



Secret Prey

John Sandford

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A wealthy banker is dead, shot once in the chest during a hunting trip. There are many reasons for him to be killed, and many people who would do the deed. But who did? Lucas Davenport has an idea. But this routine murder investigation is about to turn into something different. A cat-and-mouse game with a killer who does not hesitate to take the fight to Lucas himself. And those he loves...

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR

Secret Prey Details

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Author : John Sandford

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From Reader Review Secret Prey for online ebook

James Thane says

This is one of the best books in John Sandford's Prey series, featuring Minneapolis police detective Lucas Davenport, with a complex, intelligent plot and a clever, unique villain who pushes Davenport to the limit.

As the book opens, a wealthy banker, who is about to become even wealthier due to the bank merger he has engineered, is shot out of a deer stand in the Minnesota woods. There are any number of people who might have wanted him dead, including the three colleagues who are hunting with him, all of whom had the means, motive and opportunity to commit the crime. But there's precious little evidence to point the finger at anyone.

Davenport begins the investigation in the midst of a personal crisis. His love life is in a shambles and he's slipping back into the depression that had nearly crippled him some time earlier. Even the thrill of a particularly interesting and dangerous chase is not enough to pull him out of it his dark mood.

The investigation focuses initially on the merger that the banker was bringing to fruition. The merger will affect a lot of other lives, perhaps derailing the careers of some while offering opportunities for a handful of others. The jockeying begins even before the body is cold and Lucas and his team must sort through a veritable chess match of moves and counter moves by those left in the wake of the banker's demise, all of whom are maneuvering for position.

Inevitably, the infighting will get serious--and deadly. Another victim will fall, and again there's very little evidence pointing to the killer. But as Lucas pushes the investigation forward, things suddenly get very personal. As other villains have learned, it's generally a very bad idea to piss off Lucas Davenport, but in this case, a diabolical killer might just get away with it.

There are a number of intriguing characters in this book on both sides of the law. The dialog is especially witty and there's a lot of great action. Any fan of the Prey series who has not yet gotten to this book will want to do so ASAP--but only after reading all of the books leading up to it.

Steve says

Excellent as always. Even though I've read the whole series before, I usually can't remember the plot and whodoneit...this was not exception. Just an excellent series!

E.R. Yatscoff says

I enjoyed this Sanford novel better than the others even though there were plenty more characters. Likeable, diligent cops-for the most part- a budding cop romance- and a clever killer. Davenport is a good character and there is good rapport between the cops and DAs. A Mexican hotel grab book. One day my own firfighter mystery/thrillers will garner as many reviews.

Kaustuv Neogi says

Secret Prey (5 Stars)

It's the beginning of hunting season. The Chairman of Polaris Bank, Daniel Kresge, goes on a hunting trip with four other executives of the bank. At the break of dawn, he is shot dead out of his perch on a tree. There are no clues and no witnesses. Local police are flummoxed. Davenport is entrusted the responsibility of cracking the case.

As it turns out, Kresge was merging his bank with another behemoth - Midland Holding. Though he would be making a tidy sum on it, the merger threatens mayhem with job cuts all across the board. With the cut-throat manoeuvring that takes place in the aftermath of the killing for the top job and consequently the future of Polaris as an independent or merged entity, there is no shortage of either motives or suspects.

Secret Prey starts out very well. The first half of the novel is fast paced. There are so many plausible killers and so many motives, that the reader is instantly hooked right from the first chapter. One criticism Sandford's novels have faced is that the identity of the killer is known beforehand and so there is little suspense. Not so with Secret Prey. This novel is a true mystery and the reader is left guessing as to both the killer and the motive. In *Winter Prey*, the identity of the 'Iceman' was a mystery. However, we knew what the 'Iceman' was doing and thinking. In Secret Prey, the "killer" is referred to in the first chapter and then not referred to again until his/her identity is revealed in the second half of the novel. This distinguishes it from any of the previous novels in the '*Prey Series*'.

