Charles Vespian Hale Document

Context: Hale is a famous assassin, known for his meticulous planning and his desire for challenge. He set up a plan in order to kill as many people as possible on a ceremony attended at the Hudson Tower - the most secured tower in America for challenge and money.

His plan has 3 big layers, each has many smaller layers with incredible calculations

First Layers:

Context: Amelia - the police that investigated the crime of Hale - also investigated another case some weeks ago. It is the suicide of Benjamin Creeley, which lead Amelia to a fraudulent group of polices

The Case of the watchmaker:

Firstly, Hale built a close relationship with Reynolds, a sex addict, by persuading to cooperate in order to find and kill the one who killed his wife. This was his story:

"I am an entrepreneur, my name is Duncan, Gerald Duncan. Some years ago, my wife and I went to New York. I was eating in a restaurant while my wife was watching opera alone. Then my wife crashed her car before dead because of the injuries. The doctor said that she was alive

10 - 15 minutes after that accident, meaning that no one around us tried to save her even after that car accident was in New York street. Fortunately, I could find 10 people who were around that car accident, and I decided to make them suffered from painful death, just like my wife"

He was also persuaded that he would do the first 2 murders in order to make Reynold trust that the purpose of this was for revenge. Reynold only needed to be involved in the case that included women, and of course, Reynold could have sex with their corpse after finishing, and Reynold agreed

=>Fabrication, Negotiation, Persuasion

They built their identification as "Watchmakers" for disguise

They chose their planned place as an old church, which has been on sale for about 4 months, and no one would view a house on Christmas. That place still had lights and hot water

Hale(after this we will call Hale "Duncan") replaced the lock with a better lock for letting people think that there were somebody inside that church. They also had wax on these locks for checking if anyone tried to go in that church

=> Planning Coverage, Concealment, Method

Despite the gaps between their intelligence, Duncan never acted superior to Reynolds. Duncan still respected

Reynold’s opinions whenever possible, and Reynold never lost his trust on Duncan.

Duncan and Reynold shared a thing in common: They both had their ‘dark side”, so they always respected each other. Reynold listened to Duncan’s hatred to this world and his obsession to the title “Watchmaker” (Tài liệu không có tiêu đề), and Duncan still had some curiosity about Reynold’s lust desire but never disrespected his desire.

=>Relationship Management, Social Cognition, Social Integration

1.1) The first murder

Gerald kidnapped someone from the target list and took them to a pier on the Hudson River. He tied the person so they were hanging above the river, then cut their wrists. The victim tried to hold on for a long time but eventually had to let go. After the murder, Gerald left a wall clock at the scene inside a black box for the early morning staff to find.

The staff member glanced down and noticed something strange about a nearby patch of ice. It was reddish-brown. He stared at the large frozen puddle of blood near the clock, shiny with ice. When he leaned closer, he was even more horrified by the bloodstains—like bloody fingernail marks scratched into the wooden floor of the pier, as if someone with cut fingers or wrists had tried to hold on to avoid falling into the fast-flowing river. He immediately called the police.

The bomb squad was the first to arrive, since in the post-9/11 era, any ticking object had to be checked for explosives. Unfortunately, this caused the crime scene to be disturbed while the team carefully removed the clock. The location was also chosen on purpose, as very few people came by and most traces would be blown away or dirtied by the strong winds blowing along the river.

Amelia Sachs arrived afterward and began examining the crime scene.

She found out the following:

- A note (returned by the bomb squad after being discovered inside the clock) had dried blood stuck to it — Sachs collected a sample of the frozen blood.
- A fingernail had been ripped off while trying to cling to the pier — it was wide, short, and unpolished, suggesting the victim was likely male.
- The killer had gotten in by cutting through the wire mesh fence around the pier — Sachs collected a sample of the wire to check for tool marks.

No fingerprints, footprints, or tire tracks were found near the entrance or around the frozen bloodstain. No witnesses had been identified yet either.

The medical examiner reported that if the victim really fell into the Hudson River, based on what was seen at the scene, he would have died within about ten minutes due to hypothermia. NYPD divers, along with the Coast Guard, were still searching for the body and any other underwater evidence.

As for the note, it was a typed message that read:
“The Cold Moon shines full in the sky, casting its light on this body below, marking the moment death arrived and ending the journey that began at birth.”
Signed: *The Watchmaker*.

This was also the moment Gerald introduced the killer’s name — *The Watchmaker* — to the police.

=> Mass Manipulation, Preparation, Tactic, Method

1.1) The second murder

Last night, a woman called 911 and said her brother — Theodore Adams — was supposed to come over for dinner but never showed up. Then this morning, in an alley on Cedar Street near Broadway, Theodore Adams's body was found.

Amelia arrived to investigate after leaving the first crime scene. While examining the area, she called Lincoln to discuss the case. Amelia gave the following summary:

I. Victim and Scene Conditions:

- **Victim:** Theodore Adams, approximately 35 years old.
- **Location:** Found lying on his back in a dead-end alley off Cedar Street (near Broadway), about 4.5 meters from the street (the alley is 30 meters long).
- **Condition:** Mouth gagged, wrists and ankles bound together with plastic tape.
- **Cause of death (observed):** Crushed by a heavy metal bar (nearly 2 meters long, with two holes like

those in a needle) which had been suspended from a fire escape (3 meters high) using a rope. The bar crushed the victim's throat — his neck was flattened to just 2.5 cm thick.

- **Mechanism:** The other end of the rope was placed in the victim's hand. Tied up and unable to crawl away, he was forced to hold the heavy bar to stop it from falling on him. He failed.

- **Estimated time of death:** Dead for quite a while; body frozen due to the cold (it's December).

- **Signs of movement:** Victim was dragged to the kill spot (rock salt and slime were found on the back of his suit jacket and the underside of his pants). No clear tire tracks found.

- **Facial appearance:** Pale and expressionless. Sachs imagined the struggle (face turning red, then bruised purple, eyes bulging) lasted about 10–15 minutes.

- **Surroundings:** The dead-end alley was used for deliveries and covered in gravel. Rock salt had been spread in the middle of the alley to melt ice.

III. Physical Evidence and Collected Traces:

- Items directly related to the murder:
- Metal bar, rope, plastic tape (found on the victim).
- The clock and note were mentioned but handled first by the bomb squad — the note had similar content to the one at the first scene.

Victim’s belongings:

- Business card: Listed him as a freelance writer. Work address was the same as his home address.

- Cash: $60 in relatively new bills.

Unusual traces around the body:

- A fine sand-like substance was found on the ground within about a 1-meter radius of the body. This material wasn’t found elsewhere in the alley.

- Signs of sweeping: Sachs noticed small pieces of straw in the sand, suggesting the killer used a broom.

- Sand was also on the victim and the metal bar, meaning the sweeping happened after the victim was already there.

Traces outside the main scene (on the sidewalk):

- Shoe prints: Half a dozen prints from large, wide-soled boots (hiking style) were found in the snow at the entrance of the alley (Cedar Street), near the curb.
  The prints suggest someone stood there watching for a while (they shifted position). There was no clear reason for anyone to stand there (no phone booth, mailbox, or nearby window).

IV. Sachs and Rhyme’s Inference and Theory:

- **Nature of the crime:** A deliberate, brutal murder meant to prolong the victim’s suffering. Could be a message from organized crime, or the act of a disturbed person who enjoys causing pain.

- **Killer’s caution:** The killer was very careful not to leave obvious evidence (no fingerprints, hair, fibers...) at the main scene.

- **Meaning of the sand sweeping:**

    - At first, they thought it was to erase general evidence.

    - Sachs (and Rhyme agreed) believed the killer cleaned the area so thoroughly because he planned to return — to see if the victim was dead, to observe the police, or even to "hunt" the investigators. Sweeping was to remove even the tiniest clues (like fibers or shoe debris) that could link him if he came back.

V. Information from Others (Sachs received but didn’t handle directly):

- **Pulaski:** Reported that Sellitto was questioning people nearby (no witnesses yet), bomb squad would send the clock to Rhyme, and he would get license plates of nearby parked cars.

- **Sellitto:** Confirmed no witnesses from nearby offices. Will have security open the rear door near the body as Rhyme requested, so Sachs can check inside.

Barbara (the victim's sister, who called the police the night before) came to the scene, saw the body, and identified her brother. She was devastated, panicked, and collapsed emotionally. Sachs took her inside a nearby building hallway to get out of the cold and avoid attention, helping her calm down after using the restroom. Barbara gave the following information:

- He was single.
- A freelance writer, mostly wrote for ads.
- Well-liked by many.
- No known enemies. No love triangle.
- Never used drugs or did anything illegal.
- Had lived in New York for two years.
- No one Barbara knew would have a reason to hurt him so violently.

Sachs believed the lack of connection to organized crime increased the chance that this was done by a mentally unstable killer — which made it more dangerous for the public.

=> Concealment, VSI, Creativity, Logical/Convergent/Divergent/Non - Linear Thinking (id sure how to scale Thinking), Unpredictability(Disguise Intention)

1.1) The third murder

Gerald told Vincent to scout their third target (the first victim Vincent would take part in): Joanne — a flower shop owner. Even though the Watchmaker already knew Joanne often worked at her flower studio a few blocks from her retail shop, he wanted to be sure — to see whether customers would come to the studio for orders or if she would be working alone. Meanwhile, Gerald would head to Cedar Street (the second crime scene), expecting the police to be there by now. He wanted to see who they were really dealing with.

As they stepped out of the alley, a freezing gust of wind blew hard, causing Vincent's hooded leather jacket — which he hadn't zipped up (something Gerald always warned him about) — to flap open. At that moment, a college student happened to walk by, and might've seen Vincent's face. Vincent panicked, not just afraid of being identified, but also worried that he had put Gerald in danger. Angry at himself, he muttered that he would go "take care of" the student. But Gerald reminded him sharply that he had never killed anyone before — Gerald had always been the one to do the killing, while Vincent only helped with transport.

Gerald pulled out the box cutter he had used the day before to slit the man's wrists on the pier and went after the student. He returned a while later with the cutter and a pair of bloody gloves. He had taken care of the student.

The body was stuffed in a dumpster and covered with trash. With luck, it would be dumped at a landfill or into the ocean before anyone noticed the blood.

He then calmly changed into one of the three backup pairs of gloves both men were always required to carry. Gerald gently instructed Vincent that if someone fights back, he should slash their eyes — that would make them stop immediately and give full control to the attacker. Gerald didn’t yell, just reminded Vincent to be more careful from now on. Thankfully, things were still under control, and their plan would go on unchanged. Vincent would still get to "spend time" with the female victims, just as promised. Finally, Gerald told him to meet at the museum at 4:15 PM.

That advice was brutally simple — slash their eyes — but could that really solve everything? Of course not. What the Watchmaker truly meant was something deeper: a reminder to Vincent of just how dangerous he was. It was a subtle way to plant fear, just enough to keep Vincent in check.

Though Gerald always treated Vincent with care, he needed the younger man to remember that he was dealing with someone who could kill without hesitation. Disappointing someone like that — someone whose instinct in a struggle was to “go for the eyes” — would not be wise. That quiet threat behind the advice was meant to keep Vincent’s wild impulses under control, to stop him from doing something reckless that might ruin their carefully laid plans.

=> Psycho Warfare, Individual/Direct Manipulation, Strategic Adaptability, EF

With the official confirmation of the serial killer known as the Watchmaker, Lincoln’s task force was reassembled. Here's a rundown of the investigation team:

Lincoln Rhyme: A legendary former forensic criminologist who retired after an accident left him 90% paralyzed. Though officially a consultant, he’s effectively the leader of this high-profile case.

Amelia Sachs: A detective with the NYPD, daughter of the late patrol legend Herman Sachs. Years ago, she had a relationship with Nick, a street cop later arrested for being part of a corruption ring. Now, she is Lincoln’s partner—both professionally and romantically—and his most capable “hands” at crime scenes, examining evidence in his place.

Lon Sellitto: A veteran NYPD lieutenant, long-time colleague and close friend of Lincoln.

Mel Cooper: A forensic expert who regularly supports Lincoln in major cases, especially in the lab.

Ron Pulaski: A young NYPD officer assigned to assist Lincoln and Amelia with fieldwork and logistics.

Dennis Baker: A supervising lieutenant in the Major Cases unit, which Sellitto oversees. Under pressure from City Hall to stop the Watchmaker fast, Baker was one of the people who pushed to get Lincoln and Amelia on the case. He’s aiming for a major win, and believes Lincoln’s team can deliver it.

Kathryn Dance: An agent with the California Bureau of Investigation, currently in New York on assignment. A specialist in interrogation and kinesics—the study of body

language and verbal cues—she’s been asked by Sellitto to assist with interviews and interrogations in the Watchmaker case.

Summary of the Investigation Progress – Watchmaker Case

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1. First Crime Scene: Pier (22nd Street, Hudson River)

Reported by: Ron Pulaski
Timeframe: Suspect was at the west end of the pier sometime between 6 PM (previous night) and 6 AM (closing time).

