't think anything about it or him was routine.

When she sees his mug shot on TV, she falls on the floor.

"It's crazy to find out I interacted with this person," she later said. "I touched this person's hair. I made this person look and feel good about themselves."

Like everyone whom Bryan ran into over the next few weeks, she wonders if she missed any signs.

But Bryan is a good actor.

He's confident.

And the Pullman police have no idea that the suspect is in their midst. Or what he looks like. Or, in fact, anything, because for once, in an unprecedented fashion, Moscow hasn't been looping them in or sharing any details—and that makes them unhappy.

Glenn Johnson, the Pullman mayor at the time, later reflected: "Everyone was so frustrated. 'Where's the information?' they kept asking."

The Pullman cops have an unwritten rule never to have less than half a tank of gas in their cars, in case Moscow needs them to pursue someone who committed a crime there.

But now the Pullman cops are sitting in their cars, idle. They have nothing to go on.

When WSU police chief Gary Jenkins considered how Bryan resumed his normal activities in Pullman in the days and weeks following the murders, he believed his actions denoted a growing confidence.

"I would think with every day that went by that he wasn't caught that his chances were getting better and better [that he wouldn't be]," Jenkins said.

But cockiness, it turns out, can be misplaced.

Chapter 93

*Pullman, Washington
December 2022*

It's one of the last classes of the semester, Criminal Justice Processes and Institutions, a course taught by Dr. Craig Hemmens in Wilson-Short Hall.

The topic of the recent murders in Moscow is brought up for class discussion.

For instance: What is legally on the table for the murderer when they've caught him?

Idaho has the death penalty; Washington State does not.

The murderer surely would have known this.

Ordinarily, Bryan would be front and center, speaking more than most of the others.

But one of Bryan's classmates—someone who has four classes with him that semester and is used to listening to his monologues—notices that he doesn't speak at all. Not once in three hours. He's got nothing to say on a topic that has the class revved up.

This is extraordinary, the classmate thinks.

The classmate assumes Kohberger is ill or tired or something. Ben Roberts, another classmate, remembers dimly that Bryan said he was extra short on sleep in December.

But it doesn't occur to anyone that their homophobic, misogynistic classmate is anything other than deeply weird.

Ben wonders if Bryan is feeling the pressure of being the only one in their cohort from the East Coast, if he's found it hard to adapt to Pacific Northwest culture.

“He is running into an entirely new group of people who are now his peers,” he said. “He doesn’t have any seniority over anybody. He doesn’t have any authority... He is trying to adapt to a new social structure on the opposite side of the country. And the West Coast does things somewhat differently from the East Coast.”

Weeks later, Steve Goncalves—his blood boiling at the thought of “this Pennsylvania kid who came out here on purpose to kill us”—said something similar.

“I know my history... the East Coast feels like they’re the superior coast,” Steve said. But he’s determined not to let this atrocity undermine the very reason he moved his family here, his desire to provide a safe home for his family.

So his goal is to make absolutely sure prosecutors get a conviction so the world can see that Idaho is still the sanctuary he believes in.

“We have farm towns and trusting people,” Steve said. “But he underestimated us.”

Chapter 94

*Pullman, Washington
December 9, 2022*

Bryan is blowing up again at Professor Snyder.

Only two days ago, it had seemed as though Bryan might have eked out a Hail Mary.

He and Snyder, along with graduate director Dale Willits and Dr. Melanie-Angela Neuilly, so the cohort hears, had met in Wilson-Short Hall to discuss Bryan's progress following the improvement plan that had been emailed to him on November 3.

The plan that told him to be more respectful to women—his professors, his peers, and his students.

"While not perfect, we agreed that there was progress," Dr. Neuilly wrote to Bryan, yet the committee still decided it had to terminate him.

Because now, just two days after that promising meeting, Bryan is losing it—for the second time this semester—with Snyder in the professor's office.

When Ben and Bryan's cohort hear about this, they are mystified about how anyone could rub the affable, easygoing professor the wrong way.

"To use very coarse language for a second," Ben said, "if you fuck up badly enough that you wind up on a PIP, a performance improvement plan, as a graduate student, you have done something terribly, dreadfully, miserably wrong."

But Bryan cannot control himself in front of Snyder, apparently.

The rest of the class has seen what happens to Bryan when he's

angry. He goes bright red and clenches his fists so hard that his knuckles turn white.

Chief Jenkins heard that one of the thorny issues under discussion is the allegation by a woman student that Bryan followed her to her car.

But the discussion spins out of control, way beyond civility, into something angry.

Two days later, on December 11, Dr. Neuilly wrote to Bryan requesting a meeting—at which he must have known she would fire him. And he would lose his funding.

She later wrote in her termination letter of December 19 that she'd requested the meeting because, during his "altercation" with Professor Snyder, "it became apparent that you had not made progress regarding professionalism."

Bryan will receive this letter when he's back home, in Pennsylvania, so the rest of the cohort is in the dark as to what happened.

As far as they know, he'll come back in January. But they aren't giving much thought to him and his difficulties.

Top of mind for them is the troubling fact that there have been these horrific murders in Moscow, and the police seem to have no clue who did it.

So everyone just wants to get the heck out of Dodge for the holidays.

Chapter 95

*Pullman, Washington
December 12, 2022*

Deola Adetunji, a WSU criminal justice undergrad, is puzzled when she looks at her end-of-semester grade.

She sees that Professor Snyder's TA Bryan has posted that she got a B.

He's wrong, she thinks. He added up her scores wrong. She deserves an A. So she emails him and tells him he needs to fix it.

She's never had a one-on-one interaction with Bryan before. She's seen him in Professor Snyder's class three or four times, but not recently.

It seems that he has stopped coming to class. She doesn't know why. She assumes he's got his own stuff to take care of.

When he *was* in class, he was strangely restless and flitted around unnervingly. One time Professor Snyder asked him to move because, the professor said, he didn't like people standing behind him while he taught—so Bryan hovered somewhere by the door. It was awkward.

At 10:58 p.m., Bryan emails Deola back. "I have adjusted the settings to only count your ten highest scores. This should have a positive impact. Let me know if you have any questions."

Good, she thinks. *That's taken care of*. And she doesn't think about Bryan Kohberger anymore.

Until she sees his mug shot a few weeks later.

And then she thinks that if he committed the murders he's been accused of, it's both odd and interesting that he bothered to answer

her email about her grade.

Chapter 96

Indiana

December 15, 2022

At 10:45 a.m. on the third day of the four-day cross-country trek east from Pullman, Washington, to Albrightsville, Pennsylvania, father and son hear sirens on I-70 outside Indianapolis.

Bryan pulls over and waits for the officer to get out of the cop car and approach from the shoulder.

Michael Kohberger is in the passenger seat, a buffer between the officer and his son.

If Bryan fears the worst, he hides any inner turmoil. His face is pale, as usual. But his hands are on his lap, relaxed.

The sheriff's deputy is disarmingly cordial as he asks for Bryan's license.

"You were right up on the back end of that van. I pulled you over for tailgating. Is this your car?"

Bryan nods.

"Where ya headed?"

Now Michael injects himself into the conversation, which goes strangely circuitously.

Michael: "Well, we're coming from WSU—"

Sheriff's deputy: "What's WSU?"

Michael says, "It's Washington State University." Then he explains there's just been an incident there involving a SWAT team.

Bryan interjects: "I go to the WSU university, basically."

No one has answered the deputy's question, so he asks again: "So you're coming from Washington State University and you're

going where?"

Michael tells him, "We're going to Pennsylvania." He adds conversationally and with emphasis: "We're slightly punchy from hours—days!—of driving."

Sheriff's deputy: "What did you say about some SWAT team thing?"

Michael: "There was a mass shooting and everything..."

Sheriff's deputy: "Interesting."

Michael: "Well, it's *horrifying*, actually."

Sheriff's deputy: "So y'all work at the university there?"

Bryan: "I actually do work there."

Michael (with pride): "He's getting a PhD."

Sheriff's deputy: "Yeah, I hadn't heard about that incident... just yesterday or..."

Michael explains that just an hour and a half ago, they learned that a SWAT team was called in to deal with a gunman hostage situation at WSU. The situation is "still wrapping up." He says he thinks they did shoot somebody.

Bryan again interrupts his dad. "Not sure about that, actually."

This conversation has gotten far, far away from tailgating.

The cop has got other things to do today.

"Interesting," he says.

He lets them go.

Not ten minutes later, the Kohbergers hear sirens again. They are still on I-70.

This time it's the Indiana State Police.

Again, the trooper explains he's pulled them over because Bryan is tailgating.

If Bryan senses anything strange or threatening about this second stop, he hides it well. This time Michael looks slightly nonplussed when the officer appears at the passenger window.

But again, the officer is quick to let them go: "I'm not gonna give you guys another ticket or warning if you just got stopped. Just make sure you give yourself plenty of room. It's all about how fast

you're going, okay?" Then he asks, "Where y'all headed?"

When they answer, he laughs. "That's a long haul. You guys scared of airplanes?"

For weeks, months, years, in fact, after Kohberger is arrested, it's reported that the Indiana stops were not random. It's reported that the FBI already had Kohberger in their sights. That the FBI had a single-engine plane tracking him. That the FBI hadn't looped in Moscow to what they knew.

Many articles mention this, and Chief James Fry gets irritated every time he reads one. Because it's not only off base; it's completely nuts. He's pissed that the only leak, the *only* leak in the entire investigation, came not from any of the people who worked directly with him but, he believes, from the Pennsylvania branch of the FBI.

"So tell me this. If they can't keep their mouth shut that we're getting ready to arrest a person... do you think they can keep their mouths shut about a plane tracking the killer all the way across the United States?" he asked sarcastically.

Yet again, in his view, the media knows nothing and wants to make a buck off something. "It makes a great story," he said wryly. It's also completely untrue.

"If that truly would've happened and I would've found out about it, you would've probably seen the roof of the police department come off."

The boring truth of it is, as far as Fry knows and as a spokesperson for the FBI has, unusually, stated on the record, the stops in Indiana *were* random.

The timeline of the investigation indicates that law enforcement had not yet homed in on Kohberger on December 15. Brett Payne hadn't even heard the name "Bryan Kohberger" until the FBI phoned on December 19. He didn't try to obtain warrants for Kohberger's phone records until December 23. It was only in the days right before Christmas that the threads connecting the touch DNA on the knife sheath, the right model of white Hyundai Elantra, and its new license plate and owner came together—and then the phone records all pointed to Bryan Kohberger.

On December 15, when the Kohbergers were pulled over, law enforcement still didn't have him.

The Kohbergers arrived in Pennsylvania on December 16 without being stopped again, and Fry's team was later able to see that the car had reached home.

But in that moment, Kohberger was still safe. He was still below the radar of Fry's team.

Although that was changing by the minute.

Chapter 97

*Albrightsville, Pennsylvania
December 28, 2022*

Bryan gets in the car—he's cleaned every inch of it, inside and out—and drives to the end of Monroe County and back.

He doesn't know it, but he's got eyes on him every second.

The car and his phone are being tracked.

There's a team of Pennsylvania state troopers in the woods surrounding 119 Lamsden Drive, surveilling it around the clock. They've been there since yesterday at dawn.

They've seen him depositing the garbage in his neighbors' bins.

Bryan has no idea that they've taken the family garbage or that a forensics lab will determine that there is a 99.9998 percent chance that the DNA collected from the trash belongs to the father of the person whose DNA was on the knife sheath found beside Maddie at 1122 King Road.

He has no idea, basically, that it's game over.

Chapter 98

*Albrightsville, Pennsylvania
December 29, 2022*

When FBI agents storm the Kohberger family home, blowing the door down and the windows out, raiding it and Kohberger's car, they have warrants for anything and everything that could connect him to the murders at 1122 King Road.

Pennsylvania state trooper Justin Leri signs his name to each of the two long lists that go into the "FBI's Receipt of Property" document, which will be made public months later.

From Bryan's car, they take:

Swabs, Ziplock bag with pink zipper, 7 quarters, plastic baggie with green zipper, 36 dimes, 32 nickels, 8 pennies, gloves, receipts, car insurance card, car registration, hiking boots, Comfort Inn room key holder and stay information, tire irons, shovel, goggles, floor mats, reflective vest, used water bottles, wrench, door panel, seats and seat cushions, headrests, seatbelt, visor, fiber, brake pedal, gas pedal, phone charger, band aid, wrappers, maps, document, seat belt, boot.

From the Kohberger family home they take items that quite obviously could connect Bryan to the "firefighter" of Dylan Mortensen's half-awake dream: an assortment of clothing, including black face masks, hats, gloves, boots.

They take his phone, laptops, hard drives, computer, the black-

box Samsung car-navigation system, as well as three knives—including a large, sheathed Taylor Cutlery knife—a gun (a Glock 22), and three magazines. They also take a flashlight, two bags with a “green leafy substance,” an AT&T phone bill, and a large Craftsman shop vacuum.

More tantalizingly on Leri’s list are items that are not fully explained but that could suggest a possible motive for murder. It’s the inclusion of these that catches the attention of cybersleuths when the list is made public, months later in March.

For instance, the list intriguingly mentions a book—it doesn’t give a title—with underlinings on page 118.

All the online forums—the Facebook discussion page, Reddit, TikTok, Instagram, and more—will debate for days if this could be underlining on page 118 of Elliot Rodger’s manifesto.

On that page, Rodger wrote of how he came to select the date of his “day of retribution,” his act of misogynistic terrorism. After ruling out Halloween because of the heavy law enforcement presence, he decided it “would have to be on a normal party weekend, so I set it for some time during November.”

Then there’s the item on Leri’s list of a drawing referred to as “A Man’s Mind.” Could this be a reference to a well-known black-and-white poster of a man’s face in profile with a naked woman erotically arched backward, cleverly drawn into his frontal lobe? The name Sigmund Freud is scribbled underneath.

That’s the question posed by cybersleuths, who post the drawing side by side with page 118 of Rodger’s manifesto and suggest—to much agreement—that both point to the mind of a misogynistic incel who planned a murder that was more or less a copycat of Rodger’s 2014 killing spree as vengeance for all the women who would not sleep with him.

Other miscellaneous items are harder for the online community to analyze.

These include a “note to dad from Bryan, a note in his desk,” a “note from Bryan to Montana,” a criminal psychology book, other criminology books, a maroon notebook, documents, and the DeSales University handbook.

As the items are being seized and documented, on the other side of the country, in Pullman, at 10:38 p.m. PST—1:38 a.m. EST—Chief Jenkins gets the call from Moscow he's been waiting for.

Kohberger has been arrested in Pennsylvania.

Some of Fry's team, led by Sergeant Dustin Blaker, are already en route to sit outside Kohberger's Pullman apartment while Jenkins's crew paper and serve the warrants.

By 7:15 a.m., the paperwork is done. And while Jenkins's team watches, the Moscow team goes in looking for evidence that ties Kohberger to the King Road murders.

They take, according to papers filed in court:

One nitrile type black glove

1 Walmart receipt with one Dickies tag

2 Marshalls receipts

Dust container from "Bissell Power Force" vacuum

8 possible hair strands

1 Fire TV stick with cord/plug

1 possible animal hair strand

1 possible hair

1 possible hair

1 possible hair

1 possible hair strand

1 computer tower

1 collection of red dark spot (collected without testing)

2 cuttings from uncased pillow of reddish/brown stain
(larger stain tested)

2 top and bottom of mattress cover packaged separately
both labeled "C"

Multiple stains (One tested)

When this list is published, it isn't just the internet forums that focus on the "possible animal hair strand," along with the bloodstains and human hair, as being of vital importance.

Steve Goncalves wonders if the hair could belong to Murphy, Kaylee's goldendoodle, now in Jack's care. "She loved to sleep with Murphy, so the question I want answered is who put Murphy in a separate room that night?"

If it was Bryan Kohberger, well, Steve thinks, that could have been a costly mistake.

Chapter 99

*Monroe County, Pennsylvania
December 30, 2022*

They hold him in the Monroe County Correctional Facility in Stroudsburg, about twenty-five miles from his parents' home. And they talk to him for nearly fifteen minutes.

Bryan Kohberger is charged with four counts of first-degree murder for Xana, Ethan, Maddie, and Kaylee, and one count of felony burglary for breaking into 1122 King Road.