After, the identity of the killer is revealed to the reader in the second half, Davenport too soon figures out the same a little too conveniently. As the case against the killer is largely circumstantial, it simply becomes a matter gathering evidence solid enough to get a conviction. Hence, all the suspense that was so carefully built up in the first half dissipates in a flash.

Davenport's quest for evidence is largely aided by the killer's compulsion to create a distraction from the main investigation. Not only does such an attempt fail, it also leads to the critical clues that eventually nail the killer. Given the cunning the killer displays throughout the book, it stretches credibility that the killer commits such a rookie mistake. (view spoiler)

The earlier novels in the series focused too much on Davenport's personal life and his gaming hobby/side business. In Secret Prey, his relationship with Weather has come to an end. There is no digression to any games he is creating. The absence of these extraneous insertions considerably speed up the plot.

Characters and events in the previous novels find a place and are referenced here. Andy Manette, the kidnapped psychologist in *Mind Prey*, is treating Weather for the trauma she suffered at the hands of LaChaise in *Sudden Prey*. One thing Sandford has stressed till now in the '*Prey Series*' is how abuse and pain in the formative years of childhood creates psychopaths out of otherwise healthy children.

In conclusion, despite the underwhelming second half, Secret Prey, on the whole, is enjoyable, entertaining and well-written.

Tim says

A quick start, followed by a bit of a lull, concludes with typically strong Sandford action, with even some humor! 8 of 10 stars

Kellie says

*****Possible Spoiler*****

#9 of the Prey Series-I reread some of my comments I made on the earlier books of this series. One of the things that stands out is my earlier opinion of the main character, Lucas Davenport. He is definitely a ladies man. But his personality as a cop is what is the most interesting. He has power. He seems to be able to take control of situations, no matter how violent, and do as he wishes, whether it's legal or not. He seems to get away with it. My thoughts on this character come through another character in this book. Lucas was involved with a woman named Weather. After the last book, they have separated. All of the reasons that set Lucas apart from other cops are what keep Weather away from him now. This book was very suspenseful and very engaging. I enjoyed it. It's been a while since I've read a Prey book and I'm wondering why. I like the mystery but more than anything I like the way this author writes. He has developed Lucas into a very intricate character. He is good at his job, not so good in his personal life. The writing has some humor and gentle banter between the people Lucas works with. I am looking forward to reading Certain Prey which is #10 of this series. This author is similar to a Michael Connelly or a Robert Crais.

Eric_W says

Audrey MacDonald is the power-hungry wife of a loathsome bank executive who wants to become president and CEO of the Polaris Bank. The current president, who is in the midst of negotiating a merger that would drastically alter the future plans of the other bank executives, is shot while on a hunting trip with many of those same executives. Lucas Davenport is asked to assist with the investigation. Certain peculiarities emerge that point to links between the Kresge killing and the ostensibly accidental deaths of several other bank executives that had occurred years earlier. Audrey's husband, Wilson, who when drunk regularly beat her, was the only one who profited professionally from each of the deaths. He and Audrey are now trying to capitalize on Kresge's death by attempting to manipulate the board into appointing him the new CEO. He is opposed by Jim Bone and Susan O'Dell, who also lust after the top job. Sandford's descriptions of the back-biting and political machinations are brutal and priceless. An amusing side plot concerns a number of very well-connected old ladies who have been growing opium poppies for fun and now insist on being arrested for their flagrant violation of the law. Audrey soon realizes that, despite her best efforts, the investigation is beginning to focus on Wilson and, weak as he is, he will be unable to withstand the strain and will undoubtedly reveal the sordid truth behind the killings. She resolves to kill him, manipulating him into a situation that justifies her homicide. How she does this is truly cold and calculating. The investigation would have ended, had she left well enough alone, and not made the mistake of trying to distract Lucas – it had worked before – by creating several diversions. Specifically she assaults and firebombs two of his friends. Audrey is a librarian and hasn't forgotten all those handy research skills to help choose her victims. The irrational and unlikely coincidental nature of these attacks leads Lucas's team of investigators to discover the intricate pattern behind the murders that ultimately benefit only one person. You've really got to watch out for these librarians. . . .

William says

ebook read by ME

Good mystery with plenty of possible tracts

Not a lot of hot thrills except for Marcy Sherril!