Evidence:

- **Fingernails**: Male.
- **Blood**: Confirmed human, AB positive (rare—3.5% of the population). Victim likely male.
- **Blood Analysis**: Contains anticoagulants → older victim, probable coronary issues. No other drug traces or illness.
- **Fence**: Cut with a standard wire cutter. Type can't be traced.
- **Other Traces**: No prints, no footprints or tire marks (except employees).

Lincoln’s Deduction:

- Victim clung to the pier edge (fingernail scratches between planks), then fell or let go.

- Rhyme wonders how long he was hanging there.

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2. Second Crime Scene: Alley (Cedar Street, near Broadway)

Reported by: Pulaski
Description: Dead-end alley, 4.6m wide, 32.7m long, gravel surface. Body found 4.6m from alley entrance.

Time of Death: At least 8 hours before being found (at 7 AM). Body frozen → hard to pinpoint exact time.

Surroundings:

- 3 commercial buildings (closed 8:30 PM & 10 PM).

- 1 government office (closed at 6 PM).

- Garbage collection at 10 PM.

Rhyme's Estimate: Time of crime likely between 10:15 PM and 11 PM.

Vehicle Check:

- Pulaski documented cars within 2 blocks in extreme detail → scolded by Rhyme (waste of time).

- Plate numbers checked: no criminal records.

- Parking ticket records around crime time: no results.

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3. Victim Background (Theodore Adams – found in alley)

- **Criminal record**: None.
- **FBI check (via Dellray)**: No entries on file.
- **Family**: Sister says he had no enemies, no known issues.
- **Initial Rhyme theory**: Possibly a random victim of a psychopath.

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4. Key Clues & Evidence Analysis

Clock Timer:

- Sent to Rhyme's lab after bomb squad cleared it for biohazard.

Sand (in alley only):

- **Type**: Playground sand (not construction).
- **Found**: Around body and on weapon → spread after victim was positioned.

- **Rhyme theory**: Killer may plan to return; or wind at the pier might’ve dispersed it.
- **Important trace**: Thallium sulfate (illegal rodenticide) found in sand.
    - Not in control sample → possibly transferred from killer.
    - Could lead to killer’s environment (not likely used to kill).
    - Cooper checking seizure reports involving thallium.

Metal Bar (murder weapon):

- Used to strangle victim.
- Size/weight: 183cm long, 2.5cm wide, 7.5cm thick, 37kg, holes at both ends.
- **Use**: Common in shipbuilding, cranes, heavy machinery.
- **No fingerprints.**
- **Material**: Iron (oxidized).
- **Source check**:
    - Local sites: No matches.

    - Queensboro Bridge project: No matches either.

Plastic Tape (used to bind Adams):

- Standard gray tape.
- **Glue residue**: Only shows de-icing salt (matches scene) and the sandbox sand.
- **Unusual detail**: Cuts are perfect and identical in length → used a sharp tool, high precision.
- Contrasts typical haphazard use (e.g., tearing with teeth = DNA risk).

Rope:

- Ordinary, no unique traits from database.

Fishy-smelling Soil (from Adams's coat pocket):

- Pulaski's initial assumption: linked to killer's job.
- Rhyme corrected: it reflects victim's activities.
- **Contents**: Oil, nitrogen, urea, chloride, fish protein → logged in victim profile.

Brown Carpet Fiber (on Adams's shoe sole & watch strap):

- **Identified as**: Car floor mat fiber.

- **Implication**: Killer likely used a car (can’t carry 37kg bar on subway).

- **Trace limit**: Over 40 car models use this fiber → too broad for ID.

- **Tire marks**: Obscured by de-icing salt (intentionally?) → can’t identify vehicle type.

The Poem(I’m not sure)

The Cold Moon

The Cold Moon, round and full in the sky,
Shines its light on this corpse beneath the earth,
Indicating the time when death arrived,
And marking the end of a journey that began with birth.

=> VCI

Analyzing the letter:

Rhyme confirmed: Today is indeed the full moon.

"The Cold Moon" (capitalized by the killer): According to Cooper's research, the lunar calendar marks time by the phases of the moon. The names of the months describe our life cycle, from birth to death. The months are named according to various points in the year. The Moon of Mulberry is in the spring, the Moon of New Rice and the Moon of Hunting are in the fall. The Cold Moon is in December, the month of hibernation and death.

Rhyme noted: Killers associated with astronomy/moon themes are often serial killers. Combining these clues =>

It's very likely that the third victim has already been targeted or might be dead by now.

Checked databases (VICAP, NCIC, state) with "The Clockmaker," "Cold Moon," and other lunar months: No results.

Poem origin: Cooper checked poetry pages and asked literature professors: no one knows => Likely composed by the killer himself.

Paper and ink: Regular printed paper, HP LaserJet ink => Nothing special.

=> Concealment, Disguise Intention, Creativity, Anticipation, Mass/Logical Manipulation

The two clocks from the two crime scenes were returned by the bomb disposal unit, and the investigation team continued their work.

The clocks were identical, with the only noticeable difference being dried blood on the base of the clock left at the dock. They appeared old-fashioned—not digital, but hand-wound. However, the components inside were modern. The internal mechanical parts were housed in a box sealed with resin, and the bomb disposal team pried open the box, but both clocks were still running accurately. The clock cases were made of black lacquered wood, and the faces were decorated in an antique style with white metal. The hour markers were Roman numerals, and both the hour and minute hands were black, shaped like sharp arrows. There was no second hand, but the clocks emitted a very clear ticking sound every second.

Cooper examined the clocks and reported that there were no fingerprints, only a few trace elements, all matching samples that Amelia had collected from both crime scenes. This meant that neither clock had been in the Clockmaker's car or home prior to this.

From the characteristics of the clocks, they traced them back to the Arnold company in Framingham, Massachusetts, which specialized in selling clocks, leather goods, office decorations, and gifts, mostly for the elite. These were not cheap items. There were dozens of different clock models. This particular one was a Victorian style, crafted from genuine brass and oak, designed in the style of British clocks sold in the 19th century. The wholesale price was fifty-four dollars. These clocks were not sold freely on the market; they had to be purchased through specialty suppliers.

Each clock had only a model number but no serial number. Lincoln instructed Cooper to call the manufacturer, tell them the clock's model numbers, and ask if they knew where the clocks had been shipped. Of course, the killer might not be the one who purchased the clocks—he could have stolen them from a shop or from someone's home, or perhaps bought them at a flea market... but those possibilities were speculative. It was the only lead they had.

Cooper reported back that the distributor did not keep records by serial number, but if the clocks had been sold in New York, they would have been sold at Hallerstein, the only retailer in the area. Sellitto decided to visit the store to gather information from the owner, accompanied by

Dance to monitor the owner’s reactions in case he was involved or even the Clockmaker himself.

Through a series of responses during the conversation, Dance confirmed that the clock shop owner, Victor, had no direct involvement in the Clockmaker case. However, his behavior indicated that he was hiding something—either he didn’t want to be linked to the case or he had sold the clocks to someone he believed might be a criminal. Dance reassured him that he would be protected by the police, and only then did Victor begin to open up about his encounter with a terrifying customer, who they now knew was Gerald.

Based on Victor's testimony, a digital facial recognition system was used to create a likeness of the Clockmaker at the clock shop. The system, developed from the old Identi-Kit, recreated the features of a suspect based on witness descriptions. On the screen appeared the image of a white man around fifty years old, with a double chin, a thick nose, and unusually pale blue eyes. The clock shop owner added that the killer was about 1.85 meters tall, with a solid build and short black hair. He did not wear any jewelry. Hallerstein remembered that the man wore dark clothing, but he couldn’t recall the exact style.

A month prior, a man had come into the shop asking to buy a clock—not necessarily a specific brand, but one that was compact, with a loud ticking sound, and that could show the phases of the moon. This could imply that the killer wanted the victim to hear the ticking as they slowly died, further suggesting that the Clockmaker might be a sadistic individual with high intelligence.

=> Fabrication, False Profiling

He ordered 10 clocks, which for the police meant there would likely be 8 more victims. When the shipment arrived, the man came to pick it up and paid in cash. He didn’t say his name, where he was from, or why he wanted those particular clocks, but he clearly knew a lot about them. They (Victor and the Clockmaker) discussed collectors who had recently bought famous clocks at auctions and about the exhibitions on timepieces currently taking place in the city.

The Clockmaker didn’t let Hallerstein carry the clocks to the car. He took them himself, making several trips in and out of the store. He paid with cash, but since he wore gloves, no fingerprints could be traced. The investigation team tried to pinpoint exactly when the Clockmaker had contacted the store owner, and by going through the call logs kept at the switchboard, they identified several calls that might have been made by him. However, these calls were made from public phones in Manhattan, leading the team to yet another dead end because of the killer's meticulousness.

Lincoln looked at the evidence board again—particularly the note about the soil containing fish protein and how it had been dragged from the car into the alley. He suddenly realized the mistake he had made earlier. He had previously thought that the sand-like dirt found in the victim’s pocket was related to or belonged to the victim. But now, after having Cooper test the technique of dragging Thom (a nurse) across the floor by grabbing the hem of his coat and pulling it backward (the most effective way to drag someone), they discovered that Cooper’s fingers had left behind aluminum dust on the inside of the coat, exactly where the dirt had clung to Theodore Adams'

coat. This meant that the Clockmaker had left the dirt on the victim’s coat when he dragged him down the alley.

This breakthrough pointed them in a new direction for their next steps: they now needed to focus on everything related to fish protein.

At the scheduled time of 4:15 PM at the City Art Museum on Fifth Avenue, Vincent met Gerald. As cautious as ever, the Clockmaker asked him to recount what he had learned, while making sure they didn’t look at each other (to avoid being followed). Vincent explained that throughout his surveillance, Joanne had mostly stayed at the flower workshop, with no one coming or going. She did visit her shop on Broadway to meet a delivery person, after which they both left. From a public phone booth, Vincent, following Gerald’s instructions, called the store to ask where Joanne was (which was a normal inquiry for appointments, etc.) and was told she would be back at the workshop soon. This confirmed that Joanne spent most of her time at the flower workshop, and knowing her schedule as well as the security system at the location gave both men added confidence in their plan.

As for Gerald, when he checked the two crime scenes, he saw that at the pier (Scene 1), they had set up barricades but there was no one present at that moment. He noticed police boats patrolling the river, meaning they hadn’t found the body yet. At Cedar Street (Scene 2), he couldn’t get close due to the heavy police presence, which indicated that they were taking the case seriously.

=> Logical/Convergent Thinking, Observation, Induction

Currently, the exhibition theme at the museum is "The Study of Time in Ancient History," and it seems to be the only topic that Gerald shows any interest in. According to Gerald, the study of time is a discipline that focuses on the measurement of time and timekeeping devices. He then pointed out the *Delphi Clock*, a masterpiece housed in a large glass-enclosed case, guarded by a strict security officer. The Clockmaker enthusiastically began to introduce the *Delphi Clock* to Vincent, showing rare enthusiasm for it.

(Note: The *Delphi Clock* is a fictional object in the story, though it is closely inspired by the real-world *Antikythera Mechanism*, with many similar characteristics such as its design, origin, and function. Notable differences include the *Antikythera Mechanism* being based on the geocentric model (whereas the *Delphi Clock* implicitly supports the geocentric theory, despite it being considered heretical at the time), and the *Antikythera Mechanism* being made of bronze, while the *Delphi Clock* is adorned with precious gems. Nevertheless, both devices share a core concept of a highly advanced timekeeping mechanism ahead of its time.)

On the other hand, The investigation journey into the 118th Precinct case, led by Amelia (mainly) and Ron, has been running parallel to the developments of the Clockmaker case. By this point, they had uncovered quite a bit. While the two were discussing potential leads, Amelia suddenly whispered to Ron that it seemed they were being tailed. However, after noticing that the car tailing them was a Mercedes-AMG, she quickly dismissed the idea, attributing it to a coincidence. After all, it's rare to actually

be followed, and most of the time, it's just a self-created feeling. Besides, who would tail someone in a $140,000 car?

Gerald and Vincent were using an SUV that Gerald had stolen from a location he claimed wouldn't be discovered for a while. The vehicle was also equipped with a New York license plate stolen from a different brownish-yellow Explorer, designed to fool the police in case they happened to notice. This disguise was relatively effective because the police rarely check VIN numbers, only registration numbers.

The car was parked on Spring Street, east of the flower shop, in complete darkness. Gerald was preparing to kill his third victim, and Vincent was preparing for his first “chat” in a long while. The two of them connected their earpieces to their mobile phones, and Vincent activated the police radio scanner placed on the seat next to him.

Gerald carefully checked himself over to make sure all his pockets were securely closed. He rolled a lint roller over his clothes to pick up any stray evidence and reminded Vincent to do the same before heading into sex with Joanne. Gerald took the clock (the same kind as in the previous two cases) and a lock-picking tool. He would use his lockpicking skills to break into the flower shop, while Vincent stayed outside to keep watch and act as backup if necessary.