They've swabbed him for DNA several times. Presumably the samples are in a lab being analyzed right now.

But Bryan knows no more than that about what law enforcement has on him. According to Idaho law, Brett Payne's probable-cause affidavit must remain sealed until the suspect is back in the state.

At first Bryan says he doesn't need a lawyer. He's calm. When he's asked if he knows what murders they are talking about, he says of course.

"Yes, certainly I'm aware of what's going on. I'm ten miles away from this," he says.

And then, suddenly, he changes his mind. He asks for a lawyer.

While he waits, he's given a dark green blanket-like suicide-prevention vest to wear. As a Fox News reporter explained: "Suicide-prevention vests are used to 'ensure warmth and comfort' while not obstructing the wearer's movements, according to PSP Corp, a maker of tactical and suicide-prevention gear. The vests also cannot be rolled or torn and prevent inmates 'from using the fabric to create a weapon or hanging mechanism.'"

On the morning of December 30, Jason LaBar, the chief public defender for Monroe County, comes to see Bryan.

LaBar said that he was astonished when he first got the call. Of course he knew about the murders—but for the suspect to be in Monroe County? “I did not expect that.”

LaBar finds that his new client is calm in all of their four meetings over the next three days. Unusually calm, given the circumstances.

Bryan tells the lawyer that he was “shocked” when the agents burst into his parents’ home waving guns in his face.

LaBar said that in his experience—and he has quite a lot of experience—every defendant reacts differently.

Kohberger seems to want to chat; it’s as if he’s got a story he wants to tell LaBar. But the lawyer cuts him off.

“I really wanted to make sure that [Kohberger] understood that I didn’t want to know about the facts and circumstances.”

LaBar explains to Bryan that he’s there only to handle the extradition proceedings. That someone in Idaho will be appointed to act as his criminal lawyer. That the only way for Bryan to learn why he’s been charged with these crimes is to fly back to Idaho. Only then will the probable-cause affidavit, the document filed by the police with enough in it to justify the arrest and search warrants, be available to him. LaBar is just as in the dark as his client.

LaBar is almost surprised by how quickly Bryan agrees to waive his rights in Pennsylvania and be extradited. His client wants to understand what the police think they know. “He was very candid with me about the extradition,” LaBar said, which made his job easier.

So did Bryan’s obviously high intelligence and working knowledge of criminal law.

LaBar works with Bryan on the wording of what he, in his role as chief public defender, will say to the media; journalists noted that it did not explicitly state that he was innocent.

On Saturday, December 31, LaBar issues that statement.

Mr. Kohberger has been accused of very serious crimes,

but the American justice system cloaks him in a veil of innocence. He should be presumed innocent until proven otherwise—not tried in the court of public opinion. One should not pass judgment about the facts of the case unless and until a fair trial in court at which time all sides may be heard and inferences challenged...

Mr. Kohberger is eager to be exonerated of these charges and looks forward to resolving these matters as promptly as possible.

Chapter 100

Monroe County, Pennsylvania
January 3, 2023

Dressed in a red prison jumpsuit, Bryan walks into the Monroe County Court of Common Pleas in Stroudsburg for the extradition hearing. He looks three times at his family.

The person he gazes at directly is his father, Michael.

Bryan even smiles—faintly.

As Judge Patti-Worthington questions him as to whether he's fully understood that he's waiving his rights in Pennsylvania and will be flown to Idaho to face four charges of murder, Maryann Kohberger collapses.

A court official rushes over and provides Kleenex. Mrs. Kohberger's eyes are so swollen from crying that she can barely see as the proceedings finish.

Two nights ago the family released a statement that they had worked on with LaBar.

First and foremost we care deeply for the four families who have lost their precious children. There are no words that can adequately express the sadness we feel, and we pray each day for them. We will continue to let the legal process unfold and as a family we will love and support our son and brother. We have fully cooperated with law enforcement agencies in an attempt to seek the truth and promote his presumption of innocence rather than judge unknown facts and make erroneous

assumptions. We request privacy in this matter as our family and the families suffering loss can move forward through the legal process.

After the judge signs the extradition order and they've said goodbye to Bryan, who walks out of the courthouse flanked by guards, the Kohbergers return to their home with its blown-out windows and doors.

Privacy is something they will find they have lost.

Chapter 101

*Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport
Pullman, Washington
January 4, 2023*

The single-prop plane makes two refueling stops, first at Willard Airport in Savoy, Illinois, then in Rapid City, South Dakota, on its journey from Pennsylvania to Pullman.

A sea of law enforcement, members of the Latah County Sheriff's Office, arrive at 5:15 p.m., ahead of the 6:23 scheduled landing.

It's pitch-dark when Bryan gets out, cuffed, but the flashes pop and media can see his distinctive features as he towers over the officers flanking him. He's got a dark winter jacket on over his red prison clothes.

Agents load him into a black SUV and make the eight-mile drive to the Latah County jail beside the courthouse in Moscow, where they book him. Then he waits in a small cell for a lawyer and for the wheels of justice to start turning, moving him toward his eventual trial for mass murder.

As far as law enforcement knows, it's Kohberger's first time back in Moscow since his brief visit to King Road four hours after he allegedly committed the murders.

This time, he's here to stay for the foreseeable future.

PART FIVE

Blame Game

Chapter 102

*Priest Lake, Idaho
December 29, 2022*

It's late, after ten thirty p.m., and the Chapins are headed to bed.

Stacy is showering when Jim hears her phone ring. He looks at the caller ID. He knows something big must have happened for Tyson Berrett to be calling so late.

"Stace, you need to come get this," he yells.

Stacy comes out and hears from Berrett that they have just arrested a guy named Bryan Kohberger.

She and Jim go to Hunter's and Maizie's bedrooms and tell them the news.

That night, for the first time in weeks, Jim Chapin sleeps well. They all do.

Kohberger's arrest can't bring Ethan back. But Maizie and Hunter are headed back to UI in a few days, and Maizie was worried that whoever murdered Ethan was still around campus, lurking.

Stacy and Jim assured her that the UI campus right then was probably "the safest in the country"—but privately, behind their closed bedroom door, they expressed to each other that maybe Maizie was right to be concerned.

So the fact that the police have arrested someone comes as a huge relief.

They have no idea what his connection to Ethan is, and they are not interested in finding out. The bottom line is that their son is in a jar in their basement and nothing can change that.

But when Jim sees Kohberger's face on the news, weirdly, it

resonates.

"He just looked like a bad guy... the long, drawn face... he just... fit the picture that I had in my mind," he said later.

Jim is glad they've got him. He wants this guy to pay. And he feels certain that he will, no matter what happens next.

"Stace will shoot me for saying this... but... there's three ways you can look at it. He's either going to go to jail for life or he is going to be put to death or he's going to walk out the front door. And I'm okay with any one of them. Because the outcome for him is going to be the same."

What he means is that Kohberger is not likely to survive even if he gets off.

This is Idaho, after all.

"You really think Steve Goncalves," Jim asked months later with a wry smile, "is going to sit back while he walks around freely?"

The answer is no.

Chapter 103

*Rathdrum, Idaho
December 29, 2022*

There's relief for the Goncalves family too, of course, after Tyson Berrett tells them the news.

Tomorrow is the joint memorial for Kaylee and Maddie. Now the family can focus on the service without the fear that their murderer is watching.

They have no idea what the connection could be between the girls and the guy the police have captured, this criminology PhD student at WSU. And what's the deal with WSU? How and why did the school protect him if he'd been the menace he seemed to be on social media?

Steve hears from Alivea, who is plugged into social media, about all the red flags Kohberger exhibited; students started posting them once the arrest was made public. The more he learns, the angrier he gets.

Just because this was a school environment, it seems to him, this guy—Steve doesn't like to say his name—got protections he would not otherwise have had. WSU hasn't published any of the disciplinary problems the school faced with Kohberger.

Steve Goncalves isn't going to stop with his own investigations just because they've got him in custody. "Half of the stuff that I found and dug up on him... that shit hasn't [come] out... And it pisses me off. They've really clammed up," he said.

Steve plans to keep up the pressure on the prosecution the same way he did on the cops.

He's going to search the dark web for any piece of data he can find. He's going to look for this guy's cell records, his social media posts. He's going to leave no digital stone unturned.

Steve wants to make sure, absolutely sure, that Bill Thompson gets a conviction.

Anything less would not be serving Kaylee.

Chapter 104

*Pullman, Washington
December 30, 2022*

Journalist Evan Ellis is live on air that Friday when he sees a text from Chief Fry:

Holding a press conference at 1 pm.

There are many press conferences held by the Moscow PD these days, so Ellis doesn't pay much attention. This was a mistake, he later realizes, because the chief had never given him a heads-up about any of those.

Ellis is still on air when the news breaks in Pennsylvania. It's a leak: Agents there have arrested Bryan Kohberger, a WSU criminology PhD student.

Oh, shit, Ellis thinks, experiencing a rare feeling of shock.

The murderer had been walking among them.

He needs to report. If Kohberger was at WSU, he's been living in Pullman. And if he's been living in Pullman, the Moscow team is going to be raiding his apartment right around now.

Ellis phones a source in law enforcement and asks where in the area he might "bump into" out-of-state authorities executing a search warrant.

The source tells him, "I'd go to the Steptoe Village Apartments."

Ellis arrives just as the raid is getting started and records it for his Facebook page.

But even as he clocks the scene in front of him, his mind is racing to what comes next.

Based on his experience, he fears that the administration at WSU,

his alma mater, will go into communications lockdown. "My wife works there and she shows me some of the crap that WSU sends out [internally], which is: 'Do not say anything. Do not talk to anybody... This is not happening. You're not talking.' And of course, they can't prevent people [from doing] it, but they're extremely vindictive up there and everybody is scared."

Ellis and the WSU vice president of marketing and communications, Phil Weiler, have long had a contentious relationship. "I fight with WSU on a weekly basis," he said, "about hiding information and shutting out the taxpayers... It's completely disgusting and sad, but WSU has been doing it for years."

Today is no different, he thinks. *In fact, it's worse.* Evan phones Weiler. He texts him. He emails. Nothing.

At noon, the school issues a statement.

Law enforcement officials in Pennsylvania have arrested Bryan Christopher Kohberger, a Washington State University graduate student, in connection with a quadruple homicide that took place in Moscow, ID in November.

"On behalf of the WSU Pullman community, I want to offer my sincere thanks to all of the law enforcement agencies that have been working tirelessly to solve this crime," said Elizabeth Chilton, chancellor of the WSU Pullman campus and WSU provost. "This horrific act has shaken everyone in the Palouse region.

"We also want to extend our deepest sympathies to the families, friends, and Vandal colleagues who were impacted by these murders," Chilton said. "We will long feel the loss of these young people in the Moscow-Pullman community and hope the announcement today will be a step toward healing."

This morning, the Washington State University Police Department assisted Idaho law enforcement officials in the execution of search warrants at Mr. Kohberger's

apartment and office, which are both located on the WSU Pullman campus. WSU Police are working closely with local, state, and federal law enforcement officials as they continue their investigation.

Kohberger had completed his first semester as a PhD student in WSU's criminal justice program earlier this month.

Ellis thinks this isn't good enough.

Where is the transparency? Accountability for hiring Kohberger? Any apology?

He posts a Facebook video that afternoon in which he repeats Weiler's name three times for effect: "We have reached out multiple times to WSU spokesman Phil Weiler for more information on Kohberger as a WSU student. Phil Weiler has failed to return any emails, texts, or phone calls in regard to this arrest of a WSU student, doctoral student in criminology, and any more information from WSU on this suspect has been denied at this point with no response from Mr. Phil Weiler, the spokesman at Washington State University."

He later tells his listeners that part of his frustration with the college is based on history that goes back two decades.

Bryan Kohberger is *not* the first high-profile criminal connected to the WSU Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology.

On Route 270 between Moscow and Pullman, Evan tells his listeners, there's a road sign commemorating three WSU fatalities. In 2001, a twenty-two-year-old student, Frederick Russell, was charged with the vehicular homicide of three WSU students and of injuring four others in a horrific crash on that highway. Fred was drunk at the time.

His father, Gregory Russell, was the head of the criminal justice department.

Fred was arrested, but three days before he was due to stand before a preliminary hearing, he escaped, accompanied by a WSU criminal justice graduate student and Russell family friend. He spent

six years on the lam and was featured on the US Marshals' Most Wanted list before being captured in Ireland.

Evan doesn't hide his disgust.

"This is how deep it goes with that dumpster fire of an institution that I went to," he said.

As it happens, the mayor of Pullman, Glenn Johnson, who is a regular on Evan's show and a friend of his, also knows the story of the Russells.

Mayor Johnson, who holds a master's degree in journalism and a PhD in mass communications, shares Evan's frustrations with WSU's stonewalling. That the school where he taught classes in subjects like television news and communications management for thirty-five years before becoming mayor employed the guy arrested for the Moscow murders is a bridge too far, he thinks. *Something* needs to happen at that school. *Something* needs to change.

So when he finds himself in an emergency meeting with WSU chancellor Elizabeth Chilton, he says: "Elizabeth, in case you hadn't been told, this is the second time there's a bad story coming out of WSU's criminal justice department."

He figures she probably does not know about the Russells because she's new. She started in January 2022.

"So, the point is," he says in conclusion, "this"—he means Kohberger—"is the second black eye [for the WSU criminal justice department]."

He adds with a flourish: "You only have two eyes."

Chapter 105

*Pullman, Washington
December 30, 2022*

In fact, the Washington State University administration is in total meltdown.

Inside Wilson-Short Hall, phones are ringing off the hook as the news of Kohberger's arrest spreads like wildfire.

Professor Snyder is bombarded with calls. So too is Professor Willits.

The last people either one wants to engage with right now are members of the media.

Willits is distraught. It was he who admitted Kohberger.

A day or so later, he runs into WSU chief of police Gary Jenkins in the corridor, and Willits almost collapses.

"He was about ready to break down," Jenkins said. "He said, 'I just feel horrible. I'm the one who accepted him in this program.' So he felt responsible."

As Evan Ellis predicted, the administration's mandate—don't "give interviews"—comes down very quickly from on high to the faculty and the students in the department of criminal justice. That's the message in the email that Ben Roberts and the other members of Kohberger's cohort receive from WSU administration.

Ben and the others are in transit back to Pullman after the holiday break when they receive the email. Which is shortly followed by a bombardment of emails and calls from the media. Kohberger's class list is on WSU's website for a further twenty-four hours before the department takes it down, citing privacy.

The students immediately reach out to one another, torn between shock and disbelief.

What had they missed?

And, worse, as advanced students of criminal minds, *how* had they missed it?

"I can't think of a group of people who would be better positioned to see this sort of behavior, the red flags associated with it in their own ranks," Ben said, "and we just completely didn't see it."

Several of them struggle with the idea that Kohberger was just there, in their midst, sharing office space and classes.

"It's one thing to study criminology from the relative safety of academia's ivory tower," Ben said, "but it's quite another [to] have a quadruple homicide on your doorstep."

So when the graduate students arrive on campus, WSU administrators are ready for them; there's a meeting attended by staff and students in which they learn they will receive psychological support from counselors loaned out by Gary Jenkins's police department.

It's much needed. The group feels not only blindsided by what happened but betrayed. And the curt answers they get from faculty in the meeting don't help much.

"We enter into criminology because we want to make the world a better place," Ben said. "There's a general interest, not really in taking the reins of power, but in figuring out how those reins of power can affect people and how you can service the system to be better. And so when you see somebody run off and do the exact opposite of that and make the world a very, very dark and ugly place for somebody, it sort of really is the ultimate betrayal of everything that I think a criminology program stands for."

Making things worse is that the group is now under siege on campus.

Journalists pose as students. The cohort winds up locking their offices because random strangers mill around, holding out their phones, wanting a quote.

The cohort locks down. They decide that to protect the members'

sanity—and for practical reasons of getting on with their work—they'll follow the case and they'll talk to investigators when they inevitably come to question them.

But they no longer want to discuss Bryan Kohberger, even among themselves.

Chapter 106

*Moscow, Idaho
December 30, 2022*

Dean of students Blaine Eckles gets up at around six a.m. and sees he missed a call from Captain Tyson Berrett the night before, at around eleven.