Mike says

Re-reading this novel, my star dropped from 4 to 3 stars. There's still Davenport, skirting a depression issue after his gal, Weather, has distanced herself from him in the last volume. He is pulled into what starts out as an interesting killing of a bank chairman on a hunting expedition.

Along the way, Lucas is immersed in the cut-throat, back stabbing world of high finance, and the dangerous world of an imminent bank buyout/merger.

As the bodies of financiers keep piling up along with the motives and suspects, Davenport is skirting the alluring prospect of a work centered romance.

I don't think the quality of the story telling, or the antagonist, measures up to most previous entries in this series, but thankfully, most of those later on will.

Jim says

Lucas Davenport is again up against an impossible case in author John Sandford's ninth series book, "Secret Prey". Written in 1998 this Davenport adventure may be John Sandford's best yet. Exceptionally long at just over 500 pages this Davenport read for me mightily pushes the envelope in a couple areas a bit too far. I was a bit uncomfortable with a couple of side issues within this plot. The future Mrs. Weather Karkinnen-Davenport is still suffering seriously with PTSD from the LaChaise shootout ending from the previous book. Lucas is giving her plenty of space but he expects the marriage to take place regardless. Weather is in therapy and is retreating inside herself. Davenport's newest case is the brutal murder of bank mogul Daniel Kresge. Kresge is the CEO of the massive Polaris Bank System. While out hunting in a blind he's shot to death. Polaris and Midland Bank were in the process of finishing a merger. This merger was causing a lot of ruffled feathers at Polaris. With several suspects who sit on Polaris B.O.D., Lucas has his hands full trying to sort out the players. Quickly it appears Wilson McDonald is the prime suspect. Being frozen out of a important position on the board is a prime motive. McDonald pushed by an overly aggressive wife Audrey, so it seems that Lucas is closing his case out quickly. However wife beater Wilson beats the hell out of Audrey one night and ends up shot to death by his badly beaten wife. When board member Susan O'Dell is murdered at the door of her heavily secured apartment building sends the case back decades looking for clues. This case has plenty of wires that must be uncrossed and traced. Meanwhile a shaky Weather has her house firebombed and burned to the ground. When Weather goes into hiding Davenport doesn't know if the message is for him or from the "seed" getting revenge for LaChaise. Although his case is becoming more and more complicated Lucas discovers a new object for his affections. The last straw is when Sister Mary Joseph (Elle Kruger) is attacked and almost killed Davenport must finally outwit his new nemesis. Yes there is one

player in this plot who makes it a mission to take down Davenport and kill him. With plenty of action and very intriguing suspense, "Secret Prey" delivers chapter after chapter. It took me awhile to get through the first 150 or so pages. So many characters and I mean "characters" to sort out. But as the book progress the plot without question became a wild roller coaster ride. Most definitely needed seat beats on to get through the ending. Easily four stars out of a possible five stars for, "Secret Prey". Too bad I couldn't give it 4.33-4.50 stars. I'm only one third through the Prey series from master story teller John Sandford. I hope the next 18 books are as good as or better ! A do not miss series no matter what year the year each book came out.

Piker7977 says

Right before a large bank based in Minneapolis proceeds with a large merger, a group of executives go out on a hunting trip. This group of educated and connected professionals will be affected by this move...one way or another. The head honcho sits in a tree stand and contemplates his financial future while spotting deer. A turn of his head reveals a blaze orange coat with a rifle pointed at him. Do I know that face....BAM! The second his corpse lands on the ground, the future of the bank is up in the air. Could this have been a hunting accident or does someone in or outside of the group have a motive for killing the old technocrat? Better call Davenport!

One of the better offerings I've read in this series. Some decent plot twists with the usual Sanford recipe of cheesy dialogue and violence which makes for a good read. Davenport is back on par in this one and the villain is outside the box.

aPriL does feral sometimes says

"There'd always been something in Lucas that was hard, brutal, and remote. She'd been sure she could reach it, smooth it out. He needed that as much as she did: he didn't know it, but his taste for the street, his taste for violence, was killing him, in ways that weren't obvious to him. But she'd been wrong about reaching him: the violence was essential to him, she now believed."