Through Vincent’s surveillance, the two knew that Joanne was about to return home. Their plan was for Gerald to be waiting in the flower shop to kill Joanne, while Vincent would keep an eye on the outside, listening for any police activity through the radio scanner. After the deed was done, Vincent would have his sex with Joanne’s body while Gerald kept watch. Then they would escape as if nothing had happened.

When Joanne entered the house, she found coils of wire on the floor, which were supposed to be hanging on hooks on the nearby wall. She picked them up and noticed why they had fallen: the hook had come loose from the wooden bar. That was all. But then she noticed something odd. The wire coil was one of the new ones, the ones she hadn’t used yet. She assumed it was just a lapse of memory, attributing it to a bit of alcohol. But then she heard the unmistakable ticking of a clock, and she was sure there was only an electronic clock in the shop. She decided to check.

Vincent felt the tension build as three minutes passed since Joanne had entered the house, and there was still no communication from Gerald. His nerves started to fray. Then, through his police radio scanner, he heard the unmistakable command: *"All units in Lower Manhattan, immediately move to Spring Street and search all flower shops in the area. This is in connection with the two previous murders committed by the Watchmaker."* Panic surged through Vincent—how had the police traced them so quickly?

In a frantic panic, Vincent grabbed the radio and urged Gerald to flee immediately. He started the SUV. Just in

time, Gerald ran out and climbed into the vehicle, and Vincent pressed on the accelerator. However, Gerald reminded him to slow down to avoid drawing attention. They turned onto the next street just as several police cars patrolled nearby. Gerald, maintaining his cool, advised Vincent to keep calm and casually glance back, as any innocent citizen would do in such a situation. Vincent did so and then recounted the situation. Gerald, equally puzzled, wondered how the police had pinpointed their location so specifically.

They continued driving, moving further away from the scene. Gerald had already prepared for such an escape, knowing the exact route they would take. They parked their SUV across from the flower shop, and a short drive further would lead them to an intersection where they could blend into the traffic. Gerald instructed Vincent to take the turn slowly, carefully, in order to minimize any tire tracks or traces that the police might be able to follow. With every action, they remained calculated, trying to avoid leaving behind any evidence that could be traced back to them.

=> Risk Calculation, Contingencies, Knowledge, Concealment, Strategic Adaptability

It was actually Lincoln who had deduced it. Earlier, police had raided an environmental agency a block from here, where illegal thallium sulfate—rat poison matching the compound found at scene #2—had been stored. Lincoln also discovered that fish protein’s main use is in fertilizers for orchids. Sellitto issued an official alert directing units to check flower shops and landscaping companies near that environmental agency.

The police, unfortunately, arrived just a bit too late—letting the Watchmaker escape—but fortunately just in time to prevent the murder of his third victim, Joanne Harper, who had called 911 after hearing noises while investigating the ticking. She recounted the events of that night and said she had no connection to Adams (victim #2) when asked. *(Preparation)*

A witness said he had been walking down the street and saw someone jump out of the flower shop—a middle-aged man in a dark short coat. When shown a composite sketch from the Hallerstein shop, he confirmed it was likely him. He saw the man run to a brown SUV driven by a round-faced white male wearing sunglasses => The Watchmaker had at least one accomplice.

The witness wasn't sure what kind of SUV it was—possibly an Explorer—and he couldn't see the plate number in the dark. Sellitto issued an Emergency Vehicle Alert. This alert notified all patrol cars with radios as well as most law enforcement officers and traffic police in the area to look for a brown Explorer carrying two men.

After collecting all evidence at the scene and confirming the watch wasn't an explosive device, Amelia Sachs returned to her Camaro. While searching for her gloves in her handbag in the back seat, she noticed the contents had spilled, despite being sure she'd locked it. Sachs quickly identified signs of a break-in: glove marks on the passenger window and disturbed insulation suggested someone had used a Slimjim to open the lock. This was the first time her car had been tampered with during an investigation. She double-checked and confirmed nothing was stolen—cash, credit cards, spare ammo, and pepper

spray were all intact. Still, she planned to contact her card companies just in case. She asked nearby onlookers if they'd seen anything, but no one had.

She used her crime scene kit to examine the vehicle for prints, footprints, or other traces but found nothing. As she was leaving, she glimpsed a large black car slipping into an alley a half-block away—reminding her of the Mercedes she'd seen earlier. But she couldn't make out the model or give chase. Sachs was unsettled—if it wasn't theft, then what was the intruder's intent? *(Preparation)*

The team continued their investigation. Cooper and Sachs dismantled the clock but found no meaningful traces—no footprints, no fingerprints, no weapon, nothing. Lincoln wondered whether the killer had used a special tool to cut Joanne's floral wire, something that might hint at his profession or past expertise. But no, he had used Joanne's own scissors. And just like the plastic tape pieces, the wires had been cut to exactly the same length—183 centimeters.

The vehicle lead also hadn't yielded much. Vehicle registry records listed 423 brown Explorer owners. Rhyme noted the Watchmaker could be among them, but they couldn't interrogate them all. Sellitto assigned people to check owners in lower Manhattan. Even with the Emergency Vehicle Alert, no one matching the suspect's description had turned up yet.

In the envelope Sachs brought back, they found black material fragments. These appeared where he took the wire coil and where he had likely hidden in the workshop.

She also found some near the front door—where he had stepped while fleeing to the Explorer => These shoe traces could reveal where the killer had been.

Cooper ran the sample through a compound separator. The results: 73% paraffin, followed by aromatic hydrocarbons and theralene => Lincoln immediately recognized this as the composition of roofing tar. He deduced that the killer had recently visited a site with fresh roof tar—no one hangs out on rooftops in this weather. Lincoln wanted a list of buildings currently undergoing re-roofing. Even though it's rare in winter, the number was still too high. So he suggested using ASTER—an advanced satellite-based radiation and thermal scanner. It's a sensor aboard the Terra satellite, a joint NASA–Japan project. It captures thermal images from space => This could help narrow the search by identifying areas emitting heat above 200°C, since roof tar must be that hot to apply. A full scan of Earth takes 16 days, so Lincoln proposed starting with Manhattan, where the Watchmaker had struck three times.

Looking at the city map, Lincoln deduced the Watchmaker's escape route. He asked for a team to search for tire tracks at the intersection if Spring Street was still blocked. Unfortunately, the street had been reopened 15 minutes earlier—they couldn't isolate traffic for too long after an incident. By now, if the SUV had left any tracks, they would've been overrun by other vehicles. The Watchmaker, it seemed, had even accounted for that.

=> Prediction, Risk Calculation

Amelia and Ron continued discussing the information they had uncovered in the 118th Precinct case, during which

Ron also mentioned that he had seen the Mercedes again after leaving Amelia's car earlier.

At a street corner after the two men had escaped, Vincent asked Gerald whether they would try again with Joanne Harper. The Watchmaker firmly ruled it out for two reasons: First, the police were very likely to have assigned surveillance around the Spring Street area following the failed assassination attempt. Second, and more importantly, making another attempt would raise suspicions that the Watchmaker had a personal motive in targeting this specific victim (namely, Gerald Duncan's revenge), whereas everything they were doing was meant to mislead the police into believing the Watchmaker was a madman killing at random.

=> Convergent/Logical Thinking, Fabrication

Suddenly, Gerald noticed a white vehicle with a rooftop light bar about a block away, apparently accelerating quickly. Gerald suspected it was tailing them and made a sharp turn to shake it off, using street information provided by Vincent.

Back at the operations center, Sellitto received a call reporting a confirmed sighting under the Emergency Vehicle Alert. A tan-brown Explorer, with two white males inside, had evaded a patrol car and was being followed. They were pursuing it toward a large garage by the river, in the Houston area near the West Side Highway.

Two patrol officers reported that the Explorer had been found abandoned on the second floor. There was no sign of

the two men previously seen inside. This was because the garage had too many entry and exit points, and the police hadn’t mobilized in time to seal them all. Patrol units later swept the surrounding streets, but there was still no trace of the Watchmaker or his accomplice.

Once again, the two criminals had slipped through the net—but at least this time, they had left behind the vehicle they had been using for some time, giving investigators a chance to examine it. Since the 118th Precinct case was at its peak, Ron volunteered to go to the vehicle site instead of Amelia.

Gerald and Vincent, each carrying a large canvas bag of their gear from the SUV, gradually made their way on foot through a park near the Hudson River. They were now two blocks away from the garage where the SUV had been abandoned. As the Watchmaker mulled over how the police had identified the vehicle, it suddenly dawned on him that in their panicked escape, they had left a few things behind. The book and ammunition were still in the car. But fortunately, there was nothing linking them by name, and no fingerprints would be found—Gerald had always insisted on wearing gloves at all times (which wouldn’t raise suspicion anyway, since it was winter). Vincent, terrified of disappointing his friend—or losing his chance at a “heart-to-heart”—had been equally meticulous, even wearing gloves when unwrapping snacks or candy in the car.

=> Leadership, Relationship Management, Social Cognition, Preparation

Still, Gerald said, every piece of evidence the police collected was like another part of a watch. Given enough of them, if you were smart, you could understand how the mechanism worked. You might even identify the maker. Gerald changed into a different outfit from the bag, put on a baseball cap, and looked completely unlike before. He tucked a box cutter into his sock—he planned to return to the garage to retrieve the forgotten items. The idea came from the fact that the garage was large and dimly lit; the police likely didn't have enough personnel to cover every corner. If luck was on his side, they might not have found the Explorer yet. Gerald also hinted that if the police *had* found the vehicle, he would decide based on the situation—possibly even eliminate them. Meanwhile, he instructed Vincent to return to the church—their base of operations—immediately.

=> Strategic Adaptability, Preparation

As always, Lincoln Rhyme required that only one person conduct the crime scene examination to avoid reliance on others and to ensure full focus on the evidence without being distracted by anyone else's actions. Ron was on the second floor of the garage alone, while Lon Sellitto and Bo Haumann remained at the command post below. Two crime scene technicians had set up lighting and shoved equipment cases into his hands before stepping away.

1. Initial Assessment and Scene Overview (As Directed by Lincoln):

- **Initial report:** Pulaski reported the location and basic condition of the SUV.

- **Lincoln demanded more detail:** Rhyme interrupted, asking for specifics rather than vague descriptions ("fairly deserted").

- **Surrounding vehicles:** Pulaski counted six other cars near the Explorer, identifying distances (closest: 3.5m, farthest: 7m).

- **Check of surrounding cars:** Rhyme asked if anyone might be hiding. Pulaski confirmed the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) had checked.

- **Hood temperature check:** Rhyme inquired whether the hoods were warm (suggesting recent arrival). Pulaski realized he hadn't checked, then used the back of his hand (to avoid leaving prints) to feel them. Result: all were cold → the cars had been parked for a long time, no recent witnesses.

- **Tire marks:** Rhyme asked if there were fresh tire marks heading toward the exit. Result: none, except for the Explorer's → suspects likely had no backup vehicle and left on foot.

2. General Observation of the Scene:

- **Rhyme instructed:** Pulaski was told to "observe the overall scene."

- **Parking condition:** Pulaski reported the SUV was parked "carelessly," straddling two lines. Rhyme inferred the suspect exited in a rush, knowing they

were being pursued.

- **Footprints:** Lincoln asked about clear footprints. Result: none, as the floor was dry.

- **Nearest exit:** Pulaski identified the staircase exit 7.5m away, already cleared by ERU.

- **Unusual details search:** Rhyme urged a deeper scan. Pulaski initially found nothing noteworthy.

- **Rhyme encouraged inference:** Told Pulaski to mention any impression, even if speculative.

- **Pulaski raised a question:** Why did the suspect park *there*—far from the exit—instead of driving closer or hiding the car in a more secluded spot? Lincoln called it a good question—possibly an act of panic. *(Preparation)*

3. Close Examination Around the SUV (Grid Search Method):

- **Rhyme's instruction:** Pulaski was told to use a grid search—examining from the entrance inward, around, beneath, and above the car.

- **Execution:** Pulaski spent 20 minutes pacing back and forth, inspecting the floor and ceiling near the SUV.

- **Odor check:** He sniffed the air. Result: only the usual garage smells (disinfectant, oil, exhaust)—nothing

unusual.

- **Report:** Pulaski reported no significant findings in the area around the vehicle.

4. Examination of the Explorer:

- **Vehicle identification:**
    - VIN and registration were checked.
    - Result: The vehicle belonged to a man currently imprisoned (Rikers Island). It had been impounded and later stolen by the Watchmaker from a police holding lot, awaiting auction.
    - The suspect was smart and meticulous—usually, it takes weeks to register such impounds with the DMV, and months before auction. The license plate was stolen from another tan Explorer parked at Newark Airport, a place where cars are often left unattended for long periods. *(Tactics, Knowledge, Concealment)*
- **Searching for Physical Evidence Inside:**
    - **Rhyme emphasized importance:** A stolen car can contain fingerprints and personal items. Evidence first.
    - **Odd noise:** Pulaski heard a metallic rattling sound, followed by a "tick" like a clock. He was uneasy but told himself it could be garage noise

or hot headlights.

