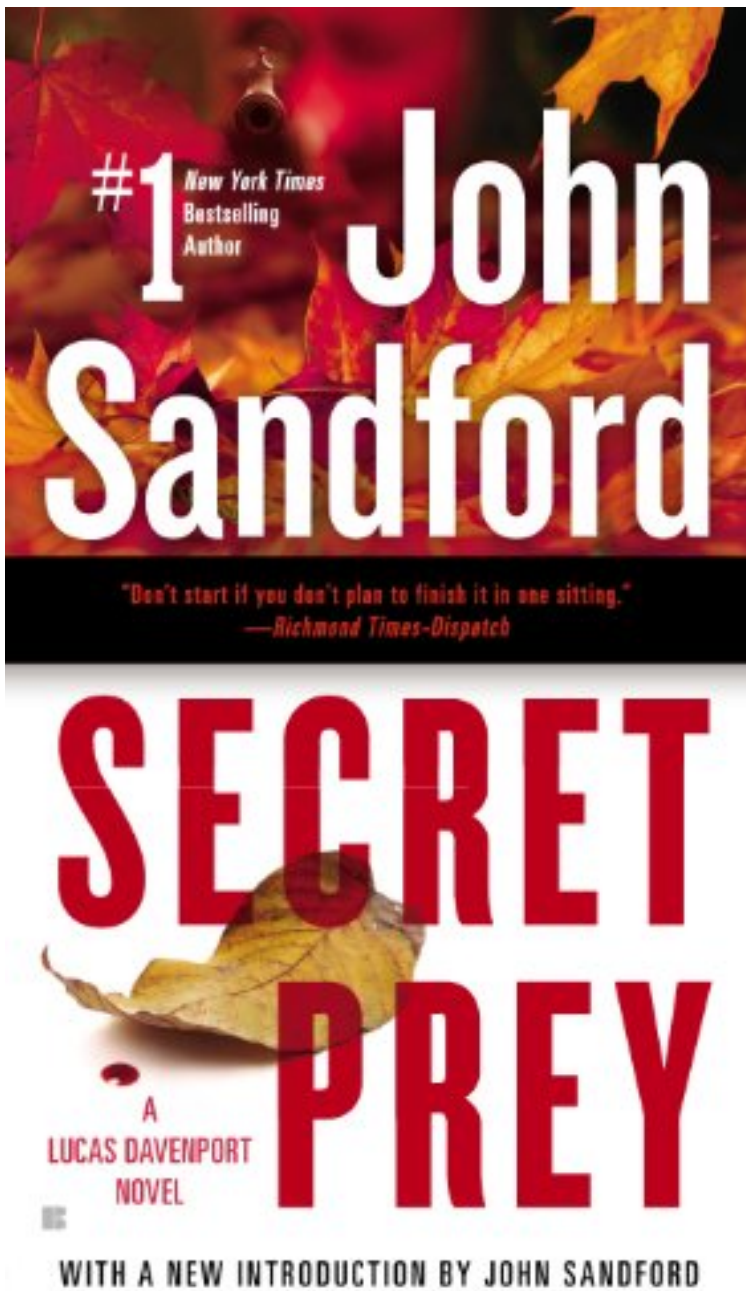


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Secret Prey



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Description : Description du produit#1 New York Times bestselling series featuring Lucas Davenport.
When a wealthy banker is shot during a hunting trip, Lucas Davenport suspects murder.

Prsentation de l'diteurA 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.com John Sandford is back with his dapper, dangerous Minneapolis deputy police chief Lucas Davenport for a ninth "preyer" meeting. Fans of the series will be glad to hear that it's full of smart suspense and deduction as well as explosive action. Davenport and his fellow cops are still recovering from the deadly revenge scheme that maimed them in *Sudden Prey*, which seems to have ended the relationship between Lucas and his doctor lady friend. This accounts for the depression that dogs him as he is sent to investigate the killing of top banking executive Daniel Kresge in a hunting lodge north of Minneapolis. Any of Kresge's four fellow hunters--all employees at his Polaris Bank--could have shot him, and all had motives, as did his almost ex-wife. About halfway through the book we find out who the real killer is, just a few pages before Lucas does, and that villain is a masterful creation, an example of the banality of evil worthy of Hannah Arendt. This is where Sandford's beautifully honed skills at creating suspense really kick in: he keeps us fascinated as Davenport, revitalized by an affair with a jaunty colleague, tries to turn what we all know into hard evidence. --Dick Adler