It's rare that he misses phone calls. Usually his wife, Shelley, gets the phone if he can't, but they'd both fallen asleep.

He texts the police officer: Hey Tyson, what's up?

Before he gets a response, he sees a news flash. Moscow PD is holding a press conference. They've arrested a suspect in Pennsylvania. He attends Washington State University.

Eckles feels like a huge weight just lifted off him. "Once we learned that the alleged perpetrator wasn't from our community, that was such a relief," he said. "Just knowing... what it meant for our students... I knew they'd feel more secure."

He texts Jenna Hyatt, the dean of students at WSU.

In the weeks since the murders, he's gotten to know Jenna well. The outreach he's received from her has been so overwhelming that he's ashamed that UI hasn't done more for other campuses in tragic times. She's sent counselors to man the UI counseling center so that the UI team could attend the vigil. She's sent care packages galore. He considers her a good friend.

So now he texts her, sympathizing: The tidal wave that just hit our campus is about to hit you.

Whatever she needs, he wants to help.

Chapter 107

Moscow, Idaho
December 30, 2022

Lexi Pattinson, daughter of local lawyer Mike Pattinson, is pissed.

She's on TikTok on her phone, watching all these videos that WSU students are making about Bryan Kohberger.

Apparently the guy was a TA? He was *hired* by WSU?

WSU has a reputation, locally, for hiding bad news. Lexi knows a lot about this because her mom works there, so she's heard the stories.

"Their hazing is much worse than ours," she says, explaining that WSU's Greek life, unlike the University of Idaho's, is not regulated by the Interfraternity Council. (Three weeks after Kohberger's arrest, nineteen-year-old WSU student Luke Tyler dies in his bed—a "suicide" after being badly hazed—and the school does not issue any statement. Lexi's mom tells her that the staff is very, very upset.)

She can see on TikTok that Kohberger's former students are talking about all the red flags: his harsh grading of women, his rude remarks to women in class, his aggression, his stalking of someone, his social difficulties.

So where is a statement from WSU about the school's role in this?

"He was their hire, a teacher, a TA," Lexi said after learning about Kohberger's past disciplinary problems. "They haven't even addressed that aspect. And I think that's disgusting and that reflects on a lot of the community. I know my mom and people that work there were pissed."

Her mom will wind up leaving.

The only silver lining—and it's a very, very thin one—is that Kohberger's arrest removes a question mark Lexi had about the possible role of someone she went to Moscow High School with: Emma Bailey.

Emma lived near the King Road house and would, months later, face drug-related charges in connection with the suspicious death of another UI student. (Prosecutors dismissed the case.)

When the Vandal Alert went out about an unconscious person and then Lexi heard about the murders, she was worried that drugs and Emma were involved.

But when she learned it was a knife attack and that drugs were not involved, she stopped suspecting Emma. When Lexi sees all the stuff floating around on TikTok about Kohberger and his strange behavior, she's relieved that he's not from Moscow.

Even so, as she looks around at the enhanced police presence and the way everyone now locks their cars and doors at night, she realizes that the imprint Kohberger made on Moscow is going to last for a very long time.

"People think they know how it affected our town," she said, "but [they don't]. It isn't the same. We lock all our doors... all our car doors... our little town isn't as safe as we thought it was."

And in her mind, WSU is primarily to blame.

Chapter 108

Montana

December 30, 2022

Moscow's mayor, Art Bettge, is spending the holidays in his off-the-grid cabin in northwest Montana, and one morning, there's an unexpected knock on the door.

It's one of his neighbors. She tells him there's been an arrest in the case.

Bettge treks with her to her cabin to borrow her Starlink internet connection. He contacts the city council and gets a sneak peek at the arrest and extradition documents. He immediately understands why it took a few weeks for the investigators to get to Kohberger's DNA.

"The public does not realize how long DNA analysis takes and believe results should be available in TV-crime-show time frames," he said. "In my day job as a food scientist-biochemist, I know better."

He quickly gets up to speed on Bryan Kohberger.

Thank God the guy is from Pullman and not from Moscow, Bettge thinks.

And where the hell has Pullman been on this, anyway? Have they not been looking out for white Elantras? That was out in the public.

And as for WSU...

For WSU, he thinks, this comes at a tricky juncture. The school has lost its footing—that's the common view in the area.

"I think they've sort of forgotten why they're supposed to be there," Bettge said. "You're a land-grant university, which means you

should be primarily involved in research associated with agriculture, mining, forestry—issues like that.”

Instead of which, the school has focused on football; the athletic department has run up a twenty-million-dollar debt. And now the Pac-12 Conference has been depleted because, apart from Oregon State, all the other schools have left. There are rumblings that the faculty is about to deliver a vote of no confidence in the administration.

Bettge is going to sit back and watch this unfold—with a little bit of schadenfreude.

There’s a lot of connectivity, for obvious reasons, between Moscow and Pullman—they share an airport and an aquifer but also an unspoken rivalry. After all, they are in different states. Each houses a different university.

It’s a source of pride to the Muscovites that many people who work in Pullman live in Moscow, even though it means they have to pay the 5.8 percent Idaho state income tax. (Washington has no income tax.)

Muscovites believe Moscow has a community spirit, a downtown with lots of bars and restaurants, and that Pullman, situated as it is on four hills, does not.

“You go to Pullman [at] lunch, noontime, things are happening. Go back at about six thirty or seven o’clock at night... it’s like tumbleweeds are blowing gently down the streets,” Bettge said. He launched into a joke he said he probably shouldn’t tell, but what the heck:

“What’s the difference between Pullman and yogurt? The answer is that yogurt has live culture.”

Bettge says that the sudden switch in focus will turn out to be costly for Pullman.

“I don’t know why, but WSU and Pullman were both completely and utterly unprepared for the attention to shift” in their direction, Bettge said. “They were caught flat-footed.”

Chapter 109

*Puerta Aventuras, Mexico
December 30, 2022*

Emily Alandt comes down to the kitchen in her pajamas. Hunter Johnson and her parents are already sitting there talking.

"They found him," her mom says, and she hands Emily her phone.

Emily looks at the photo. She's never met this guy. She and Hunter feel certain that neither had Xana or Ethan.

Josie and Linden check in, and it turns out they never met him either. It's mystifying.

Josie immediately searches for Bryan Kohberger on Instagram, but she's too late. If he had a real footprint there, it's gone.

But there's a plethora of fake accounts.

She even gets a DM from one of them: Hey, it's Bryan, sorry for killing your friends.

Although she's heard the news she's been hoping for, Emily doesn't feel the emotional release she expected to. Although "there was someone arrested, there was no fear that had left my body," she said.

She doesn't really believe it can be this guy, some random stranger.

It's the one possibility she hadn't thought about: Why would someone unconnected to any of her four friends have murdered them?

"Just like everybody else out there," she said, she "expected it to be someone they knew."

Over and over again she reconstructs the events of that night—this guy entering the house—and replays them in her mind.

Why Xana? Why did he ignore Dylan?

"I have wondered a million times over why he walked away and didn't look in the other rooms... if Xana and Ethan, if Maddie and Kaylee, why not the rest?" she said. "I also just try to keep a positive mindset and say, 'Thank God, not the rest.'"

Chapter 110

*Lehigh County, Pennsylvania
December 30, 2022*

Josh Ferraro is on edge, waiting for the news.

Last night, Grace, a friend he works with at the Swim-In Zone, a local pool, told him that her dad was part of the state police team staking out the home of the suspect in the Idaho Four killings.

She tells him that it's a former DeSales student.

Josh is shocked.

He went to DeSales. He studied criminal justice, then spent three years as a corrections officer. So he feels like he has more understanding than the average person about why people commit serious crimes.

The people he's seen locked up, they look like average Joes. They *are* average Joes, in fact, for most of their lives. But underneath... underneath there's an itch. And these people spend their lives waiting for the chance to scratch it. They put themselves in places where the opportunity is readily available.

On December 9, for the heck of it, Josh made a TikTok video suggesting the profile of whoever did this is a single male between the ages of twenty and thirty. That's because, he theorized, Moscow was a college town, and the suspect would need to blend in.

Still, when the face and name of Bryan Kohberger flash on his TV screen, he's taken aback. Something about that name rings a bell. But that face—he doesn't remember that face.

Until he checks his phone and sees old emails.

"Oh, shit!" he says.

It's the Ghost. His lab partner on a biology project. The strange guy who showed up promptly for classes, then vanished into his car and drove off to one of an assortment of jobs. The guy who didn't speak to anyone except the professors. Who occasionally hung back to talk to Professors Ramsland and Bolger.

When Josh last saw the suspect's face, it was fuller. Different.

Josh is shocked.

Nothing about Kohberger stands out in his memory as a red flag. Nothing.

Quiet, yes. Strange, yes. Awkward, yes.

But a murderer?

"There's nothing, there's just nothing to the guy, except he was a good student," Josh said.

He reaches for his phone and texts as many of his classmates as he can find. Does anyone remember anything peculiar about Bryan Kohberger? Anything that would indicate he'd turn into a mass murderer?

They ask one another the same question:

When they look back, what did they miss?

Chapter 111

*Center Valley, Pennsylvania
December 30, 2022*

DeSales University professor Katherine Ramsland is deeply frustrated.

As soon as the news breaks that the suspect arrested for the murders of the Idaho Four was once a student at DeSales, the university issues an edict to the faculty:

No one who taught Bryan Kohberger is to say anything.

So the expert in forensic psychology and extreme offenders finds herself in a truly ironic situation. She's the author of seventy-two books, more than a thousand articles, and a *Psychology Today* blog called *Shadow Boxing*, the tagline for which is "a blog that probes the mind's dark secrets." And yet she's not allowed to write or talk about the one murder case she has personal knowledge of and for which she may or may not be called to testify—the case involving her former student Bryan Kohberger.

Her inbox and voicemail are cluttered with endless media requests that she has to decline.

She reads media reports describing her classes, like her Psychological Sleuthing class in the crime scene house where she staged murder scenes using dummy bodies and fake blood and asked the students to act as detectives.

She reads recollections of Kohberger as one of the better students, someone who evidently wanted to impress Ramsland by reading her books, including her most well known, *Confession of a Serial Killer*, about Dennis Rader, the BTK Killer.

In articles discussing her classes—including her course on spree murderers like Elliot Rodger—her students tell the media they remember Kohberger dedicating himself to the assignments, in particular to Rodger’s YouTube video, which was on the syllabus.

Classmate Brittany Slaven remembered that he was so “advanced” that she once peeked at his paper when stuck on a test, knowing he’d have the correct answers.

Brittany said they spent weeks learning from Ramsland, via the acronym IS PATH WARM, the characteristics that law enforcement should look for to detect a murderer-in-waiting:

I—Ideation

S—Substance abuse

P—Purposelessness

A—Anxiety

T—Trapped

H—Hopelessness

W—Withdrawal

A—Anger

R—Recklessness

M—Mood changes

What if Kohberger had copied Elliot Rodger? The character similarities were there all along. Ramsland’s students tell the media they learned from Ramsland that psychopaths like Rodger and Rader are very hard to detect.

Chad Petipren, another student of Ramsland’s, said that he remembered Kohberger as a normal guy. Bryan sometimes mentioned going to church and Bible study, but when Chad asked him questions about the Bible, Bryan didn’t always know the answer.

But look at Dennis Rader and what Ramsland taught them,

Petipren said. "Rader had a son, he had a child... It's like he became a normal person for years. He could have been my church president."

Until, that is, Rader went out and committed murder.

Chapter 112

*Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania
December 30, 2022*

That little prick! He was in my house all the damn time!”

When Mark Baylis sees Kohberger’s image on the TV, he swears. Suddenly it all makes sense.

If the guy is capable of murder, he’s certainly capable of burglary.

Baylis remembers Kohberger as clear as day, always lurking behind his son and nephew, never saying hello, staring into space.

He hadn’t connected the dots at the time. But now he’s sure of it.

Baylis dials the local state troopers and asks them to reactivate the investigation into the series of break-ins he experienced all those years ago.

He hadn’t been able to figure out who was stealing items from him piecemeal, maybe up to twenty-five times, taking thirty thousand dollars’ worth of rare coins, jewelry, and knives from his house out in the woods.

The worst of it was that, at the time, he’d worried it was some of the homeless veterans his charity aimed to help. That was a shitty feeling.

He’d known it had to be somebody who knew his property well, who could get close enough to watch the house and track his movements. Someone who had the time to sit out in the woods, crumpling up the Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup wrappings, dropping them on his land.

He just hadn’t bothered to think about his son Jack’s friends.

Until now.

This Kohberger guy was always around. Until he got into heroin.
And then Jack had dropped him for a bit.

So Mark asks the cops if this time they could do their job,
because he knows who was stealing from him.

But it turns out, it doesn't matter.

The case is no longer in their system. It's too old.

"We can't do anything," they tell him.

Mark's too busy to press further.

Looks like the little prick is going to get his comeuppance anyway.

Chapter 113

*Effort, Pennsylvania
December 30, 2022*

Poor Maryann!"

All Connie Saba can think of when she sees the news about Bryan is his poor parents.

All those struggles with Bryan, the arguments that he and Michael used to have on the phone when Bryan was in her house hanging out with her son, Jeremy.

Maryann trying to protect Bryan from Jeremy.

The silent breathing over Connie's phone after Jeremy died.

Connie wants to believe the best, but she can't.

She knows better than to phone Maryann. That woman is a closed book at the best of times.

And this is not the best of times.

Connie is going to pray for her.

Chapter 114

Moscow, Idaho
January 4, 2023

The Suburban pulls into the garage. The steel doors lock behind him.

Bryan Kohberger walks down the twenty steps to the fluorescent-lit dungeon that is the tiny, underground Latah County jail.

It was state-of-the-art construction back in 1972 when someone with a sense of humor scrawled outside the newly built booking room: *Welcome to the Latah Hilton*. Decades later, the graffiti was removed.

Most of the inmates are there for the usual reasons: drugs, DUIs, domestic abuse, assault.

Technically, the jail—with a capacity of thirty-eight inmates—is too small to meet the state’s legal requirements. There aren’t enough rooms. The inmates are housed in a square around the common areas: kitchen, shower, and library. They’re allowed just one hour a day, combined, to use the library and the twenty-by-ten-foot wired-in exercise yard. There’s nothing else to do except watch TV.

It’s a twenty-four-hour cycle of boredom with the odd flash of excitement.

In 1984, Leslie Rogge, the “gentleman robber” who was being held for federal bank robbery, walked out, aided by a map and a door opened by the jailer. He was not apprehended until 1996, in Guatemala. He’s due to be let out in May 2034, at the age of ninety-four.

In 1992, William A. Davison, a twice-convicted murderer, escaped

from the exercise yard. He was captured after a manhunt lasting a month.

The common shared cell for up to eight people is not where Kohberger goes.

Months later, a friend of Josie and Linden's who is drunk and booked there for the night sees Kohberger in a cell alone, per his "maximum security" status.

Jail staff are not going to take a risk with him.

"Inmates have wives and children too," Sergeant Brannon Jordan, the deputy who was injured in the fatal shooting of Officer Lee Newbill, said. "What he did is out of a horror movie.... In the prison world there's status that comes with harming someone like him."

The deputies' priority is to keep Kohberger alive.

They need him to face the wheels of justice.

"Nobody," Jordan said, "wants to fuck that up."

PART SIX

Warpath

Chapter 115

Moscow, Idaho
January 5, 2023

They bring Bryan Kohberger up from his cell into the tiny Latah County courtroom, and he sits in the defendant box within spitting distance of the Goncalves and Laramie families.

He's shackled and clad in orange prison clothes.

He doesn't turn to look at anyone. His only animated gestures are directed to Anne Taylor, his public defender, who sits easily beside him. Taylor has long, blond, shiny hair, and everything about her—clothing, posture, and demeanor—exudes a no-nonsense confidence. If she's ruffled to be representing America's most notorious suspect, she doesn't show it.

Taylor works for the public defender's office in Kootenai County, where serious crime is far more abundant than it is in Latah County. (In an irony that will soon come to light, one of her clients was Xana's mom, Cara Northington. Taylor avoided the conflict of interest by quietly filing for a withdrawal from Northington's case.)