- **Front seat:** Found crumbs (crackers, corn chips, potato chips, chocolate) and sticky residue (possibly soda).
- **Under back seat:**
  - Found a box of Remington .32 caliber bullets.
  - Upon opening (with Rhyme's silent approval): rounds were inside but 7 missing → Rhyme called this useful detail.
  - Found a book on interrogation, though it looked more like a torture manual. No store or library markings, clearly well-read. Rhyme praised Pulaski for describing without assuming it belonged to the suspect. *(Preparation)*
- **Vehicle floor and crevices:** Vacuumed under and between seats.
- **Dashboard compartment:** Empty.
- **Brake, clutch, accelerator pedals:** Samples scraped → yielded little.
- **Headrest:** Rhyme suggested checking for hair or perfume. Pulaski doubted (people often wear

hats) but did as told. Result: Found a gray hair.

- **Fingerprint Search:**
    - **Rhyme hopeful:** Wanted prints to ID the Watchmaker.
    - **Pulaski conducted:** Used Magna brush, powders, sprays, lights, goggles for 10 minutes.
    - **Result:** Absolutely NO fingerprints—visible, latent, partial, or smudged—anywhere inside or outside the vehicle.
    - **Rhyme was skeptical:** Found it implausible the suspect could have cleaned so thoroughly in such little time.
    - **Found fibers:** With a magnifier, Pulaski discovered beige cotton fibers (flesh tone) → from gloves. Rhyme concluded: suspect and accomplice were cautious, smart, and well-prepared (always wore gloves).
- **Exterior of Vehicle (Stains, Tire Marks):**
    - **Rhyme requested:** Check tire marks, protective mesh, side mirrors.
    - **Result:** Mostly melted snow and dirt.
    - **Action:** Collected soil/dirt samples.

6. Evidence Collection and Storage:

- **Sealing:** Hair and other samples sealed.
- **Photography and video:** Rhyme confirmed Pulaski knew standard documentation procedures.

7. Examination of Potential Escape Routes:

- **Rhyme directed:** Check all possible exits.
- **Pulaski performed:** Restarted grid pattern, moving toward the exit, checking floor and ceiling.
- **Recurring strange sounds:** Heard ticking-like sounds again (rattling, footsteps, dripping), adding to his unease.
- **Initial result:** Reported to Rhyme: “Nothing so far.”
- **Third ticking sound, then loud crash—metallic noise.** Suddenly, the radio link between Lincoln and Ron cut out, followed by Ron’s voice: “10-13”—the most urgent emergency code a police officer can use, signaling immediate danger. Sellitto and Haumann rushed upstairs.

Turns out, it was just a homeless man wielding a metal rod who tried to attack Ron while he was examining the staircase—where the Watchmaker likely escaped. Fortunately, Ron had heard the noise behind him, turned in time, threw a trash can, and subdued the attacker.

(Preparation)

Their new car was a **Buick LeSabre**—Gerald had **killed its owner and stolen the vehicle** in the Lower East Side. Duncan also pointed toward the street corner where he had earlier **stabbed a student to death**. The fact that the police still hadn't shown up meant that the **Dumpster containing the body had likely been picked up by sanitation workers unknowingly**, and was probably now halfway to the sea on a barge.

Gerald recounted that he **hadn’t been able to get close to the Explorer**. There weren’t many cops, but there was **a homeless man making noise**, and then he heard someone scream. The police began rushing in, so he had to flee.

The two men then talked about life, and the **Watchmaker once again demonstrated deep knowledge** through a story about the **first clock that worked at sea** (see Card 2). Gerald used the story to **encourage Vincent**, saying the recent setbacks were just minor delays in their overall progress. It was nothing compared to their larger plan—just like how **John Harrison struggled for 26 years** to have his invention officially recognized. *(Knowledge, Preparation, Leadership, Extreme Endurance)*

Continuing Forensic Analysis of Evidence Found at the Vehicle Scene:

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1. Ammo Box Analysis (.32 ACP):

- **Evidence:** A box of Remington .32 ACP rounds, **missing 7 bullets**.

- **Initial Observations:**

    - The .32 ACP caliber is **less common** than others like .22 or 9mm (.380). *(Preparation)*

    - Not highly lethal but still dangerous—commonly nicknamed a **"woman's gun."**

    - Has a **limited but present market**.

- **Analysis & Inference:**

    - **Weapon correlation:** 7 missing rounds suggest a weapon with a **7-round magazine**. Rhyme suspects an **Autauga Mk II**, but **Beretta Tomcat, NAA Guardian, Kel-Tec P-32 (LWS-32)** are also plausible. No definitive ID yet.

    - **Nature of evidence:** This is **circumstantial**; it implies possible ownership of a .32 caliber weapon. If a suspect is later found with such a gun, this box supports the link.

    - **Traceability:** Cooper confirmed **tracking ammo sales is ineffective**.

    - **Bullet details:** Each round weighs **71 grains**, capable of **causing serious injury at close**

range.

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2. Book Analysis ("Advanced Interrogation Techniques"):

- **Evidence:** A book on torture/interrogation techniques.
- **Initial Observations:**
    - Published by a **small company in Utah**.
    - Cheap quality: paper, print, and writing.
    - Anonymous author, claiming to be a **former Special Forces soldier**.
    - Describes brutal methods potentially leading to death (drowning, strangling, cold exposure, wrist cutting...).
- **Forensic Analysis (Rhyme & Cooper):**
    - **Physical trace:** Cooper dusted every page over clean paper — **no fibers, hairs, soil**.
    - **Fingerprint: None found** — confirms **gloves were used**.
    - **Source tracing:**

    - Not sold via **major retailers or websites** due to content.
    - Distributed through **unofficial channels**: online auction sites, **far-right/militia organizations** (Rhyme links this to domestic terror cases).
    - **Publisher refused to cooperate** without a court order (which would take weeks), indifferent to the book's use as a murder manual.
- **Conclusion:** The book reveals **intent and methods** but offers **no direct forensic trace** or quick sourcing information.

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3. Debris Analysis (Grille, Tires, Mirrors):

- **Evidence:** Rock dust, leaves, partially-burned charcoal.
- **Analysis:** Nothing specific; **not traceable to a unique location**, just general environment. **Low value**.

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4. Sand Analysis (from SUV Back Seat):

- **Evidence:** Sand from the rear seat.

- **Analysis:** Matches the **same type of sand** used by the suspect to **erase footprints at the Cedar Street alley** crime scene.

- **Conclusion:** Creates a **direct link** between the **Explorer vehicle** and the **previous crime scene**, reinforcing that it was indeed used by the Watchmaker.

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5. Food Crumbs Analysis:

- **Evidence:** Traces of **fried corn, potato chips, pretzels, chocolate candy, peanut butter cookie bits, and sugary soda** (not diet).

- **Analysis:** Cannot identify suspect directly.

- **Conclusion:** Could help **corroborate identity** if suspect is found and matches food habits or items at their home. Adds another **layer of connection** to the vehicle.

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6. Cotton Fiber Analysis:

- **Evidence:** Short cotton fibers, **flesh-colored**.

- **Analysis:** Matches **common work gloves** sold widely.

- **Conclusion:** Supports Pulaski’s assumption. Shows the suspect **cleaned the car** after stealing it and **always wore gloves** inside. Highlights **caution and intelligence** of the Watchmaker. **No unique leads.**

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7. Hair Strand Analysis:

- **Evidence:** A **23cm long hair**, black turning gray, found on the headrest.

- **Analysis:**

    - Long, black/gray. Importantly, **no root**, so **no DNA test** possible.

    - **Does not match** the Watchmaker sketch (who has short hair).

    - **Alternative theories:**

        - Wig? No adhesive found.

        - Accomplice’s hair? Possible.

    - Rhyme’s inference: Most likely from **a previous occupant**, probably a **middle-aged woman**.

- **Conclusion:** Likely **not from the Watchmaker or current accomplice**, but recorded for completeness.

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8. Shoeprint Analysis:

- **Evidence:** One clear footprint and 5-6 fainter ones, flat sole, size 13 (US), **leading to the emergency exit**, made in water.

- **Analysis:**

    - **Behavior:** Wide spacing, only some show full heel contact ⇒ **indicates running**.

    - **Identification:** Flat sole, **no unique pattern** ⇒ **brand unknown**.

    - **Person:** Normal wear pattern, no deformities. **Large foot size**, but Rhyme notes it **doesn’t prove body size**.

- **Conclusion:** Confirms someone **ran from the scene**, gives **foot size** and direction, but **not enough to ID** shoe or wearer.

Summary of Forensic Process:

- Although many items were collected and **analyzed thoroughly**, most only provide **indirect support** or

reinforce existing theories.

- There's a **lack of high-certainty evidence** like full fingerprints or DNA from a root.

- The items **show the suspect's intelligence, caution, and brutality** (glove use, car cleanup, torture manual, ammo choice).

- A few key **links have been formed** (sand from old crime scenes, ammo hunting weapon type).

- Several **mysteries remain** (origin of the book, true source of the hair strand).

Lincoln was clearly displeased.

Ron could tell that despite all the information and resources at their disposal, **they still knew frustratingly little about the true identity** of their perpetrator.

The only certainty was this:

They were up against an adversary who was **extremely intelligent, meticulous, and dangerous**.

=> Concealment, Knowledge, Planning

Some little context

After a long, grueling day with Case 118, Amelia Sachs returned to the Watchmaker Task Force and reported a series of disturbing developments.

She recounted how a neighbor had called her, saying a man named *"Joey Treffano"*—a former colleague now deceased—had shown up at her building, asking questions about her and looking around. Sachs firmly stated this was an imposter. She also reminded the team of how she and Ron had been followed recently, and earlier that day, someone had broken into her car at the Spring Street crime scene to search her handbag.

Kathryn Dance then recalled something suspicious. Lincoln Rhyme immediately gathered everyone—Sachs, Sellitto, Cooper, Ron, and Baker.

Sachs shared her belief that they were being surveilled and added (falsely) that Dance had also seen someone following her—**a trap meant to bait Baker**.

She asked each person if they'd noticed anything unusual:

- **Pulaski** hadn't seen the black Mercedes again.
- **Cooper** hadn't been paying attention.
- **Sellitto** wasn't sure.

Then Sachs asked **Baker** if he had felt like he was being followed while in **Brooklyn**.

Baker denied ever being in Brooklyn.

Sachs turned to Dance, who gave a confirming nod—**a signal that something was wrong**.

Sachs drew her weapon and ordered Baker to put his hands up. Sellitto stepped in quietly behind him.

Rhyme explained what Dance had actually noticed earlier:
When Baker had talked about leaving the Spring Street scene, his **body language—crossed legs, averted eyes—indicated deception**. That had stood out to Dance.

To confirm her suspicion, Sachs had phoned **Officer Nancy Simpson**, who was also at the scene. Simpson said Baker had left shortly after Sachs, contradicting his earlier claim that he stayed nearly an hour. She also thought Baker had gone to Brooklyn afterward, prompting Sachs's question to trip him up.

Sachs then **confronted Baker directly**, accusing him of:

- Breaking into her car
- Rifling through her bag
- Impersonating Joey Treffano to question her neighbor

Baker **admitted to impersonating Treffano**, but claimed it was a misunderstanding.
He denied owning the black Mercedes—his police salary wouldn't allow it. Cooper confirmed the car wasn't registered to Baker.

Then came the full story.

Baker explained that after persuading his superiors to let Rhyme and Sachs work the case, he'd received an **email from a high-ranking inspector** (Pulaski later confirmed the email existed in Baker's briefcase). The message expressed concern over Sachs's **past connection to a**

disgraced NYPD detective, *Nicholas "Nick" Carelli*—her former lover—who had just been released from prison.

Sachs being seen with Carelli could cause "inconveniences," the email warned. Though she wasn't accused of wrongdoing, the brass was wary.

Baker had been ordered to discreetly monitor Sachs—track where she went, who she met, and whether she had any contact with Carelli or his associates.

He claimed he did it **to protect her**.
Believing that the higher-ups might use the connection to remove Sachs from the case, Baker chose to investigate quietly. He hoped to **clear her** and keep her involved by reporting that she hadn't done anything wrong. He even presented **written reports** (Pulaski confirmed them in his case file) documenting his surveillance and his conclusion that Sachs was clean.

Baker emphasized that the order had required secrecy, and apologized for the disruption.
He insisted it was the only way he could think to help.

Sachs's **anger faded**.
In its place was **hurt**—and maybe even **shame**. She seemed to feel that her past was once again causing trouble, this time for her team.

Rhyme, watching silently, could see the pain in her expression.

No one pursued the matter further.
They let it go.