ExtraitOneThe chairman of the board pulled the door shut behind him, stacked his rifle against the log-sided cabin, and walked down to the end of the porch. The light from the kitchen window punched out into the early-morning darkness and the utter silence of the woods. Two weeks of nightly frost had killed the insects and had driven the amphibians into hibernation: for a few seconds, he was alone. Then the chairman yawned and unzipped his bib overalls, unbuttoned his pants, shuffled his feet, the porch boards creaking under his insulated hunting boots. Nothing like a good leak to start the day, he thought. As he leaned over the low porch rail, he heard the door opening behind him. He paid no attention. Three men and a woman filed out of the house, pretended not to notice him. Need some snow, the woman said, peering into the dark. Susan ODell was a slender forty, with a tanned, dry face, steady brown eyes, and smile lines around her mouth. A headlamp was strapped around her blaze-orange stocking cap, but she hadn't yet switched it on. She wore a blaze-orange Browning parka, snowmobile pants, and carried a backpack and a Remington .308 mountain rifle with a Leupold Vari-X III scope. Not visible was the rifles custom trigger job. The trigger would break at exactly two and a half pounds. Cold sonofabitch, though, said Wilson McDonald, as he slipped one heavy arm through his gun sling. McDonald was a large man, and much too heavy: in his hunting suit he looked like a blaze-orange Pillsbury Doughboy. He carried an aging .30-06 with open sights, bought in the thirties at Abercrombie Fitch in New York. At forty-two, he believed in a certain kind of traditionhis summer car, a racing-green XK-E, was handed down from his father; his rifle came from his grandfather; and his spot in the country club from his great-grandfather. He would defend the Jaguar against far better cars; the .30-06 against more modern rifles, and the club against parvenus, hirelings, and of course, blacks and Jews. You all ready? asked the chairman of the board, as he came back toward them, buttoning his pants. He was a fleshy, red-faced man, the oldest of the group, with a thick shock of white hair and caterpillar-sized eyebrows. As he got closer to the others, he could smell the odor of pancakes and coffee still steaming off them. I dont want anybody stumbling around in the goddamn woods just when its getting good. They all nodded: theyd all been here before. Getting late, said ODell. She wore the parka hood down, and the parka itself was still unzipped; but shed wrapped a red and white kaffiyeh around her neck and chin. Purchased on a whim in the Old City of Jerusalem, and meant to protect an Arab from the desert sun, it was now protecting a third-generation Irishwoman from the Minnesota cold. We better get out there and get settled. Five forty-five in the morning, opening day of deer season. ODell led the way off the porch, the chairman of the board at her shoulder, the other three men trailing behind. Terrance Robles was the youngest of them, still in his mid-thirties. He was a blocky man with thick, black-rimmed glasses and a thin, curly beard. His watery blue eyes showed a nervous flash, and he laughed too often, a shallow, uncertain chuckle. He carried a stainless Sako .270, mounted with a satin-finished Nikon scope. Robles had little regard for tradition: everything he hunted with was new technology. James T. Bone might have been Susan ODells brother: forty, as she was, Bone was slim, tanned, and dark-eyed, his face showing a hint of humor in a surface that was hard as a nut. He brought up the rear with a .243 Mauser Model 66 cradled in his bent left arm. Four of the five the chairman of the board, Robles, ODell, and Bone were serious hunters. The chairmans father had been a country banker. Theyd had a nice rambling stone-and-redwood home on Blueberry Lake south of Itasca, and his father had been big in Rotary and the Legion. The deer hunt was an annual ritual: the chairman of the board had hung twenty-plus bucks in his forty-six years: real men didnt kill does. Robles had come to hunting as an adult, joining an elk hunt as a thirtieth-birthday goof, only to be overwhelmed by its emotional power. For the past five years hed hunted a half-dozen times annually, from Alaska to New Zealand. ODell was a ranchers daughter. Her father owned