Moscow is scarcely unfamiliar territory for Taylor. She attended the University of Idaho's law school—it's almost impossible to find a lawyer in the area who didn't. In fact, the man who gave Taylor her first job is now sitting a couple of feet away from her on the other team: Bill Thompson.

Judge Megan Marshall, the Moscow magistrate, is another part of the cozy UI law graduate circle, and she reads out the charges against Kohberger. Four counts of murder, one of burglary. She asks if he understands them—he says he does. She explains that the

punishment is either the death penalty or life in prison. The prosecutor has sixty days to decide which one he intends to pursue.

Judge Marshall sets another court date a few days hence to determine the date for the weeklong preliminary hearing during which the prosecution will lay out its evidence to show grounds for a trial.

Steve Goncalves watches it all go down with a mixture of extreme emotions. He has not been eating or sleeping more than three hours a night. Kristi and Alivia have been telling him they are worried about him.

But it's tough for him to sit back and watch this guy with the strange eyes and the passive face, considering the fact that he's alive and Kaylee is dead.

Where is the justice in that?

Steve read Brett Payne's probable-cause affidavit—it was filed one hour before the court proceedings began—and there's a lot in it, undoubtedly. The highlight, clearly, is the DNA found on the snap of the knife sheath. It's going to be hard to argue against that. That's what his sources in the local FBI are telling him. DNA is the gold standard of evidence.

But Payne's affidavit says that investigators got to Kohberger's DNA via his dad's, so the defense could look for loopholes there—and Steve is worried.

Will the DNA evidence hold up as legitimate and legitimately obtained? Will the defense try to argue that Kohberger's DNA could have gotten on the knife sheath years before? Steve plans to do his own research on how long DNA could last there.

"I'm told that that version of a Ka-Bar has a special material for the button and it's copper-based, and that dramatically speeds up the deterioration of the DNA—tests have shown sometimes less than twenty-four hours to the max seven days," he said.

And what about the lack of an obvious link between Kohberger and the victims?

Kohberger wasn't part of Kaylee's circle, so will the lurid speculation that Kaylee had an OnlyFans page or some sort of secret life worsen?

Steve wants to protect Kaylee, be her mouthpiece now that she's unable to speak for herself.

But Judge Marshall just made that harder.

Ahead of Kohberger's extradition from Pennsylvania, Judge Marshall imposed a gag order stopping the police, investigators, attorneys, and anyone connected to the investigation from talking to the media. The point of this, obviously, is to protect the investigation.

But a few days later—without any public process or rationale—she refines the gag order to include the lawyers for the victims' families and witnesses.

Steve doesn't like this one bit. His attorney, Shanon Gray—and thirty news organizations—filed an appeal.

Steve's concern isn't simply that his First Amendment rights are being restricted, though that is a legitimate issue. It's that he has seen and felt the harm that occurs when there's a vacuum in the narrative. He's seen all the rumors about Kaylee on Facebook, which Alivea, thankfully, was able to quash. He's seen innocent people like Jack DuCoeur falsely accused until the police cleared them. Now there's no official check on the rumors and speculation about Kaylee and Maddie other than a trial that could be years away. Kohberger's defense can say anything in the courtroom—and Steve is helpless to speak out against it.

"All this misinformation will get out there and then it will just sort of become legend," he says.

He's so upset that he stays locked in his home office for hours, glued to internet conspiracies. Concerned, Kristi and Alivea come up with an idea to help him.

They decide to take control of a Goncalves family Facebook page and repurpose it. Now that Kohberger has been arrested, what had originally been set up to field tips will become a supportive online community, not only for the Goncalves family but also for other families going through similar experiences. It's a way, at the very least, to tell the world what *they* are thinking and feeling—a way to keep Kaylee and who she really was alive in the public imagination.

Chapter 116

*Rochester, New York
January 5, 2023*

It's the mention of the knife sheath Kohberger left at the scene that convinces Kristine Cameron that Bryan Kohberger and Pappa Rodger are one and the same.

When Kohberger was arrested and she saw his face on the news, she thought that he looked similar to the strange profile picture of Pappa Rodger. But, she'd told herself, that could just be wishful thinking.

Kristine also thought about the fact that Elliot Rodger targeted sorority girls. In particular, he targeted the Alpha Phi sorority. Kaylee's sorority.

"I was like, wait a minute. [Kohberger] killed all—he killed four people. Three of them are girls, three of them. He's never had a girlfriend..."

After the arrest Kristine waits for Pappa Rodger to resurface on the Facebook page and opine about Kohberger.

But he doesn't reappear.

And his silence starts a frenzy on the Facebook page.

People put up screenshots of his earlier posts about the murders and highlight the parts of Brett Payne's affidavit that jibe just a bit too neatly with them.

There's his obsession with the idea that police had found a knife sheath at the crime scene, his opinion that the killer had been in the house fifteen minutes, that he'd stopped after killing four out of exhaustion, that the house was targeted for a reason, that the killer

was not in the circle of victims' friends, that he'd left the neighborhood.

Once again, the contents of the Facebook page enter mainstream news. On NewsNation, Ashleigh Banfield does several segments on whether Pappa Rodger could be Kohberger.

Kristine and Alina half expect to get a call from the FBI or the police. It's not every day that you find you've *become* the story you are covering.

The exposure is helpful, Kristine believes, for Alina and herself. It takes the duo a big step closer to building an audience for the true-crime podcast they want to host. Vice Media has signed them to an exclusive deal to report on Kohberger.

Kristine loves that she and Alina are joined at the hip. Both women believe their arrangement works.

Alina puts in many more hours than her partner on this Facebook page and the others they started because, unlike Kristine, she's home most of the time because she's struggling with medical issues around an injured back. Alina believes that Kristine is fully supportive of her predicament; one night when Alina was recovering from a procedure, Kristine refused an invitation to go on Ashleigh Banfield's NewsNation show alone to talk about Pappa Rodger, a sign of how robust their friendship and partnership is.

But Alina has often told Kristine that she cannot afford to continue to work night and day on the pages if they can't find a way to monetize what they are doing. Kristine, who has a full-time job, tells her she understands. Their friendship and partnership are "above any sort of monetary thing," Kristine believes.

"I would've put her first," Kristine later said.

But by then, it was too late.

Chapter 117

*Troy, Idaho
February 2023*

He's been out in the snow for hours.

There's something deeply therapeutic about wielding a chain saw through logs again and again. In the two months since Kohberger's arrest, Chief Fry has used this quiet time to think and heal, though even out here, on his land, he's never quite able to forget those insane six weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

Thanks to the gag order, he's no longer being pressured to speak to the press. Fry has said no to every media request: "Geraldo, Katie Couric, Dr. Phil—I turned them all down," he said.

For now, it's mostly quiet; both sides are preparing for the preliminary hearing.

At work, he's continuing with the investigation, looking closely at Kohberger's digital footprint and the victims' to see if they intersect.

To see if they can find the motive.

Meanwhile, there's a page on Reddit called Justice for Kohberger that the chief follows, "for humor" and with irritation, on which people insist that Kohberger was nowhere near the house on the night in question and conclude that Fry's wife, Julie, who was elected county clerk in November, is somehow controlling Kohberger's court schedule or giving her husband advance notice of hearings.

The chief adores Julie, his wife of thirty-two years—"when she speaks, she's kind of like EF Hutton," he said—so this Reddit nonsense irks him greatly.

One conspiracy theorist even concluded that the chief was the murderer and Kohberger was framed as a scapegoat.

Fry looks forward to setting the record straight. As he hoped, Brett Payne's probable-cause affidavit definitely quashed some of the police department's worst critics. He received a congratulatory letter from retired LAPD deputy chief John D. White, the chief investigator in the O. J. Simpson case:

Dear Chief Fry, Congratulations on a job well done. I told my wife after your first press conference, "This chief knows what he's doing!" Your handling of the media investigation was a textbook example of how to handle big media cases.

And the guy who'd emailed him that this would be the next JonBenét Ramsey case turned around and congratulated him as well. "You might have got the right guy," he wrote.

After all their back-and-forth, Fry was curious about this critic. "Tell me about yourself," Fry replied. He learned the guy was seventy, had been in the oil business in South Dakota before he retired and moved to Florida, and had three kids.

It never ceases to astonish the chief how, when you cut through all the crap, people have more in common with each other than they think.

Even Pastor Doug Wilson came to sit in his office recently.

The cops had lost their legal battle with Christ Church over the psalm-singing arrests, and Christ Church was now suing the city for wrongful arrests and the selective prosecution of Wilson's grandson.

But the pastor was extending an olive branch because he'd heard that Fry received death threats from Christ Church congregants over the episode. Fry told him that, yes, he'd received death threats, but not from Wilson's congregants, some of whom were police officers.

"I don't care who people are. We get paid and we take an oath to serve all people," he told Wilson.

Fry wishes that Steve Goncalves felt able to trust his department

more. The chief hates to feel at odds with the family of a murder victim; he doesn't know how it happened, but he can see that the Goncalves family feels mistreated by the cops, and they do not trust Thompson and his team either. That's upsetting to him.

Their lawyer, Shanon Gray, is vocal in the media. He's demanding meetings and wants to be kept in the loop about whatever the cops hand over to Thompson as part of his case.

This is often a problem in murder cases. Victims' families think they are owed information, and by law, they do have some rights, but to protect the investigation, they can't be told everything.

It's not a perfect system. The chief knows that. And he's upset that the Goncalves family has articulated how upset they are to feel left out.

Fry wants to see this case through. But the clock is ticking. He's fifty-four years old. He believes in change. And elections for county sheriff will be held in November 2024.

That's the one other job, apart from being police chief, he'd love to have, and by then, he thinks Captain Anthony Dahlinger will be ready to replace him.

Fry needs to think about the future.

So he's taking a moment for himself, out here in the woods, while he can.

He's learned the hard way: You never know what's around the corner.

Chapter 118

*Moscow, Idaho
February 2023*

It's around eight p.m. and pitch-black when Ava Wood hears the knock at the front door of her home at 718 Queen Road.

She installed a Ring camera after the murders and she can see a man standing there. He's dressed in a Moscow PD uniform, but since last November, she doesn't trust anything or anyone. She keeps her door locked and waits.

He knocks some more.

Eventually she speaks through the camera: "Who are you here for?"

He replies, "I'm here for Ava Wood."

Ava had three new locks and an alarm system installed after the murders, and now she unlocks and opens the door.

He hands her an envelope and speaks in a clipped, formal voice: "You're being subpoenaed for the *State of Idaho versus Bryan Kohberger* preliminary hearing in June."

Ava thinks her legs might give way. She starts to shake. She has never been subpoenaed before.

"This is the Bryan Kohberger case?" she asks. "Who is it from?"

The officer answers, "The defense. Anne Taylor."

The *defense*?

"Do I have to show up?" she asks.

"Yes," he tells her. "It's illegal to disobey."

As soon as he's gone, Ava slams the door and, in tears, phones her parents.

Luckily, her dad is a lawyer who specializes in bad-faith litigation. He advises her to phone Thompson's office and let them know she has been contacted.

She speaks to Stacie Osterberg, Thompson's assistant, who suggests she should find out what Taylor wants.

So in March, Ava and her dad do a Zoom with Taylor.

On the call, Taylor homes in on something Ava told the police the day of the murders: On Friday, October 14, at one a.m., she'd heard someone climb up the metal steps to her apartment, which was across the street from 1122 King Road, and try the door.

"You could hear the jingle of my doorknob. It's a finicky doorknob," she said.

But the door stayed closed because Ava had put in a dead bolt during her junior year.

She told police what she now tells Taylor, that at the time, she'd looked on Snapchat to see if any of her friends were in the area, saw one, Mason Bangeman, and texted him to ask if he had just tried to let himself in.

No, he'd said. So Ava asked him to check the street. She watched through her bedroom window as Mason and a couple of friends walked into view. He texted Ava that he couldn't see anyone.

So Ava went to sleep. She didn't think any more about it.

Until Xana, Ethan, Kaylee, and Maddie were murdered in the house across the street.

And then she wondered aloud to the police: Was the murderer the same person who had tried to get into her apartment four weeks earlier?

Anne Taylor asks her repeatedly to describe what she can see of the street from her home. Ava says she can see the front door of 1122 King Road and the street leading up to it.

Taylor asks her if the police ever got back to her about the October incident.

The answer is no.

After Kohberger was arrested and Ava read the probable-cause affidavit, she asked if anyone in law enforcement knew if October 14 was one of the twelve times Kohberger's phone had pinged in the

King Road area.

No one will tell her.

It occurs to Ava that if Kohberger wasn't in the area in the predawn hours of October 14, the defense could argue there was another predator running around.

But if he *was*...

Ava guesses from Taylor's other questions that the lawyer is looking for holes in the accounts of the victims' friends.

Taylor asks Ava a lot of questions: "How well did I know Maddie, Ethan, Kaylee, and Xana? What kind of people were they? Did the roommates ever fight? Did they leave their house unlocked? Did I ever attend the parties they had? How close was I with Dylan and Bethany? Were we all in the same room at the police station? Did I know anything prior to the police being called or showing up? Did I know anything while sitting outside? When did [I] find out all four of them were dead? Did I have any knowledge of Kaylee or anyone having a stalker? Did I hear anything that night? What did I do the night before? Why was I outside that morning? How did I get wrapped into this whole situation?"

Taylor apologizes for putting Ava through this, which is decent, Ava thinks.

But Ava, who is back with her parents in California, really does not want to testify.

Texts ping back and forth among her friend group. Who else has received subpoenas for the preliminary hearing on June 26?

Two of Jack DuCoeur's housemates, including Adam Lauda, the guy in the Corner Club bar, received them. So too has Ethan's close friend Peter Elgorriaga. He was with Ethan and Xana until the end of the Sig Chi party on November 13. Unlike Ava, Adam and Peter can't try to contest the summons because of their location. They live in Idaho.

In April, court filings show that Bethany was subpoenaed by Taylor. But because Bethany lives in Nevada, it's been agreed she can be interviewed there instead.

How is that fair? Ava, the California resident, wonders. She writes to Taylor's office asking if they will at least pay for her travel and

accommodation.

They will.

When she attends graduation in Moscow in mid-May, she keeps thinking that her next trip to Idaho is going to feel a lot more stressful.

She's back home in California a few days later when she hears the news: She doesn't need to return to Moscow for a preliminary hearing because there won't be one. Bryan Kohberger has been indicted for the murders by a grand jury Bill Thompson convened in Moscow—in secret.

All the better for the prosecution, which won't have to show its hand and reveal its witnesses to the defense ahead of a trial.

Chapter 119

Moscow, Idaho
May 11, 2023

Emily Alandt is already in town for graduation when she gets the email summons from Bill Thompson.

He's convened a grand jury and she needs to testify.

No one can know.

She needs to get to the Latah County Courthouse on Sunday evening, when Thompson's team will prepare her for what to expect at the real thing on Monday morning.

Hunter Johnson received the same summons.

The only people they tell are their moms, Karen and Jessica, who are with them for graduation.

Emily has an immediate problem: She has nothing to wear other than her graduation dress. So Jessica, Hunter's mother, takes her to Target, where she purchases a respectable pair of pants. It's hard, if not impossible, to relax through graduation events, knowing what lies ahead.

As she walks into the courthouse on Sunday evening, Emily glances at a big steel door to the jail. She shudders.

Kohberger is down there.

She tries to push him from her mind.

She and Hunter are separated for their practice sessions. Emily's interlocutor is Ashley Jennings. Emily is nervous answering the questions. There are times when she screws up and starts over.

The next morning, she and Hunter find that it's not as easy as they'd hoped to slip away from their friends, who are pregaming.

"We've got breakfast plans with our families," they lie.

"Oh, so do a breakfast shot first!" is the reply.

That puts Emily on the spot. But nothing is going to induce her to drink.

Too much is at stake.

She and Hunter are driving, five minutes from the courthouse, when a member of Thompson's team texts them an alert.

There's media outside. Use the side door.

When Emily does find herself in front of a jury, she is grateful for the preparation. It's intimidating. But she can do it. They ask the exact same questions she's just rehearsed, and she answers them smoothly.

"Tell us about the events of November thirteenth."