And just like that, the team returned to the job at hand:
Catching the Watchmaker.

1.4) The fourth murder

The Clockmaker's fourth target is Lucy Richter — a U.S. Army sergeant currently on leave and staying at her childhood home in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, as she prepares for redeployment. The killers have been tailing her from the house, observing her as she dines at a restaurant, where Gerald talks to Vincent about the historical and philosophical meanings of timekeeping (see Card 2). (Knowledge, Preparation)

The next torture method Gerald plans to use (despite having lost the book, he claims to have memorized it) is the **Water Platform technique**. The victim is suspended upside down by a rope around the waist, with their mouth taped shut and water poured into their nose. The process can be prolonged indefinitely by occasionally allowing the victim to catch a little air. Gerald intends to keep Lucy alive for around 30 minutes to maximize her suffering.

However, they **cannot abduct her tonight**, because Lucy's husband — also a soldier — works irregular hours and could return home at any moment.

The next morning, a young officer from the Coast Guard delivered a suit jacket found floating in New York Harbor,

size 44. According to the captain’s deduction, it likely belonged to the missing victim — both sleeves were soaked with blood, and the cuffs had been slashed. The jacket was from Macy’s and bore no identifying marks or evidence that could link it to its owner. The blood on it was type AB, consistent with bloodstains found on the pier. *(Preparation)*

Lincoln contacted NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory to inquire about ASTER thermal radiation detection. The results were disappointing. As Sellitto pointed out, there were hundreds — possibly thousands — of buildings showing elevated heat signatures, and the system couldn't distinguish between rooftops being tarred, active construction sites, steam emissions from Con Edison, or simply buildings with lots of chimneys. Lincoln asked an employee to report immediately if there were any attacks or break-ins near a building with freshly tarred roofing. This was almost a desperate shot in the dark.

Night fell again, and it was Thursday. Lucy Richter was home alone. Because the building housed many tenants, someone could easily notice a man picking a lock. So, **the Clockmaker climbed** onto the roof of the five-story building, located Lucy’s apartment, and descended the fire escape into her bedroom. But after five minutes without a word from Gerald, **Vincent grew impatient and radioed him**. Turned out Lucy had been on the phone the whole time, making it impossible to act — any sudden hang-up followed by a scream might alarm the person on the other end, who could call the police. That would leave them no time to set up the torture, clean up, or “have their little talk.”

After waiting a while longer and Lucy still not finishing the call, Gerald voiced what Vincent was thinking: they couldn't wait anymore. **Gerald would try to lure her away from the phone**, intending to climb back to the roof, descend into the hallway, and pretend to be a patrol officer warning residents about the Clockmaker. *(Deception, Preparation)*

Police were now present at Lucy Richter's apartment. She was, in fact, very lucky. About half an hour earlier, a passerby happened to see a man climbing up her fire escape and called 911. The Clockmaker apparently glanced down, realized he'd been spotted, and fled.

Amelia arrived at the scene of the would-be next victim and began collecting evidence.

I. Forensic Investigation Process by Lincoln Rhyme and Amelia Sachs:

Initial Info Gathering & Scene Assessment (by Sachs, reporting to Rhyme):

- **Witness/Victim**: Lucy was shown a composite sketch of the suspect → No recognition. She gave a preliminary statement describing the incident.

- **Entry Method**:

    - **Initial theory**: Front door lockpicked, based on consistent MO.

    - **Updated theory**: Based on new witness info, Sachs deduced the intruder climbed to the roof →

down fire escape → entered via bedroom window, then escaped the same way.

- **Actions of the Perp at the Scene**:
    - Placed a clock in the bathroom.
    - Entered the bedroom (adjacent to fire escape).
    - Waited for the victim.
    - Left without completing the act (due to being spotted).
- **Extended Search**:
    - Searched for other witnesses nearby → no results.
    - Sachs raised the possibility that the perp might now be using public transport due to the lost SUV.
- **Info Analysis & Investigative Strategy (by Rhyme)**:
    - **MO Analysis**: Rhyme dismissed the subway theory, emphasizing the criminal's exceptional consistency, especially in transportation choice — always a car. A switch would be unlikely.
    - **Examination Instructions**: Directed Sachs to examine key areas — bedroom, fire escape,

bathroom, routes, rooftop.

Detailed Scene Processing (by Sachs):

- Checked all areas per Rhyme's instruction.
- Searched for physical evidence (fingerprints, fibers, DNA, footprints, etc.).
- Result: No useful evidence found. Sachs noted the rooftop had no signs of fresh tar → likely no trace left recently.
- **Inference**: The perp had high forensic awareness, possibly wore protective gear (like a Tyvek suit) to avoid leaving traces.

Strategic Pivot:

- **Reevaluate the Victim**: Sachs reported Lucy was shaken and unfocused. Rhyme realized there might be untapped crucial info locked in her trauma.
- He decided to send in **Kathryn Dance**, an expert in kinesics and psychological interviewing.

II. Psychological Interview by Kathryn Dance:

Initial Observation & Psychological Assessment:

- **Setting**: Lucy’s living room.

- Dance noticed Lucy appeared outwardly calm but internally troubled by **something beyond the attack**. She lacked classic post-trauma stress signals.

- **Kinesic Analysis**: Crossed arms and legs were noted — not lies, but **psychological defense barriers** against emotional triggers.

Standard Direct Questions:

- Asked Lucy to recount the incident.

- Lucy described returning from the gym, finding the clock, being afraid (linked to her Iraq trauma), sensing a breeze, finding the window open, then police arrival.

- Asked about any unusual details — she said no.

- Asked about connections to other victims or enemies — she denied.

- **Outcome**: This method yielded no useful info. Dance believed subconscious blocks were at play.

Strategic Shift – Building Rapport & Distraction:

- **Changed tone**: Put away notes, shifted to informal conversation.

- **Unrelated topics**: Asked about her military service, leave, upcoming commendation ceremony, party

planning, Italian food.

- **Goals**:
    - Lower Lucy’s defenses.
    - Build trust.
    - Observe reactions — Lucy seemed uncomfortable talking about the ceremony (possibly public speaking anxiety).
    - Gather background info and induce distraction.

Flooding Technique:

- After easing into unrelated topics, Dance suddenly circled back:
  “Back to the man who visited you... did you notice any other unusual detail?”

- **Principle**: Overload the conscious brain with emotion/info, weakening the psychological barrier and letting repressed memory surface.

- **Success sign**: Lucy initially gave her usual “Not really,” then squinted and said, *“Wait... there is one thing.”*

Breakthrough & New Information:

- **Patience**: Dance stayed silent to let Lucy work through the memory.

- **New detail**: Lucy recalled that after hearing the ticking, she couldn’t see her vanity because the closet door was open. Earlier that day, when leaving, she had looked at the vanity — the closet was not obstructing it.

- **Inference**: The door had been moved → **the intruder might have hidden in or behind the closet door after placing the clock**. *(Preparation)*

Conclusion & Action:

- Dance confirmed the importance of this new detail. It was relayed to Sachs.

- Sachs immediately understood: this was a contact point (the closet), worth reexamining closely for trace evidence.

III. Targeted Search of the Closet Area *(Preparation)*

Closet Details (by Sachs):

- Width: 193 cm.

- Contents: Full of clothes, split in half; shoes on floor (4 pairs his, 10 hers).

Analysis of Perp's Position (by Rhyme):

- Rhyme asked: *"Did he lie down on the closet floor?"* — to deduce what surfaces he contacted.
- Sachs replied, *"No, too many boxes."*
- Evidence of disturbance: Clothes disheveled, boxes moved.
- Key find: **A piece of roofing tar** — supports roof/fire escape entry, links outside actions to inside presence.

IV. Identifying Contact Point & Optimizing Evidence Collection:

Critical Question (Rhyme):
"Which clothes did he hide among?"
Because fabric type affects evidence retention.

Sachs's Answer:
"A suit. And Lucy's uniform."

Golden Opportunity (Rhyme):
Uniforms are ideal for trace evidence — buttons, medals, ribbons can trap fibers, hairs, etc.

Precise Contact Point (Rhyme):
Was it the front or back of the uniform?
Answer: **Front** — "Perfect" — better chance of evidence transfer from direct body contact.

V. Detailed Forensic Recovery:

Results:

- Two hairs: Collected.
- Several fibers: Collected.

On-site Elimination (by Sachs):

- Compared hair to Lucy’s — no match.
- Checked husband’s brush — very likely his hair → hairs ruled out.
- Fibers became the most important clue.

Details of Fibers:

- Wool-like, light-colored.
- Found snagged on the front pocket button of the uniform → Shoulder height → matches perp's estimated height.
- **Initial theory**: Maybe from a sweater — but **more likely a bomber-style flight jacket** with a wool collar.

Confirmation:

- NYPD’s database identified the fibers as consistent with bomber jackets worn by WWII pilots.

- Sachs checked the clock again — not a bomb, identical to previous ones. Only trace: a new stain identified as **methyl alcohol**, a cleaning/disinfecting agent.

Escape Route Analysis:
Sachs examined the probable exit path but found nothing useful — unsurprising given the perp's high counter-forensics awareness.

Sitting in the Buick, Gerald explained to Vincent what had happened. When he began climbing up to the rooftop—intending to get inside the building and knock on Lucy's apartment door to make her hang up—he glanced down and spotted a man in the alley watching him. That man pulled a cellphone from his jacket pocket and shouted for Gerald to stop. The killer hurried up to the roof, ran west several buildings, and slid down into another alley. Then he rushed to the car.

Two consecutive failures—their luck was simply rotten. Gerald's deeper-than-usual silence and brooding made Vincent worry his friend might be abandoning the plan. He didn't want to lose their "heart-to-hearts"—and, well, the only true friend he'd ever had. As if reading his mind, Gerald said that although the mishap hadn't significantly affected the grand plan, it was undeniable that he hadn't yet given Vincent—the one who had stood by his side all this time—the reward he deserved. And the Watchmaker would make it up to his friend. The next target, who was originally meant to be burned alive with alcohol, would be altered slightly. (Planning, Preparation)

Kathryn Dance was walking around Greenwich Village, near Lucy's residence, asking every person she met fairly

generic questions about whether they had seen anyone suspicious. She also showed them a composite sketch of the Watchmaker and left her phone number. She couldn't run a full kinesic interview with every person, and this method could only hope for minor results.

On the sidewalk one block from Lucy's apartment, Dance stopped a man pushing a cart loaded with groceries. He glanced at the composite sketch of the Watchmaker's face and said he might've seen someone like that but didn't pay much attention. Dance immediately recognized the chronic condition of a witness—fear of involvement—so she persuaded him to enter a cafe across the street, telling him the matter was important.

That man was actually Vincent Reynolds disguised as Tony Parsons, an "unwilling" witness. And Dance herself was the consolation prize Gerald had promised him. There were two female officers working the case, but the redhead (Amelia) was rarely alone during surveillance. Meanwhile, the other one (Dance) had started going out on her own in plain clothes to look for witnesses.

Gerald and Vincent had entered a discount store, bought a shopping cart, a brand-new short winter coat, fifty dollars' worth of soap, snacks, soda, and loaded it all into the cart. Someone pushing a food cart around like that didn't raise suspicion. The plan was for Vincent to wander around Greenwich Village with the cart until he either found the second female officer or she found him. Then, he would lead her to an abandoned building a block away from Lucy Richter's apartment. Vincent would take her to the basement and enjoy her for as long as he wanted, while Gerald handled the next victim on the list. If Vincent

couldn’t finish off Dance after his “talk,” he could just leave her in the basement—Gerald would return after his job was done. Eliminating Dance had a double purpose: satisfying Vincent’s “hunger” and slowing down the police investigation.

The Watchmaker also coached Vincent on how to act during the conversation: “Act reluctant. Pretend you know something about me but don’t want to say. Hesitate. That’s how a real witness behaves,” along with some vague details the police might already know about Gerald, gradually opening up before finally admitting he knew which direction the suspicious man had gone. The final step was leading Dance to the planned abandoned building.
(Tactics, Leadership, Deception, Short Plan, Adaptability, Preparation)

But their plan failed. It turned out Dance had sensed Vincent had ulterior motives beyond just chatting. His act was no match for a kinesics expert. While paying the bill to leave the cafe, Dance discreetly pulled out her phone and redialed a detective from NYPD she had been working with. She whispered her conclusion and asked him to dispatch officers. She didn’t hang up—she hid the phone under her notebook. That’s why Dance had been reading out street names that Vincent led her through, pretending to record the route. In reality, she was giving directions to the officers.

And just before Dance made her call, they’d received a tip identifying the driver from the hit-and-run who had returned to the area—this time pushing a cart full of

groceries. The man was a large, white male.
(Preparation)

The police quickly identified Vincent Reynolds and gathered background information.
He was 28 years old, a document processor living in New Jersey, working for several temporary agencies—a typical wage worker.