twenty miles of South Dakota just east of the Wyoming line, and shed joined the annual antelope hunt when she was eight. During her college years at Smith, when the other girls had gone to Ivy League football games with their beaux, shed flown home for the shooting. Bone was from Mississippi. Hed learned to hunt as a child, because he wanted to eat. Once, when he was nine, hed made soup for himself and his mother out of three carefully shot blackbirds. Only McDonald disdained the hunt. Hed shot deer in the pasthe was a Minnesota male, and males of a certain class were expected to do thatbut he considered the hunt a pain in the ass. If he killed a deer, hed have to gut it. Then hed smell bad and get blood on his clothing. Then hed have to do something with the meat. A wasted day. At the club, theyd be playing some serious gindrinking some serious gin, he thoughtand here he was, about to climb a goddamned tree. Goddamnit, he said aloud. What?

The chairman grunted, turned to look at him. Nothing. Stray thought, McDonald said. One benefit: If you killed a deer, people at the club attributed to you a certain common touchnot commonness, which would be a problem, but contact with the earth, which some of them perceived as a virtue. That was worth something; not enough to actually be out here, but something. The scent of woodsmoke hung around the cabin, but gave way to the pungent odor of burr oaks as they pushed out into the trees. Fifty yards from the cabin, as they moved out of range of the house lights, ODell switched on her headlamp, and the chairman turned on a hand flash. Dawn was forty-five minutes away, but the moonless sky was clear, and they could see a long thread of stars above the trail: the Dipper pointing down to the North Star. Great night, Bone said, his face turned to the sky. A small lake lay just downslope from the cabin like a smoked mirror. They followed a shoreline trail for a hundred and fifty yards, moved single file up a ridge, and continued on, still parallel to the lake. Dont step in the shit, the woman said, her voice a snapping break in the silence. She caught a pile of fresh deer droppings with her headlamp, like a handful of purple chicken hearts. We did that last week with the Cove Links deal, the chairman said dryly. The ridge separated the lake and a tamarack swamp. Fifty yards further on, Robles said, I guess this is me, and turned off to the left toward the swamp. As he broke away from the group, he switched on his flash, said, Good luck, guys, and disappeared down a narrow trail toward his tree stand. The chairman of the board was next. Another path broke to the left, toward the swamp, and he took it, saying, See you. Get the buck, said ODell, and McDonald, ODell, and Bone continued on. The chairman followed the narrow flashlight beam forty-five yards down a gentle slope to the edge of the swamp. The lake was still open, but the swamp was freezing out, the shallow pockets of water showing windowpane ice. One stumpy burr oak stood at the boundary of the swamp; the kind of oak an elf might live in. The chairman dug into his coat pocket, took out a long length of nylon parachute cord, looped it around his rifle sling, leaned the rifle against the tree, and began climbing the foot spikes that he'd driven into the tree eight years earlier. Hed taken three bucks from this stand. The county road foreman, whod been cleaning ditches in preparation for the snow months, told him that a twelve-pointer had moved into the neighborhood during the summer. The foreman had seen him cutting down this way, across the middle of the swamp toward this very tree. Not more than two weeks ago. The chairman clambered into the stand fifteen feet up the tree, and settled into the bench with his back to the oak. The stand looked like a suburban deck, built of preservative-treated two-by-sixes, with a two-by-four railing that served as a gun rest. The chairman slipped off his pack, hung it from a spike to his right, and pulled the rifle up with the parachute cord. The cartridges were still warm from his pocket as he loaded the rifle. That wouldnt last long. Temperatures were in the teens, with an icy wind cutting at exposed skin. Later in the day, it would warm up, maybe into the upper thirties, but sitting up here, early, exposed, it would get real damn cold. Freeze the ass off that fuckin ODell. ODell always made out that she was impervious to cold; but this day would get to her. The chairman, wrapped in nylon and Thinsulate, was still a little too warm from the hike in, and he half dozed as he sat in the tree, waiting for first light. He woke once more to the sound of a deer walking through the dried oak leaves, apparently following a game trail down to the swamp. The animal settled on the hillside behind him. Now that was interesting. Forty or fifty yards away, no more. Still up the ridge, but it should be visible after sunrise, if it moved again. If it didnt, hed kick it out on the way back to the cabin. He sat waiting, listening to the wind. Most of the oaks still carried their leaves, dead brown, but hanging on. When he closed his eyes, their movement sounded like a crackling of a small, intimate wood fire. The chair...