She and Hunter don't know who else Thompson called for the grand jury, but Emily suspects that Dylan and Bethany may have testified on Zoom. She doesn't see either girl around campus when she and Hunter return to their friends, then ultimately walk for graduation with their respective classes.

All she knows is that on May 17, it's announced that Bryan Kohberger has been formally indicted by a grand jury for the murders of Xana, Ethan, Maddie, and Kaylee—which means there will be no preliminary hearing.

Emily has played her part.

"I'll call you when I need you. But meanwhile I want you to get on with your lives."

That was Bill Thompson's parting message to Emily and Hunter when they headed back to Boise. But for Emily, returning to normality is a struggle.

After the murders, she struggles to focus. She worries that her GPA will not be good enough for her to get into a physical therapy program, so she ends up not applying. She's lost sight of her goals. She feels adrift, no longer the person she was before the murders.

Hunter is an athletics coach at Centennial High School in Boise, so he, at least, has structure in his life.

Emily takes a series of part-time jobs, and eventually trains to be a dental hygienist. But she knows deep down that she needs to

address the trauma of November 13. She needs to try to get past it.

She starts going to counseling and digging deep, learning to be alone, even though, thanks to Hunter, she seldom is. Her doctor recommends she try Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy (EMDR), but when she runs this past Thompson's team, they warn her that this would likely disqualify any testimony she gives at trial because EMDR can affect memory.

Emily isn't going to risk that, even though a trial could be many months away.

"I don't want to testify, but I'm willing to do whatever it takes," she says. She wants to see this through. She wants to get justice for Xana, Ethan, Kaylee, and Maddie.

Then—and only then—she will do the therapy.

Chapter 120

Moscow, Idaho
May 22, 2023

Bryan Kohberger keeps his eyes forward, fixed on district judge John Judge, who is taking over the case after the indictment.

He answers "Yes," over and over, when the judge asks him if he understands the charges and the penalty for each one.

If found guilty, Kohberger faces either life imprisonment or the death penalty for each of the four first-degree murder charges.

"Ms. Taylor," the judge says, "is Mr. Kohberger prepared to plead to these charges?"

She rises and answers, "Your Honor, we will be standing silent."

The judge pauses. "Because Mr. Kohberger is standing silent," he says, "I'm going to enter not-guilty pleas on each charge."

If John Judge is surprised, he doesn't show it, but standing silent is not something that happens often. Many suspects don't even know there is an option besides pleading either guilty or not guilty. Even local attorney Mike Pattinson wasn't aware of this option.

But Anne Taylor is a very practiced criminal lawyer. And Bryan Kohberger knows more about criminal law than your average suspect.

There are two reasons, media commentators say, that someone who has said he understands the charges and issues would stand silent.

The first is if there are ongoing negotiations around a plea deal. Few people believe that that is the case here. Everything seems to indicate that Kohberger wants his moment of fame.

The second has to do with public perception. In high-profile trials, defendants might want to avoid sparking further public outrage by saying "Not guilty."

It's a nuance that likely occurs only to someone who thinks and cares about the PR ramifications of the court proceedings.

Bryan Kohberger, it is reported, cares greatly about the PR ramifications of his case. He watches TV coverage of it as much as he can in his jail cell.

Steve Goncalves complains publicly and often about Kohberger's privileges.

"We've got to get this guy. I don't want him ever, *ever* getting vegan meals, his own TV, his own phone, video conferencing his mother," he said. "I got family members that are military, they come home all messed up in the head. All they get is the VA.... And this is the way we treat our murderers? Our mass murderers that kill people? Vegan meals, TV, room and board?"

It's absolutely outrageous, Steve thinks. But so much about the legal process is.

Most people have no idea how frustrating it is to be in his shoes. Most people don't think about how little agency a murder victim's parents have.

But on his family's Facebook page, he's starting to hear from other victims' parents who say they wish they'd been more proactive and involved in their children's cases. He's getting messages of support from families all around the world.

It's hard to juggle his day job doing IT at the hospital and all this, but curating the page brings the Goncalves family together. It gives Kristi purpose on her down days.

The encouragement spurs him on.

Chapter 121

*Moscow, Idaho
Spring 2023*

Half a mile away from Kohberger's jail cell, in his office on Jackson Street, Christ Church pastor Doug Wilson closely follows developments in the Kohberger case and the implications for his family, especially his grandson Rory and his conviction for illegally affixing a sticker to a pole.

"This is just personal theory, connecting dots," he said. "I think that the judge [Marshall] did not want to throw the Moscow officials under the bus by finding in favor of Rory... because that would make the cops look bad. That would make the city of Moscow look bad in the middle of this."

His argument might not have gotten much traction with anyone other than his own congregants if it weren't for the fact that, after Kohberger was arrested, Marshall played into his hands by imposing the controversial gag order on the victims' families' lawyers.

When thirty media organizations and the Goncalves attorney, Shanon Gray, filed appeals against Marshall's gag order, Wilson felt deeply gratified. Now he isn't the only one who thinks Marshall has obstructed people's First Amendment rights.

This could be very helpful to Rory's case, he thinks.

"Just, not to put too fine a point on it," he said, but "Judge Marshall was the one who put the gag order on them, and she was the same person who excluded my grandson's defense. So it's the same. This is a small town. We're talking about the same people."

Wilson hoped that, given the public pressure, Marshall's superior,

district judge John Judge, would be sympathetic to Rory's appeal. "We had heard rumors," he said, that John Judge "was not happy with the city of Moscow."

But it's May, and suddenly the district judge is under pressure of his own, because following the grand jury indictment, he's taking over Bryan Kohberger's case. It's by far the biggest one of his career, most of which he spent as a lawyer in private practice.

Later that spring, Judge John Judge denies Rory's appeal.

Doug Wilson is annoyed but unsurprised. He thinks that Judge, like Marshall, has no interest in issuing a ruling that could further harm the reputation of the Moscow PD in the wake of the murders.

John Judge is from the same network as all the local judges and lawyers. He is a UI law school graduate, just like Bill Thompson, Megan Marshall, Anne Taylor, and even Cathy Mabbutt, the coroner.

Wilson, now clear in his own mind that whatever happens in this case has a direct bearing on Rory's, intends to fight on. The Wilsons will appeal Rory's case all the way to the Idaho Supreme Court. They will sue in federal court too. They will spend whatever it takes; they've already surpassed six figures.

"If Kohberger is acquitted, let's say, and let's say he's acquitted because of a botched handling of evidence... then our allegation that the cops botched *this* case is... the second verse," Wilson said.

But, he added, "If it comes out that he was caught and he's convicted because of sterling police work—and we all would applaud it; including us, we would applaud it—then our allegation that the cops were Keystone Cops mishandling all of this becomes more of an uphill climb. It is obviously related, either way you go."

So whatever happens, Wilson will be watching very closely.

The way he sees it, the fate of his grandson—and, to some degree, his church—hang in the balance.

Chapter 122

Moscow, Idaho
May 12, 2023

It's the Friday before graduation and the eve of the six-month anniversary of the murders.

It's also a few days before the celebration of the first "Maddie May Day." May 25, Maddie's birthday, will now be an annual holiday that Maddie's aunts, Katie and Rachel, helped create. They've bought a domain name, built a website, and extended an invitation to all: "Join us in continuing Maddie's mission by completing random acts of kindness. We can't wait to hear the stories that emerge as we all remember Maddie on this day and every day."

Deedle, as Maddie called her paternal grandmother, Kim Cheeley, is proud of her daughters for coming up with the idea. And she's excited to go to Moscow that evening with the Laramies and her son Ben Mogen and other family members to spread the word about Maddie May Day.

She's got cookies and a note about the new holiday for the Moscow police officers and the university staff.

"We wanted to thank the police department," she said. "I feel they've done an amazing job keeping their cards close [to] their chest and going about their business and doing what they had to do. I know that you're not supposed to say this out loud, but I feel they have their man."

When she arrives at the police station, gifts in hand, various officers come in and out of the room as she shares the cookies.

Deedle is gratified. Until, that is, nearly two weeks later, on May

25, Maddie's actual birthday. On that day, she reads in the *Idaho Statesman* that "the families" of Maddie Mogen and Kaylee Goncalves have filed tort claims notices with the city of Moscow, the University of Idaho, the Idaho State Police, and possibly—it's suggested but not confirmed—WSU. The paper quotes the Goncalveses' lawyer, Shanon Gray, explaining that the families have filed, as legally required within six months of the original incident, to reserve their right to sue. They haven't sued yet, but they might in the future.

"Filing a tort claims notice is really just a safeguard," Gray tells ABC News. "It's a safeguard to protect the interests of the families, the victims, and really the whole community around, because if something goes wrong or was done improperly, then someone is held accountable for that."

In May, Steve phones Stacy Chapin to tell her ahead of time that he is filing the tort against the cops and university. He explains, "This is nothing against you." And he means it. It isn't even against the police, in his mind. He's creating a layer of protection for Kaylee and Maddie. It isn't personal.

Stacy doesn't take it personally, but she is quietly upset on behalf of the police and the university.

Deedle is devastated. "It broke my heart," she later said.

She is mortified as she reads on and discovers that the Goncalves family filed theirs on May 2 and 3, but the "Mogen family" filed on May 11—the day before she showed up at the Moscow police station with her basket of cookies.

The "Mogen family" designation wrongly insinuates she had a part in this. She wants to set the record straight. She would *never* consider suing the police or the university.

"That is not us," she said. "We've been so thankful to the university, to the police department, and have been treated like royalty through this whole thing."

But Kim doesn't want to alienate Karen and Scott Laramie. During Maddie's short life, Deedle had consistent, unfettered access to Maddie because Karen and Scott allowed it. Ben was also made to feel welcome in their home. Even though he still had paternal rights,

things could have been a lot less easy had Karen and Scott not been so generous and welcoming.

"I love Karen," she said. "We stayed really close for Maddie's sake. And Scott too. I really, really love both of them."

Nervously, she phones Bill Thompson's office and asks if she is bound by the gag order.

She is not.

Then she calls the *Statesman*.

She speaks to an editor and tries to explain she'd like to be separated from the Mogen family in future reporting. But she doesn't want to create a story about a fracture in the family, so when the editor asks her if there is an issue, Deedle treads carefully.

"Well, going forward, could we just make clear who you're talking about? That's all."

She hangs up and wishes it were all much less complicated. Maddie was such an angel of a person. Deedle has added an angel wing, in her memory, to the necklace Maddie ordered for her on Etsy that had both of their names.

She doesn't get why the Goncalves family seems to be making so many decisions for Maddie's family. She's puzzled about why Maddie's ashes are on their mantelpiece alongside Kaylee's. But she also knows that it's what Karen wants.

Deedle thinks, *If that's the case, then so be it.*

Karen has lost her only child. And poor Karen had also lost her mother in a car accident when she herself was barely an adult.

So whatever Karen wants, Deedle will roll with it.

Chapter 123

Moscow, Idaho
August 1, 2023

It's over a hundred degrees when Jim and Stacy Chapin arrive on the UI campus.

They are there to drop off Maizie and Hunter for the start of the fall semester. But what they haven't told their children, because they don't want to upset them, is that after they've settled them in, they have another stop to make. Opposite the Kibbie Dome, in a nondescript building that has no AC and no electricity, is everything Ethan left behind at 1122 King Road.

Jim is reluctant to go, but Stacy insists. "Damn it, I'm going to get my kid's stuff."

Dean Blaine Eckles has thought long and hard about how to make the hideous experience as easy as possible for all the parents. He's got bottled water and nitrile gloves on hand. He and a team have staged and divided the campus building to mirror the rooms of the King Road house.

"We had old desks, and we brought in tables and staged it kind of like a garage sale," Eckles said. "We didn't want them to have to worry about opening boxes and being surprised."

Eckles has deliberately made sure that the families all come on separate days. And he has security in place just in case.

The Chapins walk through a room labeled KITCHEN to see if there's anything of Ethan's in there, then they go into a room marked FOUR, which contains the belongings of Xana and Ethan. Some of Ethan's stuff is spattered with blood. It's upsetting to see it. Unsurprisingly,

given the heat, the building smells rank.

"It was hell. I will not lie, it was hell," Stacy said later.

But she takes what she needs. She'll put the furniture in the storage unit she and Jim have kept in Moscow. And she brings the clothes back with her to Priest Lake, where she washes them and puts them away in the basement, beside Ethan's ashes. They don't need to overthink it now. But one day, she knows, when they are ready, Maizie, Hunter, and she and Jim will want to choose some pieces of Ethan's life to hold on to.

Going through Ethan's stuff is only one part of today's bittersweet experience.

Ahead of the trial—slated for October, just two months away—the court released 1122 King Road, meaning both the defense and the prosecution teams have no further use for it in terms of evidence.

Soon after the murders, the owner gave the house to the university, leaving it up to UI to decide its fate. In February, the school announced the house would be torn down.

The Chapins are fervently in favor of the house being demolished as soon as possible. Hunter can see it from his bedroom window at Sig Chi; so too can so many of Xana and Ethan's close friends, like Josie and Ava. Stacy and Jim believe no one needs to dwell on the horrific events of November 13, and the house is a horrible reminder.

"It needs to go," Stacy said, a position reflecting their larger, laissez-faire view of the unfolding judicial process. They don't want to spend a second thinking about Kohberger or a trial or any of the legal process beyond what they glean from Bill Thompson, whose staff phones regularly to update them.

Over coffee in La Conner one morning in March, as they watched the sun rise and, like every day, wiped away their tears, Stacy and Jim came to the decision that it was time to look forward, not back.

"Why would I want to waste my time looking at him?" Stacy said, referring to Kohberger. She has—for now, at least—no intention of showing up at any of the hearings or in the future at his trial. "Nothing is bringing Ethan back."

Out of devastation, the Chapins want to create something positive. To Stacy, that's *The Boy Who Wore Blue*, a children's book

she wrote about Ethan with illustrations by Lana Lee. In June, she and Jim travel to New York, and she appears on the *Today* show.

The book's profits will go to the couple's nonprofit foundation, Ethan's Smile—also a new variety of tulip Skagit County farmers have named in Ethan's honor. The foundation plans to award scholarships to high schoolers applying to college.

While the Chapins have no interest in the judicial process or the efficacy of the system, Steve Goncalves is on a mission. He asks journalists and local sources in the FBI to help him with research, and on the Goncalves family Facebook page he refers to himself as a "private investigator."

From the data Steve receives, he becomes increasingly sure that Maddie was the target. As far as Steve can see, Kohberger liked Maddie's photos on social media. He liked Kaylee's too, but always in joint photos with Maddie.

He wants to figure out how Kohberger appeared to know the layout of the King Road house before entering it on November 13, so he strenuously objects in July when the university announces its plans to demolish the 1122 King Road house quickly. "Technology changes so fast," he said. "So you never know if they discover some new scan or some kind of new phone technology or whatever and they want to go back in there and retrace steps." (He has a point. Months down the road, there will be back-and-forth between prosecutors and Kohberger's defense debating the accuracy of the model of the house to be used at trial.)

Shanon Gray puts out a statement from the Goncalveses to that effect and says the Kernodles and the Mogens are united on this point.

Dean Eckles understands their frustration over the house, but his hands are tied. University administrators are worried that the house is not safe—investigators tore out pieces of walls and floors, and there are wires hanging out. And it's costing the school around six hundred dollars a day to pay for security. It's a liability.

Because of the Goncalves family's public opposition to the demolition, Eckles is concerned that there might be some sort of disruption when they arrive on campus to pick up Kaylee's

belongings in August.

"I absolutely worried [that Shanon Gray] was going to get media there and try to make this a big deal," Eckles said later.

But the Goncalves family comes quietly, without Gray and without drama. They take their time looking through Kaylee's things.

Eckles feels for them. "I felt I had a really good relationship with [them] for the most part," he said. In person, he senses they are just decent people trying to grieve the loss of their daughter and advocate for her in the best way they know how.

By the end of August, all four victims' families have gone through the stuff. The Kernodles do it remotely.

Steve Goncalves is bracing for the worst. But out of the blue, the university announces that the demolition is postponed.

This is not entirely due to the pressure from the Goncalves family.

It's because of something that will come to frustrate Steve even more than the planned demolition of 1122 King Road.

It's because the trial date has been changed.