Vincent had worked the night of Monday, when the murders at the pier and Cedar Street occurred, but had not shown up for work since then.
Joanne Harper confirmed that Vincent resembled the man who had watched her through the window. However, she couldn't be certain due to the glare of the sunlight, the dusty glass, and the sunglasses he had worn.

Although they suspected Vincent was the Watchmaker's accomplice, the evidence linking him to the two crime scenes was very thin.
There were footprints in the garage where the SUV had been abandoned, and Vincent's shoes were size 13—matching the prints—but they lacked any unique tread patterns to definitively tie him to them.
Among the items—believed by Rhyme to have been bought as a cover to approach Dance or another investigator—were potato chips, biscuits, and other snack foods. But the bags hadn't been opened, and a search of his clothing revealed no crumbs that could match those found in the SUV.

They held Vincent on charges of possessing an illegal knife and interfering with a police investigation.
Baker wanted to use physical coercion to force a confession about the Watchmaker, especially since the

lieutenant himself was under pressure from City Hall to solve the case quickly.
But Dance opposed that, saying torture was notoriously unreliable for extracting accurate information, and she requested a private interrogation with Vincent.

Using a series of professional techniques—psychological pressure and negotiation—Dance succeeded in persuading Vincent to reveal everything he knew about the Watchmaker.
Following the interrogation, the police obtained the following information:

- The Watchmaker's real name was **Gerald Duncan**, a businessman from the Midwest.

- They had been staying in a **church near the Hudson River**, in Manhattan.
  → The specific address was confirmed—the church had indeed been closed for some time.

- According to their latest plan, **Gerald was to meet Vincent in one hour** at the **abandoned building** near the alley where Vincent had nearly raped and killed Dance.
  → **Sellitto** ordered undercover police units to stake out the area near that building.

- Gerald carried a **.32 caliber pistol**.
  → This matched the type of bullet found in the SUV.

- Their current vehicle was a **dark blue Buick with no license plates**. Gerald had likely murdered the owner to steal the car.

→ **Cooper** submitted a request for reports of any recent carjackings, murders, or missing persons cases.

- Gerald had **killed a random witness**, a college student on the corner of Tenth Avenue near the church, and dumped the body in a **Dumpster**.
  → Cooper called the precinct covering that area to check on any such incident.

- Gerald **removed the SIM and battery** from his phone whenever they weren't actively using it. He used **prepaid phones**, bought new numbers every few days, paid in cash, and discarded the old ones.
  → Even the service providers had no way to trace them if the phones were powered off.

- Regarding the **next victim**, Vincent only knew that the woman would be **burned alive**, but he didn't know her identity or the location—Gerald hadn't told him.

The Bo Haumann's Quick Response Unit was on its way. They would reach the church in a few minutes. Baker, Amelia, and Ron also quickly departed to participate in tactical operations. Lincoln, Dance, and Sellitto remained in the lab, trying to gather more information on Gerald Duncan through Vincent, while Cooper checked databases for any relevant details on the suspect.

Gerald collected wall clocks and wristwatches as a hobby. He wasn't running a shop or anything like that. The Watchmaker, in some way, had to be part of a community, since the skills and knowledge he possessed, as described

by Vincent, were not things an ordinary person could easily know. Lincoln instructed Cooper to research professional horologist organizations and even clock collecting groups. (Misdirection)

Gerald didn't use a foreign accent, so Vincent guessed he was American, narrowing down the possibilities but still encountering many organizations. Sellitto requested that Cooper email every association asking for information on Gerald Duncan.

Motive: Vincent shared the story of Gerald and his wife a few years ago. Lincoln instructed them to check hospital intake records for anyone named Duncan from 18 to 36 months ago. It was useless, as Vincent recalled that last year, Gerald had broken into a hospital and stolen his wife's records, along with the police report. He had bribed a secretary and planned meticulously since then.

The victim at the first crime scene was confirmed by Vincent to be dead as Gerald had said, though Vincent hadn't directly participated in the first two killings. The man's name was Walter something.

Throughout their days together, Gerald appeared interested in only one thing: Time, and he was deeply knowledgeable about the subject. (Preparation)

Cooper received several responses from horologist associations, but none mentioned anyone named Gerald Duncan. Interpol's reply also provided no relevant information, nor did the Violent Offender Apprehension Program.

Meanwhile, the tactical team, including Haumann, Amelia, Baker, Ron, and a few other officers, successfully infiltrated the church. Luckily, there were no traps like mines waiting for them. Inside, Amelia found five familiar clocks, meaning Gerald was on his way to the fifth victim, as Vincent had said.

I. Crime Scene Examination – Vincent Reynolds' Room (Performed by Sachs):

Objective: Collect evidence related to Reynolds, understand more about his recent activities, and search for clues about the victim or Watchmaker's plans.

Crime Scene Characteristics:

- Messy, chaotic.
- Unsanitary.

Evidence Collected:

- **Lifestyle Habits:** Dozens of snack samples, soda cans—showing his eating habits, potentially useful in tracking stores he frequents.
- **Violent/Sexual Tendencies:** Condoms, duct tape, rags—confirming his role as an accomplice in the attacks, particularly the binding/gagging of victims. This matches his testimony.

II. Crime Scene Examination – Gerald Duncan's Room (Watchmaker's Room) (Performed by Sachs):

Objective: Search for direct evidence about the Watchmaker, his real identity, his plans, clues about the next victim, and evidence related to previous crimes.

Crime Scene Characteristics:

- Completely opposite to Reynolds' room: neat, almost frighteningly so.

- Exaggerated orderliness: bed sheets pressed flat as in the military, clothes hanging symmetrically, items placed in pairs.

- **Implication:** This extreme neatness suggests an obsession with control, order, and meticulousness—reflecting his method of committing crimes and erasing evidence. It creates a cold, impersonal atmosphere.

Evidence Collected:

- **Hobby-Related Items:** Clothes (no labels—erased origin), time-related magazines (no subscriber information—hidden identity), watchmaker tools—reinforcing the "Watchmaker" image. (Fabrication)

- **Crime-Related Items:**

    - Tools: Including wire cutters that match those used to cut the fence at the first crime scene (Hudson pier), directly linking Gerald to the crime.

- Duct tape roll: Likely used to gag victims at the alley (Joanne Harper) and at the pier (victim with an unknown name). Linking Duncan to multiple crime scenes.

- Old broom covered in dirt and fine sand with little salt crystals: Sachs speculated it was used to clean Crime Scene 2 (Adams case), showing an attempt to erase traces at the previous scene.

- Fur lint roller: Used to remove microevidence (fur) from his clothes or victims.

- One-gallon bottle of methyl alcohol (methanol): Crucial evidence, confirming his ownership and use of this substance, linking it to the stains found on Lucy’s clock and suggesting the method for the next attack. (Preparation)

- Shoes with faint green paint stains: Potential evidence linking him to a specific location with this paint. (Preparation)

- **Travel/Movement Clues:**

    - Museum tour programs (Boston and Tampa): Carefully hidden under the trash bin, indicating his attempt to conceal his travel history, contradicting Vincent’s statement that Gerald was from the Midwest. (Preparation)

        - A small plastic box containing coins, Bic pens (non-identifiable), garage center receipt, Upper West Side pharmacy receipt, Upper East Side restaurant matchbook (missing three matches)—important geographical clues showing places he visited recently in New York.

    - **Evidence of Efforts to Avoid Detection:**

        - No fingerprints on items (receipts, matches, pens, box, etc.), showing extreme caution.

        - Cotton thread matching the fibers found in the stolen Explorer vehicle, linking him to the car in the case.

        - Plastic bag containing gloves: No labels, no receipt, no fingerprints on the bag, showing thorough preparation to avoid leaving traces.

        - Clothes without labels.

III. Crime Scene Examination – Common Area (Lower Floor) (Performed by Ron Pulaski):

Main Discovery: White powder covering the toilet seat in the bathroom. (Preparation)

Initial Hypothesis (Pulaski): Powder from a fire extinguisher, based on the discovery of an empty extinguisher container nearby (no store labels, another attempt to erase origin).

Mystery: No signs of a fire in the bathroom—use of the

fire extinguisher seemed abnormal and had another, intentional purpose.

Confirmation from Vincent: Gerald had recently bought the fire extinguisher, but Vincent didn't know why he used it.

IV. Initial Analysis & Summary (Rhyme directs from afar):

- **Geographic Information Processing (Boston/Tampa):**
    - Questions about Vincent's reliability (he might be mistaken, or Gerald might have given incorrect information).
    - Requested a check on motorcycle databases, animal registration systems, and vital records in these cities for the name Gerald Duncan—no matching entries found. This reinforced the hypothesis that Gerald used an alias or Vincent's information was inaccurate.
    - **Key Clue Analysis (Fire Extinguisher & Methanol):**
        - **Linking:** Rhyme connected Duncan's purchase of the fire extinguisher to the methanol (found on Lucy's clock and in the gallon bottle in Duncan's room).
        - **Murder Method Theory:** Rhyme suggested a shocking theory: Duncan wasn't using the fire extinguisher to put out fires but to

create a fire-starting device. He would use methanol as a catalyst to burn the next victim.

- **Why the Fire Extinguisher?** Rhyme explained the effectiveness of this disguise: fire extinguishers are common, ubiquitous, and often overlooked, making it the perfect cover to hide a fire-starting/explosive device.

(Knowledge, Concealment, Tactics, Planning)

1.5) The fifth murder

The fifth target of the Watchmaker is Sarah Staton, an estimator at a large floor design and interior company. The Watchmaker took advantage of the fact that she went out for a coffee break, dressed in a work uniform, and entered the office. He then hid the fire extinguisher, which was actually a molotov bomb. (Tactics, Preparation)

Second Layer

The entire case involving the Watchmaker was essentially a cover-up, and the ultimate goal was to eliminate Amelia Sachs in a way that seemed reasonable. It turned out that the mastermind behind the extortion ring at Precinct 118 was none other than Dennis Baker. These corrupt cops targeted the children of wealthy businessmen who frequented the Manhattan clubs, secretly planting drugs on them. Baker would negotiate with the parents, promising to make the arrest report disappear in exchange for a six-figure sum. If they didn’t pay, their children would end

up in prison. Occasionally, he would secretly plant drugs on the businessmen themselves.

However, the scheme wasn't just about getting money. The criminals also made sure the victims lost these sums in shady business dealings or rigged poker games in Vegas or Atlantic City—just like they did with Ben Creeley, providing a plausible explanation for the sudden loss of $200,000 to $300,000.

But then, Baker made a mistake. He got lazy. Finding suitable targets for the scheme became harder, and he decided to revisit the old victims for a second round of extortion. Some agreed to pay. Others, like Sarkowski and Creeley, refused and even threatened to go public. In the end, Baker arranged for these two to be silenced permanently, staging their deaths as a robbery and a suicide. This was the origin of the Precinct 118 case.

Everything ran smoothly for a while due to the influence of the criminals, who managed to handle and cover up all the related files—until a month ago, when Sergeant Amelia Sachs appeared. She noticed irregularities and refused to accept that Benjamin Creeley had committed suicide. She started investigating, and nothing could stop her. The criminals had no choice but to kill her. If Sachs died or was permanently disabled, Baker was certain no one else would pursue the cases with the same determination.

The problem, of course, was that if she died, the legendary Lincoln Rhyme would immediately deduce that her death was connected to the Precinct 118 case, and nothing would stop him and Sellitto from hunting down the murderers. Therefore, Baker needed to ensure that Sachs's death seemed unrelated to the 118 precinct.

Baker reached out to some savvy figures from the organized crime world he knew and quickly got word from Gerald Duncan, a professional hitman with the ability to stage crime scenes and create fake motives that would shift suspicion away from the ones who hired him. (Misdirection, Logical Manipulation, Prediction, Creativity, Holistic Thinking)

The entire strategy revolves around the concept of **Motive**. Once the motive is eliminated, the suspicion vanishes. After agreeing on the payment, Gerald Duncan began putting his plan into action. Duncan sought out a failure in life whom he could use to provide the police with information about the Watchmaker. Two weeks ago, Vincent Reynolds became the perfect target—he took in Duncan's fabricated story that he became insane after his wife’s death and went on a spree to kill indifferent citizens in revenge.

Then, just the day before, Duncan set his **Stage 1 - Watchmaker Plan** into motion: he killed the first two victims, randomly selected – one he kidnapped from West Street in Greenwich Village and murdered on the pier, and the other he killed a few hours later in an alley.

As for Baker, Duncan said he needed to ensure that Sachs would be assigned to investigate the case—that was the real reason he wanted Lincoln Rhyme involved in the Watchmaker case. This was masked as a typical desire to add a high-profile case to his record. The plots for the 3rd and 4th murders, which ultimately failed, were irrelevant because the Watchmaker was still considered a terrifying killer that needed to be stopped immediately. This meant the victims had no connection, as Duncan had claimed to

Vincent, and everything was designed to create an image of a dangerous murderer.