As the novel opens, Lucas is feeling deeply depressed. Doctor Weather Karkinnen has moved out and left Lucas Davenport permanently. She believed her world of healing could overcome Lucas's dark world of evil. Instead, the horror defeated her positive mental defenses when in one of Lucas's cases, described in the previous book in the series, she had brain matter spattered all over her when a murderer was killed by a sniper. PTSD has become an unwelcome outcome of her relationship with Davenport. Oh well.

Then, a rich executive of a bank is killed during an employee bonding exercise of deer hunting. It seems a merger of financial companies is imminent and very few employees from the bank will keep their jobs. Guess who was making employee evaluations and deciding who would be fired? If you think it was the murdered man, you are right. As the case expands into puzzles of personalities and clues, and Lucas's loved ones are viciously attacked, he finds himself ruminating about himself.

"Lucas had never thought of himself as a cheerful person, because he wasn't; he wasn't usually morose either. He simply lived in a kind of police-world melange built of cynicism, brutality, and absurdity, leavened by not infrequent acts of selflessness, idealism, and sacrifice. If a cop brought a continuing attitude of good cheer to that world, there was something wrong with him, Lucas thought. His own recent problems he

recognized as involving brain chemicals: he could take other chemicals to alter his mental state, but he was afraid to do that. Would the brain-altered Davenport be himself? Or would it be some shrink's idea of what a good Davenport would look like?

All that aside, he was feeling fairly cheerful...."

Jeff Dickison says

A good entry in the Davenport series. In this one Lucas investigates the killing of a CEO who has taken his top managers on a hunting trip. The ultimate killer is a creepy serial killer who usually manages to escape serious investigation. Recommended.

Jim says

This one blew me away. It started out very well with a true mystery, but then it becomes a game of pin the blame on the killer & what a killer! In the midst of all this, Lucas is dealing with some personal problems (love life) & solves them with some really great characters & byplay. I was chortling at the end. I'm tempted to give this 5 stars. Really tempted. Best *Prey* book yet & it's the 9th! Whoever heard of a great 9th book?!!! Sandford is really hitting his stride.

I was out weeding the south road gardens, so started the 10th book. Got rained out before I was finished & soaked by the time I got back to the shop. Didn't mind at all. The next book has me firmly in its grip.

Kemper says

If a CEO gets killed in the forest and no one is around to hear him fall, does he make a sound?

Five top executives from a bank have gone into the woods on a deer hunting trip, but only four come out alive after someone tried to make a murder look like an accidental shooting. The dead man was the president who was in the middle of putting together a merger that would have made him and the bank's board members rich while pretty much screwing over everyone else so any one of the four are likely suspects to have killed him.

Lucas Davenport is having a bad time since his fiancé broke off their engagement. As someone who suffers from bouts of depression, Lucas can feel his mind falling into bad habits. Fortunately, an interesting murder case is just the thing to perk him right back up and while he initially thought the bank president's death would be easily figured out, it turns into tangled mess that gets him fully engaged.

This one was a departure from the typical *Prey* formula in a couple of ways. Usually we get the villain's point of view, even if Sandford sometimes hid their identity, but the first half of this one is complete whodunit with the reader having no more clue than Lucas as to who pulled the trigger. A significant part of the book is about the remaining bank execs scheming and maneuvering to try and get the top job, and it's surprising how interesting that portion is even aside from how it plays into the murder investigation. It also shows that Sandford was a little ahead of the curve when outlining outlandish executive salaries and perks

several years before it really became fashionable to bash them.

The killer is eventually revealed, and then the second half of the book seems more like a traditional Sandford novel with Lucas engaged in a battle of wits in which he's trying to piece together a case that has far more victims than just one bank president. Still, there was definitely a different vibe to this one and showed that Sandford wasn't interested in just repeating what had worked in the previous books, and that breaking up of the formula along with an intriguing villain makes this one of the better books in the series.

Next: Lucas has got women trouble in *Certain Prey*.