Chapter 124

*Moscow, Idaho
August 18, 2023*

Kohberger is clean-shaven, hair neatly trimmed, and dressed in a white shirt, striped tie, and gray jacket. He enters the courtroom through the side door and takes his seat at the defendant's table, where he and Anne Taylor appear to chat easily, too easily, almost as if they are discussing the weather.

Sitting in the gallery, Kristi stares at him. She wants him to look at her, make eye contact.

Her sister, Tami Buttz, *really* wants him to look over. Tami is wearing a black T-shirt on which is emblazoned in yellow and white lettering #JUSTICEFOR KAYLEE. IDAHO HOUSE BILL 186. SHOTS FIRED.

A few months earlier, the Idaho House of Representatives passed a law that would effectively bring back the firing squad as a means of execution if state officials were unable to obtain the chemicals needed to carry out a lethal injection.

Tami's T-shirt—a photograph of her wearing it is later posted to the Goncalves family Facebook page with the caption Damn it feels good to be a gangster—is a reminder that Bill Thompson has put the death penalty on the table.

If Kohberger sees the T-shirt or the family, he doesn't react.

Even when the defense's first expert witness in this hearing talks about the science of investigative genetic genealogy, Kohberger's expression stays fixed. His attorneys will later argue in court papers that this is due to his Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis, and they will claim it could hurt a jury's perception of him. The media's pool

camera keeps zooming in on him as if seeking something, anything. But it gets nothing.

In a preview of what may come at trial, depending on what the judge allows in, Taylor steers the focus to the DNA found on the knife sheath.

She wants the state to hand over to her the precise IGG methodology that was used to construct Kohberger's family tree—discovery that the state's lawyers say they don't have. And even if they did, they argue, the issue is moot, because they have Kohberger's DNA from a cheek swab, and it's an exact match for the DNA on the knife sheath. The IGG lab work simply gave them a lead.

Judge John C. Judge says he'll allow Taylor to pursue this avenue, even though it's "on the edge." He expresses his desire to be particularly cautious because "this is a death-penalty case. And if I deny... the presentations that one or the other side believe have some bearing on the case, it's probably more wise for me to allow it." Judge adds, "It's especially important in a case like this to have a record for appeal. So I'm not saying one way or the other how [my ruling] might fall, but I think it's important to preserve the record."

For the next two and a half hours, the courtroom becomes Taylor's theater. At least, that's how Steve sees it.

Thompson seems to have little to ask or say. Taylor calls three expert witnesses and peppers them with questions about the complexity of the science behind creating a family tree from trace DNA. One of them, as far as Steve can see, has no right to call herself an expert at all.

"How are you allowing her to become an expert on the stand and not even cross-examine her?" he complains privately afterward.

The experts discuss the room for error and also the issue of whether online genetic databases were accessed by law enforcement without authorization, which could lead to legal challenges down the line.

When you look at the two lawyers battling, it almost doesn't seem like a fair fight. Thompson is retirement age and looks it. Taylor is in her late fifties, young-looking, blond. She's quick on her feet. And she's aggressive. She asks the judge, for instance, to toss

out the indictment based on numerous, far-fetched-sounding irregularities surrounding the grand jury process. She argues that too few jurors were called (thirty-two instead of forty-five), in violation of state statute. That the instructions they were given were inaccurate. Even that the questionnaires they received were misnumbered.

A former classmate of hers, Moscow lawyer Mike Pattinson, observed that part of Taylor's job was simply to buy Kohberger time. "It's a death-penalty case."

So when the disappointing if predictable news that Kohberger is waiving his right to a speedy trial comes down the pike five days later, on August 23, Steve is prepared.

It's a reminder, Steve says, that it's essential that the Goncalves family is there in the courtroom for every single hearing. He has so little control over the course of justice that his presence in that room, staring at the defendant, feels like the only powerful thing he can do. It's the only time he truly feels he's doing anything proactive for Kaylee and Maddie.

Chapter 125

La Conner, Washington
November 13, 2023

It's the one-year anniversary of the death of their beloved child.

Jim, Stacy, Hunter, and Maizie Chapin, dressed in black tie, are welcoming their guests.

Over glasses of wine in early summer, Jim and Stacy thought very hard about what they wanted to do on this day. They wanted the evening to be upbeat. Positive. Celebratory, even. They wanted it to raise money for their foundation, Ethan's Smile. They wanted it to be intimate and private.

There are more media requests flooding in than ever, partly because of the anniversary, but also because Stacy's insistence on keeping the focus of Ethan's story away from the lurid end is becoming a focus in itself.

In October, the *New York Times* covered her weekend visit to Orlando, Florida, for CrimeCon, which billed itself as "the world's number one event for true crime and mystery."

Stacy had gone to the convention as part of a panel of victims' parents who, like her and Jim, were starting foundations as their children's legacies. Once there, she saw that a professor from Alabama was offering a seminar purporting to be a "forensic analysis" of Ethan's murder.

Stacy tried to attend, but walked out after a few minutes. After some deliberation, she returned to the packed seminar near the end of the session. She stood up at the mic during the Q and A.

"My name is Stacy Chapin, and I'm Ethan's mom," she said.

The room of thirty-two hundred people hushed, then broke into loud applause.

Her voice quavering with emotion, Stacy pressed on, explaining that she hadn't watched the presentation but had a message for the room: In their fascination with crime, they should not forget the victims.

"These were four of the greatest kids, and all of the great things that you read about them [are] legitimately true... Don't forget these kids. They were amazing, amazing kids in the prime of their life."

The moment goes viral on Fox News.

Whether she wants to do this or not, through her steady insistence that people focus on Ethan's life, not his death, Stacy Chapin is developing a brand: iconic supermom.

But now, on the one-year anniversary of Ethan's death, she and Jim want a press-free evening.

They accept an offer from a friend and neighbor in La Conner, Jeff Hellam, to use his Hellam's Vineyard wine shop and bar for a party.

As Stacy warms to the idea, she realizes she doesn't want just any party. If they are going to do this, they are really going to do this. The dress code is going to be black tie.

She thinks hard about a guest list.

Of course Hunter and Maizie will be there. Of course they will ask close family friends like Susie DeVries. And her cousins Kathleen and Stuart, and the PR executive who acted as their gatekeeper. And Melissa and Jeff and all the people who helped with the foundation. Dean Eckles sends two of his team.

There are also the people who have come to be part of the Chapins' growing family because of the tragedy.

One is Jazzmin Kernodle, Xana's big sister, of whom Stacy feels increasingly protective. Jazzmin has moved to Seattle with her boyfriend, Pat. But because Jeff is in Arizona, Stacy worries that Jazzmin can feel alone at times. Stacy wants to support her.

The other person Stacy invites is the Moscow police chief, James Fry.

Even as she dresses for the evening in a long navy gown, Stacy

isn't sure that the chief will be able to make it. After all, there's an anniversary vigil going on at the UI campus, and La Conner is a six-hour drive from Moscow.

But as everyone sips the fine wines, Chief Fry walks in quietly, his son JD beside him.

During her remarks Stacy asks the room to acknowledge him.

"We just cannot thank you enough for the work that you have done to right this atrocity. And we can't wait for it to be over so that we can talk about some of what we know and what some of us *really* know."

The chief smiles.

The Chapins, like Michelle Wiederrick, Joseph's mom, and Chrissy Dove, Sarah Parks's sister, are his kind of people. "We all have different personalities... Some of us are always going to take the bad and make some good out of it," he later said.

"And then there's people who take the bad and try to capitalize on it. And then there's people who take the bad and let it destroy them. And I think Stacy, the Chapins—look what they've already done. Thirty-three scholarships, over fifty thousand dollars given to kids."

He added, "After what happened to them? That's extraordinary."

Chapter 126

Rathdrum, Idaho
November 13, 2023

On the one-year anniversary of Kaylee's murder, the Goncalveses don't go to the vigil in Moscow.

Instead, they sit in their living room on their black leather couch, familiar now to America's many true-crime sleuths, and give TV interviews about Kaylee and their frustration with the excruciatingly slow and opaque legal path to justice.

"We said, 'Gather it up... we'll work with investigators and turn this around,'" Steve tells NewsNation. He repeats how, because "nobody knows her like her brother and sister," they were ahead of investigators on the Grub Truck video and reaching out to Kaylee and Maddie's driver.

"We went from being victims and became actively involved... and [that] could make a difference," Steve says.

They tell their interviewers that they do have some proof that their advocacy matters.

For one thing, 1122 King Road is still standing. And on October 31, the FBI reentered the home to create a new 3D map of the crime scene.

Because of the gag order, it's not clear to the public what drove the agency to do this. But it's an undeniable win for the Goncalves family. "I knew in my heart what was best for those girls and Ethan, and I knew what was best was to keep [the house] around, until they did more," Steve tells NewsNation's Brian Entin.

"There will be a point when I'll be like, 'Let it go.'"

But that isn't now.

The family shifts focus to another bone of contention: Kohberger's attire for court hearings. Once John Judge took over the case, he granted Anne Taylor's request to allow her client to appear in court unshackled and wearing a suit.

"He looks like a business executive," Kristi explodes. According to her research, "[I've] never seen another murderer or whatever he is at this point in a case not in handcuffs, not in shackles, one or the other or both, and in orange."

The absence of prison clothing is infuriating.

"It makes me sick that he sits there in his suit, and he sits there and taps his hands," she tells Entin. "He rocks back and forth... why is he sitting there in the judge chair with a fresh haircut?"

Bill Thompson explains to the family, via Gray, that the judge allowed this out of caution: If the defense argues successfully that Kohberger has been made to look guilty on TV screens around the world before he appears in front of a jury, it could be grounds for an appeal. But Steve assumes that with a case that's this high profile, there will be an appeal regardless.

Steve knows there's also a good chance that Anne Taylor will argue, due to the constant local media coverage of the case, that Kohberger will not be able to get an impartial jury in Moscow, and the trial should be moved. If it is moved, Boise, nearly three hundred miles away, would be the most likely venue. How is that fair to the victims' families?

"It just seems wrong," he says, "that an outsider comes here, does crime here... without that community having a voice and determining how the justice plays out."

That's why Steve chooses to be proactive.

"I want BK to look back and say, 'If there was one thing that really brought me down, [it] was messing with Kaylee's family. They wouldn't let up,'" Steve said. "I would never want him to get away with it."

He's toying with the idea of pursuing a federal case based on Kohberger having crossed so many state lines to commit the murders. Sources at the FBI have told him that this might be a

possibility. Steve knows that's a long shot, but he's going to explore every avenue.

For the Goncalves family, nothing is off the table. "Our motto was 'Don't be victims. Don't ever be a victim.'"

Chapter 127

*Moscow, Idaho
December 28, 2023*

Demolition day is finally here, despite the Goncalveses' best efforts.

Last night Shanon Gray released a statement from the Goncalves family with the headline "Please Stop the Demolition of the King Road Home!"

"We feel that the University of Idaho and the court has put us in a horrible position to have to voice our opinions," the statement read. "We all along have just wanted the King Road home to not be demolished until after the trial and for us to have a trial date so that we can look forward to justice being served. Is that really too much to ask?"

The Chapins have not commented. Nor has Ben Mogen.

But Kristi and Steve are not ready to so easily say goodbye to the last place Kaylee had been on this earth.

Behind the scenes, Alivea, who is back in California and due to give birth to her fourth child shortly, has been trying to get her parents to back down and let it go. "This is not the hill you want to die on," she's told them. "We will have other more important battles."

On the other hand, Alina Smith, the cofounder of the University of Idaho—Case Discussion Facebook page, goes to great effort to join the protest.

She's flown in from Texas, arriving at 1122 King Road long before dawn.

But she cannot get close to the house. There's police tape

everywhere.

"They had it so blocked off over there that nobody could get through," she said.

And other than the media, there's no one around—not even protesters.

"They put warnings out a good week or so ahead of time on these little billboards everywhere that if you think you're going to show up and protest, we're going to arrest you on the spot," she said. "They scared everybody away."

The demolition is scheduled for seven a.m., but the crew starts two hours early.

By the time the sun is up, the house is in pieces on the ground.

Kristine, the other cofounder of the Facebook page, is back in Rochester, New York. She is annoyed that she can't fly to Moscow to watch and take a video of the demolition with Alina, but she's got her family to deal with over the holidays.

Earlier in the month, the university stated—for the third time—that it planned to knock the house down on December 29, while the students were home for the holidays. UI president Scott Green told the *Idaho Statesman*, "While we appreciate the emotional connection some family members of the victims may have to this house, it is time for its removal and to allow the collective healing of our community to continue."

"That quote really stung," Alivia said.

Green's stance raised the demolition debate to a fever pitch. Members of the Facebook page are split, some for and some against.

Sympathizers with students who are distressed by the sight of the house debate those who favor preserving the premises for potential use in a trial. (In the recent trial of South Carolina lawyer Alex Murdaugh, the jury visited the family plantation where Murdaugh's wife and son had been found murdered.)

On December 20, Kristine and Alina did a TV segment with NewsNation's Ashleigh Banfield to talk about the controversy around the demolition, and when Alina gets to Moscow, she tells Kristine that the trip is proving to be good PR for the page.

She's done a bunch of press, and she's met fellow cybersleuth Olivia Vitale, the creator of "Chronicles of Olivia" on TikTok. Olivia was the person to whom the Goncalves family gave their first in-depth interview a year earlier.

Alina tells Kristine, "I think we have an opportunity with her. She's, like, she didn't know half the stuff that you and I know. She's so interested in us."

Kristine is excited to learn this because she thinks that with all the work she and Alina have put into launching their podcast series, they are nearly ready.

On December 8, she posted on the Facebook page a photograph of Alina and herself captioned: Your lovely administrators want to let you know our first podcast is in the works!! Enjoy your weekend but don't cause Alina and I to drink too much.

By now Kristine has refined their podcast concept: "Two Sleuths, One Crime."

Alina, however, returns to Texas to bad news. Her husband has lost his job of twenty years.

Something is going to have to change, she thinks.

Unlike Kristine, Alina doesn't have a paying job. Running the Facebook page—and nine others like it—has been all-consuming for her. But she's got three kids, one with a disability, and she needs to carry her family while her husband gets back on his feet.

So she'll look for the right opportunity.

Kristine, she's sure, will understand.

Chapter 128

*Moscow, Idaho
February 28, 2024*

Steve is praying as he takes his seat in the gallery of the courthouse: *Let's get a date. Let's get a date.*

To the Goncalves family, attempting to set the trial date is beginning to feel like Groundhog Day.

Anne Taylor seems to be winning every tactical battle.

Each time, she presents a consistent visual: Kohberger sits up at the front, suited and stone-faced, next to Taylor and her colleague Elisa Massoth as the defense attorneys debate what evidence might and might not be admissible at a trial.

Each time, Taylor is the star of the show. She's on her feet talking and raising questions more often than any other lawyer in the room. Thompson barely says anything.

And the judge, as far as Steve can see, bends over backward to accommodate Taylor.

Last month, Steve, Kristi, and Shanon finally held an in-person meeting with Bill Thompson and his team, and they vented their frustrations about the lack of progress.

"We beat up on Thompson a little bit," Steve said. "On Friday [the judge] asked, 'What can I do to make sure that we get this case done before 2025? What would I have to do?' And Thompson said, 'You got to start setting dates.' And at the end of that court, what did he do? He didn't set a date. And we're like, 'That's your fault, Thompson.'"

Today, after yet another back-and-forth about how much of the

IGG discovery the defense wants—Taylor asks the judge to allow three unnamed criminal investigators working for the defense to access the material—the meat of the session, finally, is a heated argument about a trial date.

Steve is hopeful at the outset of the dialogue.

John Judge and Thompson want to set it for March 3, 2025. But Taylor pushes back, managing to sound simultaneously calm and exasperated.

“Death is different,” Taylor says.

The words punch Alivia Goncalves in the gut.

Taylor continues, “This is a capital case. I’ve heard the court say the court only wants to do it once and I’ve heard the court ask what I can do to speed things up.”

She pauses.

“I need discovery. I need *all* of the discovery... when I ask for something I need to get it rather than have to go back and ask and ask and ask again.

“And I’m not trying to be mean about Bill Thompson,” she says, looking directly at her former boss. “I’m just not. I think he tries his very best.”