The "gift" Duncan had prepared for Vincent and Kathryn Dance was, in fact, a trap for Vincent himself—a way to discard a pawn that had lost its value while simultaneously setting up another part of his larger plan. Duncan’s decision to send Vincent to attack was to make the police believe the Watchmaker was even willing to kill officers, while also being the one to make the anonymous call reporting that the Watchmaker's accomplice was pushing a cart around Greenwich Village, ensuring Vincent's capture (though Dance had already figured out Vincent's true nature before this event, which didn’t change the outcome).

The significance of Vincent’s arrest was that he would reveal information about the Watchmaker (Duncan knew a character like Vincent would never withstand police pressure), information that Duncan had controlled and provided to him throughout their "cooperation." The process of providing this information made the police trust that the Watchmaker was a vengeful madman, which also fit the criminal profile Duncan had intentionally shaped—motives that were hard to accept rationally, obsessed with torturing victims in the most painful ways, and collaborating with someone as depraved as him, making him seem like a personal vendetta-driven killer rather than a hired assassin, as it truly was.

Now it was time for the final step: The Watchmaker would kill another officer, Amelia Sachs. Her death would be framed as the work of a revenge-driven killer, unrelated to the investigation into Precinct 118.

And in reality, Baker had indeed been watching Amelia and Ron for several days to monitor their progress on the 118 case. Duncan had anticipated that Sachs would suspect everyone except those she personally knew. He explained that when someone suspects you, you must give them another reason—a harmless excuse—to justify your behavior. Simply confess to a lesser crime, show remorse, and people will be satisfied, removing you from the suspect list.

As Duncan instructed, Baker started asking officers about Sachs. He heard rumors that she had once been involved with a corrupt cop (Nick), so he raised concerns about her association with Nick. Then, he got the email address of someone from the Big Building, using it as an excuse to secretly follow her. She wasn’t happy about it, but didn’t suspect that he was up to even more sinister deeds.

(Persuasion, Hot Reading, Logical/Indirect Manipulation, Anticipation, Tactics, Planning)

In the current stage of the plan, Baker plays his part with impeccable precision, following the carefully crafted strategy laid out by Duncan. Everything about his movements, from how he discovered the warehouse with the green doors to how he manipulated the investigation, is meticulously planned to create an impenetrable web of deception.

The presence of the green marks at the church, which led Baker to the meeting spot, is part of the scheme to have him investigate the "potential location" for the killer, ensuring that he can be in the right place at the right time. Once there, Duncan's map of the office building, which he showed Baker, lays out the next stage of the plot:

targeting Sarah, whose office layout is conveniently perfect for the next phase of the plan.

Duncan also understands the police's perception of the Watchmaker—his use of clocks as a trademark. However, he has anticipated the police would catch on to this detail and cleverly moves away from it, opting instead to display the time and date on Sarah's computer screen. This simple yet effective method will mislead the investigation into believing that the Watchmaker is responsible, even when it doesn't align with the usual clock motif.

The bomb setup, disguised as a fire extinguisher, is another stroke of genius. Duncan has ensured that even if the bomb doesn’t explode, it leaves enough evidence to point back to the Watchmaker. The pressure gauge, the smell of alcohol, and the bomb’s location will all serve as perfect clues to misdirect the police. Meanwhile, Amelia Sachs, who is expected to inspect the scene, becomes the key target in Duncan's plan.

The office layout, especially Sarah's isolated space at the end of a narrow hallway, plays a crucial role. It’s here that Amelia will be alone, providing the perfect opportunity for Baker to take action. The entire setup, from the weapon (Duncan’s own handgun, conveniently linked to the ammunition found earlier) to the escape plan (smashing the window and disposing of the gun), ensures that the Watchmaker will be blamed.

Baker’s own behavior, despite being a part of the investigation, is calculated to reduce suspicion. His discovery of the bomb and the prompt notification to the authorities reinforce his position as a trustworthy figure, keeping Amelia from suspecting him. As the investigation

progresses and Baker observes the unfolding situation, he remains perfectly poised to execute his next move when the time comes.

The brilliant thing about Duncan’s plan is how everything aligns perfectly with the investigation's existing assumptions about the Watchmaker—each piece of evidence, every clue, and each action points in the same direction, confirming the suspicion without ever implicating Baker. By framing the Watchmaker with the bomb, the time displays, and the method of attack, Baker is effectively cleared of any suspicion.

Even when the rescue teams find the bomb and narrowly avert disaster, the investigation moves forward as Duncan anticipated. The fact that the Watchmaker managed to escape further solidifies the narrative of an elusive, dangerous killer, driving the investigation away from the true culprit.

Baker’s calm and calculated presence at the scene allows him to avoid suspicion, further ensuring that his role as the orchestrator of the murder remains hidden. His movements, from the strategic distance he maintains to his understanding of how to use the environment to his advantage, show the depth of planning and manipulation that Duncan has put into this masterful plot. The ultimate outcome—Amelia’s death—seems inevitable, and with it, the downfall of the investigation into the corrupt officers at the 118 precinct. All the evidence points to the Watchmaker, keeping Baker's hands clean and his secrets safe.

(Strategy, Planning, Tactics, Knowledge, Fabrication/Misdirection/Info Control/Concealment,

Manipulation, Setting Traps, Foresight, Creativity, VSI, Preparation, Holistic/Divergent/Convergent/Application Thinking, Induction/Abduction)

The shot rings out with a sharp, chilling sound. Amelia, focused intently on the crime scene, doesn't hear the approaching danger. The bullet, fired with precise calculation, strikes her squarely in the back of the head. Her body slumps forward instantly, the impact of the round severing her connection to the world around her.

The tension in the air escalates as Amelia Sachs, a sharp-shooting expert with the NYPD, recognizes the distinct sound of a weapon being tampered with—the click of a gun's firing pin striking a dud round. The sound is unmistakable, and it sends an adrenaline surge through her. Instinctively, she whips around, drawing her own weapon from its holster and aiming directly at the source of the sound: Dennis Baker.

Her eyes quickly scan the floor, landing on the spent round—a dud. It's immediately clear: Baker had fired but failed to get a shot off, and, as a reflex, he'd discarded the round. There's no room for explanation now. Baker's actions are all too suspicious. As Ron, her partner, also draws his weapon and points it at Baker, the situation becomes even more dire for him.

With the weapons drawn and the tension thick in the room, the investigation turns in a new direction. The team led by Lincoln, now fully aware of Baker's possible involvement, begins to comb through his personal belongings—his files, home, car—and soon enough, they uncover links that lead to the corrupt officers in Precinct 118. But the discovery that truly ties Baker to the case is a small, seemingly

insignificant detail: brown fibers found on his person. These fibers match the carpet from the Explorer vehicle, a vehicle directly tied to the Watchmaker. Along with the .32 caliber gun, this creates a damning connection between Baker and the Watchmaker.

At this point, the investigation is closing in on the truth. Baker's role in the corruption at Precinct 118 is now undeniable, and his involvement in orchestrating Amelia's attempted murder becomes clearer by the second. It's all pointing to him being the mastermind behind the plot to eliminate Amelia, especially as she had gotten too close to exposing him.

However, just as the pieces seem to fall perfectly into place, Lincoln, ever the shrewd detective, has an epiphany. There's one more critical piece to this puzzle, and it's just outside. A man, physically imposing and with a cold, calculating presence, is standing across the street, watching the operations in the task force's command room. Lincoln's instincts kick in, and he quickly orders Sellitto to bring the man in. His gut tells him that this man might be none other than the Watchmaker, the elusive mastermind behind the entire string of events. The suspense builds as they prepare to confront the person who could unravel the entire mystery.

Third Layer

Duncan's detailed plan has now been fully revealed, with the truth behind his actions coming to light. His true

motive wasn’t revenge for a non-existent wife, but to avenge a friend killed a year earlier—something he believed Dennis Baker was responsible for, given his ties to the corrupt police network. Duncan explained how he conducted his own investigation, spending money to track Baker’s operations, and eventually pretending to be a hired killer to get close to him and gain his trust. The entire persona of "The Watchmaker" and the plot to kill Amelia Sachs were just means to expose Dennis Baker. Duncan also clarified that, throughout this whole ordeal, he never actually killed or harmed any innocent people.

The first staged death, near the Hudson River dock, was entirely fabricated by Duncan using his own blood to make it look like a suicide, even going as far as faking an injury to create a false crime scene. This led both the police and Vincent to believe in the existence of a real victim, which, in turn, made "The Watchmaker" seem more terrifying and credible to Vincent. Duncan’s blood type was AB, which made the scene appear authentic.

The second staged scene, with the supposed victim Theodore Adams, was actually the body of James Pickering, who had died in a car accident. Duncan stole the body and recreated the crime scene, with the intention of making it look like a brutal murder to further his plot, ensuring that no innocent people were harmed. He even arranged for the body to stay frozen temporarily, delaying forensic analysis, knowing that the holiday season would cause a backlog. The ID found on the body was fake, but Duncan only needed it to mislead the authorities for a few days. The clock and note left at the scene were part of the illusion, designed to make "The Watchmaker" appear more dangerous.

Duncan further explained that his staged crimes—such as the young man near the church, the Buick car theft, and the false alarms with Joanne Harper and Lucy Richter—were all meant to maintain Vincent's trust and push the investigation in the right direction. Every act of "murder" was a calculated move to manipulate perceptions and ensure that the real criminal—Dennis Baker—would eventually be caught.

The gun, which had been used in the final assassination attempt on Amelia Sachs, was rendered harmless by Duncan before being passed to Baker. He had tampered with it, ensuring that it wouldn't fire, thus avoiding an actual attack. Duncan had planned to make sure Baker used that particular weapon so it wouldn't tie him to Amelia's death.

Summarizing Duncan's strategy: from the moment Baker hired him to kill Amelia, Duncan created the persona of "The Watchmaker" and worked with Vincent to provide false information, staged several deaths, and intentionally failed to complete the later killings in order to lead the police into Baker's trap. Duncan carefully placed key evidence, such as the bullet box and the rug fragment, in places where they were likely to be discovered, knowing that Baker would likely take the bait. Duncan's ultimate goal was to create a high-stakes moment—where Baker would be caught attempting to kill Sachs—allowing him to provide irrefutable proof of Baker's crimes and uncover the corruption in the police force.

Duncan's reasoning behind these elaborate tactics was clear: he didn't know who he could trust within the police department, and the corruption ran so deep that he had to

take matters into his own hands. Duncan also understood that while his methods were legally questionable, they were necessary to expose the truth.

Lincoln had already figured out much of this when he reviewed the evidence, which is why he chose to “invite” Duncan for questioning rather than arrest him immediately. Duncan admitted that his actions skirted the law, but he had taken every possible measure to minimize harm to innocent people, even eliminating threats like Vincent Reynolds.

A prosecutor was brought in to outline Duncan’s legal violations. Despite his convoluted methods, Duncan hadn’t committed any major crimes. The charges against him were minor: unlawful entry (but not burglary), theft of a body (but only temporarily), obstruction of justice (since no murders occurred), illegal possession of a gun (but it was rendered harmless), and stealing a vehicle (though Baker was likely responsible for supplying it).

Although Duncan would face civil penalties for his actions, possibly amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars, he stated that he had studied the law and was prepared to face any consequences. He believed that exposing Baker was worth the sacrifice, even if it meant going to prison.

ChatGPT đã nói:

Yes, there were a few individuals who came close to danger. For instance, when Ron was attacked by a homeless man in the garage where Duncan had abandoned the SUV, it was actually Duncan who saved him. While attempting to escape the garage, Duncan spotted a suspicious-looking man approaching with a metal rod.

Duncan used the excuse of returning to retrieve the book and the bullet box he had left behind, claiming the garage was too large and that the police might not have located the vehicles of both men. In reality, this was just a ruse to deceive Vincent, as Duncan had intentionally left the SUV in a place where it would be easily found.

Duncan then found a wheel hubcap in the trash and threw it against the wall to make Ron turn back, allowing him to see the homeless man. Ron later confirmed the sounds during the investigation, and indeed, the wheel hubcap was nearby.

As for Vincent, Duncan had ensured that he never got close enough to any women to cause harm. He always made sure to call 911 and report the incidents involving him. Duncan detailed the times and locations when the rapist was arrested, proving that he had been the one to call the police.

(Strategy, Planning, Tactics, Info Gathering, Deception/Misdirection/Info Control/Concealment, Indirect/Logical Manipulation, Setting Traps, Anticipation, Strategic Adaptability, Creativity, EQ, Preparation)

The investigation continued to confirm Duncan's account of events. Sellitto had contacted the homicide department to verify details about Duncan's supposed revenge target, Andrew Culbert. The man had indeed been shot in what appeared to be a robbery, but there were no suspects apprehended.

As for the woman, Barbara, who was considered Theodore Adams' "sister," she was actually an accomplice Duncan had helped in the past. Several years ago, Duncan had

loaned her a large sum of money, which she couldn't repay. The name "Barbara" was fabricated, along with her background story about Theodore Adams' habits and relationships—these were all false details meant to bolster the credibility of the "victim" of the Clockmaker's scheme. Her true identity was part of an agreement Duncan made with her: her name was to be kept confidential, and Duncan had to protect her source.