She blames the problem on agencies like the FBI, who, she says, hand things over piecemeal. “It’s like if you wanted to play fifty-two-card pickup with a hundred thousand decks of cards and throw them in the air, and I have to go figure out how to put them together.”

She wins the hour. No trial date is set. The judge adjourns with a further hearing scheduled for May to discuss a venue change.

Steve can barely believe it.

“So here we are stuck in this situation and we have a judge and a prosecution that’s supposed to be defending us, acting like the biggest victim, and just keeps making us feel like a victim over and over. Every time we go into the courtroom, he just sits there and just lets her hit him and lets her dictate everything that’s going to happen. It’s so frustrating.”

Steve feels he has got to do something—anything—to change the momentum. He’s going to keep doing his own digging. If no one else can get a break in the case, he will.

"The discovery hasn't closed. If we do find something that they don't have, then they're going to have to put it in the case. And I don't care if they don't like the fact that somebody else found it that isn't part of Idaho... I don't know what kind of world we live in where we hide the truth."

Chapter 129

Moscow, Idaho
May 3, 2024

When it comes to saying goodbye to the police department he has served for thirty-one years, Chief Fry knows better than to try to get through it live.

Instead, he sits near the front of the audience in the conference room of Moscow's Best Western hotel, next to Julie and his kids, while the assembled guests watch him give the farewell speech he'd recorded on video a week earlier.

The raw, emotional, authentic performance would not be highly rated by his former press coach, Aaron Snell. And it's all the better for that.

The chief's voice cracks and he stumbles over his words as he runs through the very long list of people to thank.

"To everyone who worked the Idaho Four homicides, Idaho State Patrol, FBI, Moscow officers, Latah County prosecutors, and the Idaho attorney general's office: You are all the unsung heroes who did and continue to do a great job because of how you did your job. You have brought trust and respect back to the law enforcement community, to the Moscow police personnel. You truly are top-notch."

He runs through his list: Bill Thompson; colleagues; patrol; corporals and sergeants; command; his family—his kids, his sons-in-law.

And then, finally, he gets to Julie.

"God knew I needed a strong wife," he says, tears welling at the

thought of the woman who kept his whiskey levels in check during the winter of 2022 and who has always been there for him.

He and Julie recently took the Birkman personality test, and James wasn't shocked to discover that the colors of his personality were red (for action, energy), green (for communication), and blue (for creativity), and that Julie's was yellow (for order).

"She completes me," he says.

Everyone in the room knows that this isn't farewell to James Fry so much as see you later.

Before he retired, the chief announced publicly that he would run for sheriff in November 2024. He'll be up against Richie Skiles, the incumbent, which is somewhat awkward because they know each other well. This is Moscow, after all. And both men are well liked. But if he doesn't win that, he'll find *something* to keep him in the mix.

Even so, the retirement of James Fry marks the end of an era, one in which the Moscow PD faced the most high-profile and arguably the most horrific challenge in its history.

The house at 1122 King Road may be demolished, but the people in this room bear scars that will last forever, long after Bryan Kohberger has finally faced justice, whenever and wherever that happens.

Exhibit A is Tyson Berrett, who is at the chief's retirement party. He has already told the chief he'll be having one of his own in July. Tyson is only fifty-two. But the stress of the demands placed on him during the winter of 2022 has taken its toll. He's done.

Fry later said that he regretted making Tyson the point person for all four victims' families. It was too heavy a burden for one man to bear in those ghastly six weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve 2022.

"I should have split it up," he said.

There's barely a dry eye in the room at the end of the ceremony when Anthony Dahlinger hands James Fry his police radio to sign off—for the last time.

When the dispatcher utters the words, "One-oh-one is off duty for the final time," the room is silent.

“Heavy,” says Dahlinger, the new chief, in conclusion. “Definitely, definitely a little heavy.”

Chapter 130

Prosper, Texas
May 20, 2024

After breakfast, Alina goes to her bedroom to check her phone before taking her houseguests—a member of the Facebook page and the woman’s seven-year-old son—to the airport.

She’s away for about fifteen minutes.

When Alina returns, she’s clearly distressed; her houseguest observes that Alina’s face is unrecognizable from all the tears.

What’s happened in those fifteen minutes is an argument over text message with Kristine, which has culminated in all the work Alina has done—on all ten of the Facebook pages she created and administered with her oldest friend—being eradicated.

It’s devastating.

Alina is hardly in a fit state to drive, so her houseguests take an Uber to the airport. Once she’s alone, Alina returns to bed and stays there for the next three days.

The fight between the two Facebook page founders began when Kristine texted Alina to ask if she was promoting a new case-discussion page about the recent controversial suicide of a Myrtle Beach woman, Mica Miller, whose husband was the pastor of a local church. Alina replied that she was.

Kristine responded that she couldn’t believe Alina had started something without her.

Alina explained that she had joined a crime-scene collective as part of a victims’ advocacy foundation because she believed it would result in paid work, which she desperately needed. Kristine, she

thought, would understand. Alina had financial pressures, and Kristine was so busy with her day job that Alina wanted to forge ahead on this. She was worried that the podcast project might never happen.

But Kristine did not understand.

After a rapid-fire exchange of escalating, angry, expletive-filled texts, Kristine deleted Alina from every single page they had started together.

Just like that, the childhood friends were done. Over. But so too was everything Alina had worked on for years and years.

And almost immediately their dispute became public. Kristine posted to the Facebook page her side of the story of Alina's "betrayal." The post garnered twenty-eight thousand views and almost five hundred comments.

Not all of them were positive.

What does this have to do, some members asked, with the tragic murders of four young innocents in Idaho?

Alivea Goncalves was one of those members. She messaged Kristine that she felt what she'd written on the page was inappropriate.

Alivea felt very sorry for Alina. She knew firsthand how hard Alina worked. Alivea could see how consistently and often Alina had intervened on the page to squash some of the more outlandish conspiracy theories and victim-blaming.

Fearing that the page might be deleted suddenly in the midst of the fracas, Alivea joined another, smaller page, the University of Idaho Murders—Case Discussion as a backup. A couple of days later, Alina became its administrator.

It's not the outcome Alina had imagined when she and Kristine started their page and it took off so quickly.

And it's not what Kristine wanted either. The old page no longer accomplishes what it did at the height of the investigation.

Despite the building anticipation around the upcoming trial, there's less media interest in the Facebook page than there used to be.

Neither Alina nor Kristine is invited to go on NewsNation much

anymore.

Privately, both women regret that the page's focus turned away from the victims and toward their messy personal affairs. But it's too late to mend fences.

Chapter 131

Moscow, Idaho
May 30, 2024

Yet again, Steve thinks this hearing is a complete waste of everyone's time.

Today, Anne Taylor kicks things off by interrogating Brett Payne about the surveillance video canvassing for the white Hyundai Elantra. She asks him to take her back in time to December 23, 2022, when he received Kohberger's phone records for the forty-eight hours around the murders and then issued a warrant for the six months prior to it.

Payne patiently explains that he deferred to the FBI expert, special agent Nick Ballance, to analyze the phone records and that the PCA (probable-cause affidavit)—no surprise—was put together based on input from the experts at command.

It's clear from the matter-of-fact way Payne answers Taylor's questions that he's describing the workings of a well-oiled investigation—all the different teams and experts do what they do individually, then click together.

But Taylor is looking to exploit any gaps in the machinery.

She homes in on the fact that investigators didn't create a central inventory for the thousands of hours of video surveillance. Rather, it's stored on different thumb drives. And because he was focused only on the video that was relevant for the PCA, the video with the Elantra in it, Payne doesn't know where all of it is.

Taylor wants the video they have of I-95, the main route back to Pullman, because the Elantra *doesn't* appear in it. (In Payne's

probable-cause affidavit, he was careful not to specify which route Kohberger took from Moscow back to Pullman.)

Steve can see that the defense attorney is looking for any sort of hole.

It's an absurdly low bar, he thinks.

Worse, though, the technique plants seeds of doubt. Taylor is "poisoning the audience by saying that there's no connection, that there's no video," Steve said. "So when she starts doing that shit, I start getting impatient with Thompson and saying, you know, 'She's kicking your ass in there and you need to stand up for us.'"

Thompson *is* trying to push back. He's told the judge, "The characterization that we are just consciously withholding information to the defense is utter nonsense."

Indeed, at this point, Taylor concedes, the state has given the defense "a fifty-terabyte hard drive," more than 13,000 photographs, more than 15,000 video clips from businesses, and more than 8,000 video clips from residences.

But Steve doesn't think Thompson is doing enough to manage public perception. He's upset with how Thompson questioned one of the defense's expert witnesses on April 10.

"You acknowledged, falsely, that Mr. Kohberger allegedly stalked one of the victims. That's false. You know that to be false," Thompson said.

The defense expert confirmed that the information was false.

Steve is totally confused.

Maybe Thompson is being strategic, or maybe *stalking* has some legal definition that Steve isn't aware of. But as far as he knows—and Steve knows a lot at this point—Kohberger for sure looked in at the King Road house several times before the night of November 13. Steve has even gotten hold of a video of a car idling outside it for fifteen minutes. He isn't positive, but it looks similar to Kohberger's.

He's fairly certain from his own research that Kohberger showed up at the UI cafeteria. *And* that he was looking up restaurants with vegan options in the area. There's only one: the Mad Greek, where Maddie and Xana worked.

So how can Thompson say there was no stalking?

"Maybe there's some rule" around the term *stalking*, Steve reasons, where "you have to physically communicate. I don't know... But I do believe that these victims were selected. I think he picked them and he monitored them. He studied them. He hunted them. And every father and mother's understanding [is that] he stalked them."

Meanwhile, in court, he's got to sit through more mind-numbingly technical testimony from Sy Ray, a cell phone geolocation-data analyst, who says, essentially, there's stuff missing from the record, and the missing data—about "2 to 3 percent" of the location data from Kohberger's phone—could be important.

Steve figures he knows a heck of a lot more about cell phone data than this guy. What they *should* be getting into, Steve thinks, is the trial date.

And Kohberger's alibi.

In April, Taylor filed papers saying that Kohberger would use an alibi defense. She wrote that Kohberger "was out driving in the early morning hours of November 13, 2022, as he often did to hike and run and/or see the moon and stars. He drove throughout the area south of Pullman, Washington, west of Moscow, Idaho, including Wawawai Park."

"What kind of half-baked alibi is that?" Steve said. "I mean, stargazing? Give me a break."

Why doesn't Thompson try to get it thrown out as evidence? Steve doesn't get it. Not least because on the night of the murders, he's discovered, there was very little visibility.

The hearing ends with the state getting nowhere, as far as he can see. The afternoon session—to talk further about the IGG—is closed.

Steve hears through the grapevine that during the closed sessions, the judge reams out Taylor.

He would have liked to see that.

For the moment, he and Kristi use the only leverage they have: the media.

They issue a statement.

Wasn't this hearing supposed to address a motion to compel discovery? How did it evolve into an attack on the probable cause affidavit, the prosecution's witnesses, training records, and their evidence-gathering techniques? The court needs to take control of the case and the attorneys involved. As long as the Court continues to entertain anything and everything at every hearing, the delay will never end.

Chapter 132

Priest Lake, Idaho
June 2024

It's a beautiful day when Stacy Chapin gets the call from Bill Thompson's office.

Next week there's a hearing at which finally—finally—the judge will set a trial date.

It will likely be summer 2025.

Thompson would like for it to happen when there are no students around. He's pointed out to the judge that the high school is opposite the courthouse.

The news is something of a relief to Stacy, the first hint that maybe some sort of end could be in sight. Although by now, she knows better than to count her chickens. "You have to be in for the long haul," a prosecutor friend of theirs told her. "You have to let the defense put up everything."

And Stacy has been warned that it's possible the trial will not happen in Moscow, despite the best efforts of the prosecutors. The defense will continue arguing that the community is too small and too prejudiced to provide Kohberger with an impartial jury.

But where will they go when the trial takes place? Stacy starts to wonder. Will they stay at Priest Lake? Part of her wants to leave the country for three months. She knows that the press coverage will be intense, and that means reliving the horrors of November 13.

But after months of agonizing, she, Jim, Maizie, and Hunter decide they do want to be there to represent Ethan, especially at the opening, when the jury first convenes. They also want to be in the

courtroom to support Hunter Johnson and Emily and all of Ethan's and Xana's other friends who will likely have to testify.

It will be a necessary but sorry interruption from the new normal that's finally emerging. Both Chapin kids are now so busy during the semester that their parents no longer feel they need to visit Moscow every other weekend.

Hunter and Maizie are set to graduate in May 2025. This summer, Jim is training Hunter to work with him in the machinery construction business. And Hunter also got his EMT certification. Maizie has been working as a server at Hill's Resort. After college, she's considering either training as a professional chef or studying nursing.

Public speaking, Stacy is finding, is a positive thing for her to do, provided it's in an appropriate forum that focuses not on the salacious aspects of the murders but on the family values that are Stacy's strong suit. She loves to talk about Ethan, but she's also beginning to realize that there's an appetite out there for the positivity that she and Jim are trying to create to remember him by.

In April, Stacy flew to LA to record an episode of *The Squeeze*, the mental-wellness podcast hosted by the actor Taylor Lautner, who starred in the Twilight films, and his wife, Taylor Dome.

When Lautner asked her what she felt about Kohberger's trial and the path to justice, Stacy said, "One of the greatest messages I feel like that we've done in handling this situation: Nothing changes the outcome. We cannot bring Ethan back. So you could spend a lot of time there or you can just realize that and figure out how to move forward."

And the Chapins *are* moving forward.

They like to walk around the lake and sit on the wooden bench engraved with their late son's name. "Ethan would be very proud," Stacy often says to Jim when they look out at the water and his beloved volleyball court at Hill's Resort.

They like to come to this bench and sip mimosas as they watch the sun sink behind the mountains. Even better is when Hunter and Maizie are around on weekends. The entire family can all look at the lake and talk about Ethan in what was probably his favorite spot in

the world.

They can find peace, even.

"The funny thing is, Ethan would be like, 'Well, of course my parents knocked it out of the park, that's just how we roll as a family,'" Stacy says to her husband, who nods in agreement. "We had a motto: 'Go big or go home.' And that's what we've done."

Chapter 133

*Post Falls, Idaho
June 15, 2024*

The black-tie crowd at the inaugural Make It Pink Gala is so large, it's hard to see everyone who's turned out to support the new Made with Kindness nonprofit that's been set up in honor of Maddie and Kaylee by Maddie's sorority friend Ashlin Couch.

There's a hiccup at the check-in desk. For the people in formal dress who are in a line that goes past the bathrooms and around the corner all the way to the elevators, it's a good thirty-minute wait.

No one minds. They are here for a good cause.

They can even buy the merchandise laid out on a table while they wait.

Tonight, even though people are there to support the Goncalveses and Laramies, the Goncalves family—seated around two tables in the middle of the room—mostly keep to themselves.

They lent Kaylee's name to the nonprofit, but because they know only a handful of people here, one might miss them in the crush. When the emcee mentions Kaylee and Maddie, Kristi puts her head in her hands and weeps. Steve puts his arm around her.

It's a bittersweet moment. Kristi and the girls have been looking forward to this; it's an excuse, Steve says, for them to get their hair and nails done and for him to put on black tie. And it's wonderful that there is now a scholarship in Kaylee's and Maddie's names. During the event, it's announced that Xana's name will complete the trifecta.

But they still haven't gotten justice for their daughter.

That night, Steve says he's heard the good news from Thompson that there's likely to be a court date set, finally, but his patience with Anne Taylor is as thin as ever.

He particularly objects to one line she repeatedly uses in court: "Judge, if we ever get to trial..."

If she doesn't want to get to trial, Steve says, well, Bill Thompson needs to press the judge—and find a defense attorney who does want to.

Steve is still pursuing his parallel investigation; he's seeking the answers to a million questions about Kohberger's connection to the King Road house.

For instance, he says, he'd like to know more about what Dylan saw that night. He feels certain he doesn't know everything about what she witnessed. Someone told him that she hid in a closet. Maybe she phoned someone? He's heard there's evidence on her phone that's important.

Steve is still pissed that 1122 King Road was demolished by the university when, as he puts it, "seventy-five percent" of the parents were against it. When the time is right, he'll be ready to look at his options for civil cases. He's on a roll.

Suddenly Kristi prods her husband. "Is that Blaine Eckles?" she says, shocked, looking across the room.

"It can't be," Steve says.

Post Falls is a ninety-minute drive from Moscow.

Blaine Eckles didn't tell the Goncalves or Laramie families he was coming.

And yet it *is* Blaine Eckles, sitting with a bunch of random strangers.

"I was a little curious to see how my presence would be received," the dean later said.

The Goncalves family is stunned, given the back-and-forth over the King Road house demolition.

Kristi and Alivea leap up and go say hello to him. And then they bring Eckles to their table. Steve and Eckles shake hands.

Eckles tells them that the university's Healing Garden, a project he spearheaded and has overseen to commemorate the victims and

help the community grieve, is nearly done.

It's likely to open in August, at the start of the fall semester. Of course he wants the family there.

When Eckles leaves, readying for his ninety-minute drive back to Moscow, Steve Goncalves actually smiles.

"It's Father's Day weekend, and Eckles bothered to come."

In spite of himself and the fights, Steve is touched.

"Classy," he says.

Chapter 134

Brodheadsville, Pennsylvania
Summer 2024

As Connie Saba is shopping in the Rite Aid in Brodheadsville, she sees someone in the pain-relief aisle who looks familiar.

She stops. Is it someone she used to work with? And then she realizes... it's Michael Kohberger.

Bryan's dad.

"Connie?" he says. "Is that you?"

"How are you, Michael?" she replies.

He seems very pleased to talk to someone.

"My heart goes out to Maryann," Connie says. "How is she?"

Michael tells her that his wife doesn't talk to anyone, even on the phone. "We lead a very quiet life," he says. "We don't go out." And even when they are home, he says, they don't feel safe. "People," he tells her, "are watching our house."

"What people?"

"Government people," he says, leaving her slightly confused.

Then he says, "You know Bryan didn't do it, right, Connie?"

Connie thinks.

She says: "The Bryan I know wouldn't do it." She wants to be supportive.

It's then that Michael seems to remember that he hasn't spoken to her since Jeremy died.

"We were both shocked to hear Jeremy died," he tells her. "Maryann wanted to call you but she felt unable to." He doesn't explain why.

"Does Bryan know Jeremy died?"

"Bryan was away," Michael says. He doesn't say where. "We didn't tell him for months." But, yes, he knows.

"Bryan wasn't the same after the drugs," he adds. "He wasn't the same person."

Connie nods. But, she thinks, even on drugs, Jeremy had remained sweet and good-natured.

"But Bryan was framed," Michael says.

Connie is startled. Framed?

"Someone planted the knife sheath," he tells her. "The police didn't find it when they first went in. There were a lot of drugs in that house, a lot of people around. But they only looked at Bryan. You know how he likes to drive around when he's nervous?"

Connie doesn't, but Michael tells her, "He always used to get in the car and drive at night when he needed to think or he had some fog. He had to get away and just think. Or when he couldn't sleep, he would just drive around."

Michael adds, "Things will come out in the trial. Everyone will see."

The two go down memory lane, reminiscing about Jeremy's and Bryan's childhoods, the two boys running back and forth between their respective houses.

Connie asks after Michael's daughters, Amanda and Melissa. She's read news reports that Melissa was fired from her job, but she doesn't ask specifically about that.

Michael says they are good.

They chat in the aisle for at least an hour. Michael seems almost sorry to leave. She can tell he doesn't get to blow off steam much.

That night, she phones her daughter, Bridgette, to go over the whole extraordinary conversation.

Connie feels for Michael Kohberger. He clearly believes his son is innocent. She isn't sure if he's in denial or not.

But she can empathize with how a parent must feel in a situation like this, given everything the Kohbergers tried to do for Bryan.

"If it was my child," she later said, "I'd probably be the same way."

Chapter 135

*Moscow, Idaho
August 21, 2024*

It's blisteringly hot, but the Sig Chi brothers wear their suits nonetheless.

They want to honor Ethan.

Stacy Chapin hugs each of them as they file into the new Vandal Healing Garden and Memorial for the dedication ceremony. She'd asked Blaine Eckles earlier if the guys could sit close to the Chapins.

It's the first time since the tragedy of November 13 that representatives of all four victims' families are together in Moscow.

The Goncalveses sit at the front to the left facing the podium. Ben Mogen is behind them. The Chapins and the Kernodles, represented by Jazzmin Kernodle and a couple of Xana's aunts, sit to the right.

James Fry stands at the back, almost unrecognizable in his jeans. Mayor Bettge is there. So are most of the Moscow PD. They are standing guard. There are still some true-crime maniacs around who are unhealthily obsessed with the King Road murders. Occasionally they surface on campus.

And, though few people talk about it, everyone is aware that sitting in a basement cell less than a mile away is the suspected murderer.

For Steve and Kristi, he's front of mind.

The hearing to decide the change of venue is only three days away. Kristi posted on their Facebook page: "All I can think about is the Change of Venue hearing this Thursday. I'm just sick about it... I

wish I could snap my fingers and it would be over. The anticipation eats me alive. Please pray for us.”

Today, though, the Goncalves family is not on defense. In fact, they are fully supportive of Dean Eckles and the university. Kristi even wears a T-shirt emblazoned with VANDAL STRONG. Steve Goncalves chats amicably with Chief Fry. He shakes Jim Chapin’s hand. Dean Eckles hands him a folder of Kaylee’s work. Steve and Kristi do several interviews with local media. They say that yes, it’s hard to be here. But they are glad to honor their daughter. They think the healing garden is a wonderful idea.

Dean Eckles came up with the concept of the garden after the vigil. He knew that the university needed to memorialize the Idaho Four, and while they were at it, he thought, why not create a space to remember *all* the UI students who passed away too soon while attending college? There have been four student deaths since November 2022.

So the dean invited everyone to discuss where the space might go and what it could look like. More than a hundred students, among them Hunter Chapin, and faculty members came. Eckles created a garden committee that included not just landscape architects but representatives of the victims’ fraternities and sororities: one from APhi, one from Sig Chi, and two from Pi Phi.

Dr. Shauna Corry, the dean of UI’s College of Art and Architecture, developed a class focused on the creation of a template. “They identified plants that work with our temperature, our climate, time of year... They measure how dark it gets on what days of the year.... They have done so much work,” Dean Eckles said with pride.

Earlier, in the spring of 2023, the four families were invited to sit in on the class and give their input.

Stacy felt that it was one of the most cathartic experiences she and Jim had had since Ethan’s death. The kids didn’t ask them specific questions about garden design; they asked general, thoughtful questions, like “What does it mean to be a Vandal?” and “What are the words that describe Ethan?”

Ever the mother hen, Stacy felt a bond forming with these young

kids, and she's thrilled to recognize many of them—wearing matching black shirts—on this big day.

Emily Alandt can't get to the ceremony today. The drive from Boise is too long, and Hunter Johnson is at work.

But she was asked to pick a flower for Xana. She'd suggested a Peruvian lily because the lily is Xana's birth flower and the Peruvian lily, Emily thinks, has the same sort of sparkle and spirituality as her late friend.

The Goncalves family will post on Facebook that they found it a deeply emotional, special day. They have buried the hatchet with the university for now.

It's hard to say which part of it is the most moving. Maybe it is the moment of silence for Ethan, Xana, Maddie, and Kaylee. Or maybe it is when Drew Giacomazzi, Ethan's friend and fraternity brother, speaks about each of the four victims, concisely describing their distinct personalities in a way no one will easily forget:

"Do more of what you love to honor Kaylee. Spread that love with random acts of kindness for Maddie. Be silly and do something spontaneous and fun to honor Xana. And tell stories with an abundance of laughter to live life like Ethan."

Chapter 136

Moscow, Idaho
August 29, 2024

The hearing to decide the change of venue lasts over six hours.

Steve is not hopeful that the trial will stay in Moscow, despite his best efforts to convey his feelings to the judge via Bill Thompson.

The expert witnesses that Anne Taylor produces—who testify that it would be impossible in tiny Moscow to find a fair and impartial jury—seem to speak out of both sides of their mouths, Steve thinks.

“One expert says you can call the jury and they can still remain impartial, and another expert says... you hear something and you can never get it out of your head,” Steve said afterward.

But he’s gotten the impression for months now that Bill Thompson doesn’t really want to run the risk of having a trial in Moscow because of the university. The problem, Steve thinks, is that some of these people seem to put the university first, ahead of the victims. They all went there.

Thompson said in court it would be better to avoid having a trial when students are around. That’s why he wants to have it in the summer. Steve was not pleased when he heard that.

“I mean, that’s kind of a weird way to present four murders to a judge,” he said.

He’s also worried that the university timetable will give Anne Taylor some excuse to push the trial back beyond next summer. So even though he feels that it should be local and that it will be one heck of an inconvenience for him and Kristi if it gets moved all the way to Boise, he also figures it might not be all bad to get out of the

cozy cabal that is Moscow. He'd welcome a new judge.

Today Judge John C. Judge, typically, punts making a decision at the hearing itself. He thanks both sides for their "really solid" arguments. "I would say that professionally this is the most difficult decision I've ever had to make," he adds.

On September 6, in the form of a written decision, the bad news arrives.

The judge writes that the defense has met "the rather low standard" of a basis to move venues. It isn't just that the media storm might have swayed jurors; there are the practical considerations of a tiny courthouse and staff.

The Goncalveses post their reaction on their Facebook page: "The family is incredibly disappointed in the Judge's ruling granting the change of venue. The only good thing about this decision is it will be Judge Judge's last decision in this case."

It isn't clear for a few days where the trial will be moved.

But on September 12, the Idaho Supreme Court orders it moved to Boise—Ada County—under the jurisdiction of a new judge, Steven Hippler.

Steve says that Judge Hippler is no stranger to capital cases. He's known to be strict and stern.

Good.

Chapter 137

Moscow, Idaho
September 15, 2024

Bryan Kohberger is flown three hundred miles south to Boise and booked into the Ada County jail.

There is the inevitable media fanfare around his trip.

Mike Pattinson considers this to be almost a literal weight off the minds of people in Moscow. Many of them might have wanted the trial held locally for emotional reasons—but no one liked the idea of Kohberger sitting underground, virtually beneath them.

It emerges that his exit is barely a day too soon. On October 3, it's reported that the Latah County jail might finally be closed because it does not meet code regulations. A new fire marshal has arrived in town, looked over the facility, and said that the fire sprinklers and electrical systems don't meet standards and the doors are too small.

Evan Ellis covers the story. He reports that rebuilding the jail could cost up to fourteen million dollars, minus the cost of the land. If city commissioners decide it's too expensive, Moscow's criminals might need to be housed in Lewiston instead. And the move could happen in just two weeks. "Thank the Lord Kohberger is not in there," Evan says, imagining the stink there would have been.

Being the cynical journalist that he is, he considers the timing—the election for sheriff is barely a month away—and thinks that it might be fortuitous for James Fry's campaign because the jail's failure to meet code regulations happened on his opponent's watch.

"Is [the new fire marshal] a Fry guy and trying to help him out or

just a by-the-book guy and it's just coincidence?" Evan asks.

"I have no idea," he says with a laugh.

Chapter 138

Rathdrum, Idaho
September 28, 2024

Alivea and Kristi feel like they've hit a wall. They are going to need housing in Boise for three months, but they learn that there is no federal, state, or local assistance for families who have lost a loved one. The only option, they realize with input from Jack DuCoeur's aunt, Brooke Miller, is to start a Goncalves family GoFundMe page.

The family asks initially for fifty thousand dollars to house them for the three months they will need to be in Boise next summer for the trial. They explain there will be ten of them (as well as pets) for the long haul. They need the basics: money for housing, food, travel, and compensation for loss of work.

Money pours in.

But the trial date remains uncertain.

In his first hearing in Boise, Judge Hippler says he's leaning away from the June date set by the previous judge because he thinks it will be hard to pick a jury, given family vacation schedules. Thompson suggests May; Taylor suggests September.

Taylor hits her usual theme of being overloaded with discovery. She's received an additional three hundred ninety-eight gigabytes of information since August, she says, "and I can tell the court that nobody on the team has read every bit of that yet." She also has a new mitigation expert she needs to bring up to speed because this person replaced someone who passed away.

But in a sign, perhaps, that Judge Hippler has less appetite for delay than John Judge, he tells her she needs to get it done by the

deadline he sets.

"There are twenty-four hours in a day, but if you use enough of those hours, enough days in a row, you get it done if you have to."

The judge delivers a stern lecture to both teams at the outset.

"I'd like to say I'm happy to be here, but why start with an untruth?" He adds, "I do expect—and this will come as no surprise to you—for you all to get along. I understand the stakes in this case are as high as they can possibly be in any case. But you are professionals. You have taken oaths, both as officers within your jurisdictions but also as attorneys before this bar. So I expect at all times for you to remain civil to one another, that you not engage in personal attacks, ad hominem attacks, that you not engage in theatrics, not misstate the facts or the law to the court, and that when you cite arguments in your briefs, if there is contradictory precedent, I expect to see that."

On October 9, Judge Hippler issues his ruling: The trial will start on August 11 and run through November 7.

The Goncalves family finally feels optimistic. The atmosphere in Judge Hippler's courtroom is palpably fresh, electric even.

Once they get to trial, Steve hopes events will be anticlimactic. He has reason to be hopeful. Steve's FBI sources have told him that when the agency is involved in a capital murder case, they secure a conviction over 93 percent of the time. The odds, therefore, of getting a conviction in a quadruple homicide—"Well, you do the math," he says.

A lawyer for the FBI has told Steve that in all his years of experience, he's "never seen a case where DNA has been found at the crime scene and it didn't lead to that conviction." A piece of evidence like that is "insurmountable."

Cathy Mabbutt, the coroner, and other investigators agree.

But there's one person in Moscow who is worried.

Mike Pattinson, the Moscow lawyer and Anne Taylor's old classmate, isn't so confident. "Anne's a sharp litigator," he says. He wouldn't want to bet against her.

Mike hopes he's wrong, but "if it's just a knife sheath that happens to have Kohberger's DNA on it, what does that mean?" he

asks. Is the DNA by itself enough proof?

Taylor will argue that it isn't. She will also likely "challenge the process upon which [investigators] came about his DNA," Mike believes. She may even offer alternative theories or suggest that somebody—perhaps a crooked police officer—could have planted it.

So now the stage is set for the drama that will begin in August, the moment when Emily, Hunter Johnson, Bethany, Dylan, Ava, Jack DuCoeur, Adam, and so many others in the victims' circle will likely have to take their positions in the witness box and relive the horrific events of November 13.

As to whether Bryan Kohberger will be found guilty or be acquitted?

That's a story for another time.

Epilogue

The orange NO TRESPASSING sign is the only indication that something terrible happened here.

The patch of land where 1122 King Road once stood is now strangely peaceful. Green shoots spring out of the earth. Birds sing.

Students come and go from the houses and dorms all around. But no one stops to gawk anymore. There's nothing to see, just a small field that's overrun with weeds.

Most of the students now on campus are of a different, younger generation. They have no memory of Ethan, Xana, Maddie, or Kaylee.

They have no memory of the parties, the laughter, and the life that once blazed here.

They have no memory of the deck where the inhabitants drank coffee and posed for Instagram photos.

But a stone's throw away, the four plaques in the Healing Garden ensure that no member of the Vandal family, past, present, or future, will forget the names of the four innocents who lived on this piece of green happily and hopefully.

Their names are Ethan, Xana, Maddie, and Kaylee.

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James Patterson is the most popular storyteller of our time. He is the creator of unforgettable characters and series, including Alex Cross, the Women's Murder Club, Jane Smith, and Maximum Ride, and of breathtaking true stories about the Kennedys, John Lennon, and Tiger Woods, as well as our military heroes, police officers, and ER nurses. He has coauthored #1 bestselling novels with Bill Clinton, Dolly Parton, and Michael Crichton, told the story of his own life in *James Patterson by James Patterson*, and received an Edgar Award, ten Emmy Awards, the Literarian Award from the National Book Foundation, and the National Humanities Medal.

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