Duncan was now awaiting charges for minor legal infractions. DNA tests confirmed that the blood on the cutting tool, the vest recovered from the dock, and the blood on the bridge matched Duncan’s. The fingernail Duncan had intentionally broken off also corroborated this.

In the meantime, Lincoln was asked to take on more cases. He received a call from FBI agent Fred Dellray, who reported a break-in and arson at the National Standards and Technology Institute in Brooklyn. While the damage was minimal, given the sensitive post-9/11 period, the government wanted to ensure there was no terrorist connection. Lincoln considered assisting Dellray with analyzing the evidence, but he decided to postpone it until the 118 precinct case was fully resolved and Duncan’s role was better understood.

As the investigation continued, Lincoln began to see discrepancies in Duncan's story about his friend, Andrew Culbert. Initially, investigators suspected Culbert might have been deaf, based on evidence they found, a claim confirmed by Culbert's wife. However, this contradicted Duncan's claim that Culbert had served in the military and had saved Duncan's life. This inconsistency led Lincoln to suspect that Duncan had fabricated the story about

Culbert, possibly reading about a robbery victim and using it to add credibility to his plan to trap Dennis Baker.

Although Baker had been arrested, new information regarding Duncan's past and the people he claimed were involved opened up more questions. A video of Duncan’s interrogation was shown to Dance, who quickly noted several discrepancies. She saw that while parts of Duncan’s story were true, much of it was fabricated, particularly the tale about his friend Andrew Culbert. What troubled Dance most, however, was the expression in Duncan's eyes when he denied knowing anything about his friend’s death. It was the kind of look she had seen before from notorious serial killers like Ted Bundy—an expression not of deceit, but of disappointment and betrayal. It was as though Duncan was rejecting something deeply tied to his core identity.

Despite only being charged with minor offenses and not violent crimes, Duncan was housed in a low-security holding cell at the Central Street facility. Escape seemed unlikely but not impossible. Neither Lincoln nor Dance could discern Duncan's next move, but they agreed that he should be transferred to a higher-security prison until they could fully investigate the situation.

However, when Lincoln called to arrange the transfer, he was shocked to learn that Duncan had made a deal with the prosecutor and had been released the previous night.

The Fourth layer

It turned out that Duncan’s "lawyer" had met with the Assistant District Attorney and negotiated a deal: in exchange for a written confession, a $100,000 compensation payment for mobilizing police and fire resources, and a written promise to testify against Baker, Duncan would be exempt from all criminal charges. The agreement also stated he would be rearrested if he failed to appear in court to testify. Remarkably, no fingerprints were taken, and no formal detention record was filed.

Lincoln was furious upon learning that the prosecutor had unilaterally released a key suspect in exchange for cooperation in the case against Baker. The ADA defended the decision as the only viable path forward, arguing that Duncan had complied with all requirements (surrendered passport, retained legal counsel, agreed to surveillance) and even helped ensure Westchester County wouldn't press charges over the stolen corpse. However, Rhyme quickly saw through the justification—this was a career move. The prosecutor wanted a neatly wrapped high-profile case to advance his personal ambitions. Rhyme was incensed that such a major decision had been made without consulting him, ignoring the many unresolved questions about the suspect and without waiting for Kathryn Dance’s behavioral analysis of the interrogation video. It was a stark reminder that political pressure and ambition often taint investigations.

Pressed by Lincoln, the prosecutor reluctantly disclosed Duncan's current location: a Midtown hotel, along with contact numbers for the officers assigned to guard him.

Predictably, Duncan had already vanished. According to the officers, he’d claimed to feel unwell the night before, went

to bed early, and said he planned to sleep in. It seemed he had picked the lock to the adjacent room and slipped away during the night. His escape was facilitated by the fact that the officers didn’t suspect he might flee—something even Lincoln’s own team had failed to consider. Investigators later discovered that the legal firm Duncan supposedly used had no record of him as a client—raising new questions about the identity of the so-called lawyer who arranged his release.

Thanks to Cooper’s digging, the truth about the man they had in custody began to emerge: he was not Gerald Duncan. The address on the driver's license did belong to a real Gerald Duncan, but that man had moved to Anchorage six months ago, and the house was now vacant and listed for rent. The ID photo also didn’t match the man they’d held. Lincoln deduced that the imposter had scanned housing listings, selected a temporarily vacant home—unoccupied during the holidays, similar to how he had previously exploited an empty church—and forged identity documents such as a license and passport. Cooper also discovered that the real Duncan was dealing with credit issues due to identity theft, explaining how the imposter obtained his personal data.

Investigators admitted they had failed to verify the suspect’s background thoroughly, misled by the complex and convincing narrative “Duncan” had constructed. His careful efforts to avoid hurting innocents weren’t out of ethics, but part of a calculated plan: to avoid serious charges, assist in the takedown of Vincent and Baker, and position himself as a cooperative witness—ultimately to be held in a minimally secure environment under relaxed supervision. This created the perfect conditions for his

escape. The team now realized they had vastly underestimated his cunning from the outset.

A new development came when a courier company located on the same floor as the office building broken into during the fifth “Clockmaker” case reported that an important envelope had been stolen during the time the police were searching the premises. This revelation prompted Lincoln to realize that while the team had been focused on the fake murders and Baker entrapment, a real crime had occurred—unauthorized entry. He deduced that evacuating the building had given the Clockmaker access to unsecured offices. Amelia speculated that the Clockmaker, likely in disguise, had slipped into the courier service while attention was directed at the design firm and taken the envelope. Rhyme immediately ordered an investigation into the stolen envelope’s contents, sender, and intended recipient.

Everyone now shared the same question:

What is he really after?

(Persuasion, Planning, Strategy, Tactics, Manipulation, Concealment, Misdirection, Trap Setting,Anticipation, Knowledge, Information Gathering, Preparation.)

At a subway station, Charles Vespasian Hale — the man who had impersonated Gerald Duncan, the Watchmaker — checked his wristwatch. Everything was going according to plan. Hale then took a taxi to the City Museum of Fine Arts on Fifth Avenue, carrying a canvas bag as he entered the

main hall. He left the bag at the coat check, taking his coat and hat with him.

The investigation now focused on the Delphi Watch. Lincoln contacted the director of the museum to confirm that the Delphi Watch was still on display. He warned about the possibility of it being stolen — not for sale, but for the suspect's personal collection, as the item was one of a kind.

Rhyme explained the basis of his suspicion: they had found out that the stolen envelope from the courier company earlier had come from a wealthy patron and contained a list of antique items to be donated to the museum. He then connected this to the museum tour posters found in the church where Duncan and Vincent had stayed. He asked Vincent Reynolds and the watchmaker, Victor Hellerstein, whether Duncan had ever mentioned the museum. Apparently, he had — even spending a lot of time there, showing particular interest in the Delphi Watch.

Lincoln laid out his theory to the director: the suspect had used the envelope to sneak tools or software into the museum to disable security in preparation for stealing the watch. He asked Cooper to send the suspect's photo to the director for identification. The museum director immediately confirmed it was the same man who had just checked a bag at the coat check about ten minutes ago and was still inside the museum.

Rhyme relayed the news to Sellitto, who immediately contacted Haumann, already en route. They discussed the possibility that the suspect might be armed (since there were no metal detectors at the entrance) while the security staff were unarmed. The bag he checked in contained art

books, but could easily be concealing a real or smoke bomb to distract or incite panic. When Haumann confirmed that SWAT teams were in position, Rhyme — based on Dance’s evaluation of the suspect’s willingness to kill and his advanced planning ability — decided to prioritize safety and ordered a full evacuation of the museum, starting with the lobby and coat check area. SWAT was instructed to check each person leaving and use the suspect’s photo.

The museum director, complying with the evacuation, revealed one critical detail: the watch was housed in a thick bulletproof glass case with a timed lock, synchronized via satellite to the U.S. government’s official clock. The case was programmed not to open until the following Tuesday, when the exhibit concluded. This reminded Rhyme of a government facility fire that Agent Dellray had previously asked for help with. He requested a check on that location.

Cooper confirmed it was the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which maintains the atomic clock used to regulate the nation’s time. Lincoln realized the true scheme: the fire at NIST had been orchestrated by “Gerald Duncan” (likely during the same night he escaped the hotel), not just as arson, but to cover up a break-in to alter the official time signal. The goal was to trick the museum's security case into "thinking" it was already Tuesday and unlock itself.

Rhyme reached the final and most terrifying conclusion: if the Watchmaker could manipulate the nation’s atomic clock, the consequences would be catastrophic — it would disrupt timekeeping across critical systems like aviation,

railways, national defense, power grids, and computers, plunging the country into chaos.

This was the **fourth layer** in the Watchmaker's plan: **to steal the Delphi Watch by altering America's atomic time**. All previous layers were mere distractions — a way to justify or enable access to strategic points necessary for the final act. At this point, no one could deny the Watchmaker's ability to achieve what had once seemed impossible. Police forces were now operating at full capacity.

(Misdirection, Prediction, Holistic/Non Linear/Lateral thinking, Mass/Logical Manipulation, EU, Setting Trap)

While immersing himself in the world of horology to assume the disguise of a vengeful man, Charles Hale came to a subtle realization: **<Auxiliary Function>**. These are features beyond the basic utility of telling time—such as date displays, moon phases, or chimes—often found in expensive timepieces, sometimes so elaborate they obscure the watch's main function: to tell the hour.

But for Hale, the concept was more than mechanical artistry; it became the soul of his cunning plan in New York—a smokescreen to obscure his true intentions, misdirecting the police from the real target. He anticipated that Lincoln Rhyme and his team would soon discover the false identity of Gerald Duncan, and perhaps even sense that Hale had greater ambitions beyond vengeance against Officer Baker (Tier 3).

The dazzling <Auxiliary Function> Hale staged was the supposed heist of the famous Delphi Clock at the Museum of Fine Arts. He planted clues from the

beginning—exhibition brochures on horology left at the church, cryptic conversations about clocks with witnesses (Vincent and Victor), even the calculated arson at NSIT—all weaving an illusion that he intended to disable national time synchronization and breach museum security.

The canvas bag he left behind was another flourish in this symphony of deception. Inside the hollowed-out books were explosives, a signal detector, and a cheap clock—seemingly meaningless items that still consumed hours of investigative manpower, leading them deeper into the maze he designed, convinced they were solving a bold theft.

In truth, this heist was likely impossible—but because of the exceptional intellect Hale had deliberately cultivated across the previous three Tiers, the police were compelled to believe the Watchmaker capable of it, thus lured away from his real objective.

In essence, the entire Tier 4 was an <Auxiliary Function> in Hale's clock—one that would drag many soldiers, families, and possibly even journalists to their deaths at the Commendation Ceremony inside the HUD federal building.

In fact, Hale had already left the museum an hour earlier. He had tricked the director into believing he was still inside. Upon entering, he changed into a major's military uniform in a restroom, put on glasses and a cap hidden in his coat, and quickly exited—heading toward the HUD building in Manhattan. As planned.

(Functional categories: Deception / Misdirection / Info Control / Concealment / Manipulation / Setting Traps /

Foresight / Mind Reading / Reasoning / Creativity / Abstract Thinking)

As previously noted, Hale's **true goal in Tier 5** was to kill as many people as possible at the **"Commendation Ceremony for Returning Soldiers Reenlisting After Overseas Deployment"**, an event contracted by Bud and Charlotte Allerton in October.

The man posing as Duncan's attorney was Bud himself—a real lawyer who had left the profession years ago. But pretending to be one briefly posed no challenge, especially since Duncan knew the ambitious prosecutor would eagerly believe what he wanted to believe.

The woman pretending to be the sister of fictional victim Theodore Adams (from the Cedar Street incident) was actually Charlotte.

On Halloween, Hale came to New York and stayed at a secret house in Brooklyn. For the next six weeks, he obsessively designed his "clock"—gathering materials, recruiting unwitting accomplices (Dennis Baker and Vincent Reynold), researching potential victims of the Watchmaker, and studying the HUD building.

Why did six assassins quit upon hearing the mission? Because the HUD federal building was among the most secure in Lower Manhattan:

- Thick limestone walls minimized damage even from car bombs.

- Its shorter stature made it a poor target for missiles or planes.
- Few entry points allowed strict access control.
- The ceremonial room faced a windowless wall, safe from snipers.
- Around 20 armed guards manned the streets and rooftops nearby.

In short, Hale thought, it was impenetrable—from the outside. But no one suspected the threat would come from **within**.

It wasn’t revenge as he told Vincent, nor random as he claimed to Baker, nor escape-oriented as he told the police. Every “victim” this week played a role in preparing for today's mission: the flooring company, Lucy Richter’s apartment, Cedar Street alley, and the flower workshop.

Though HUD was maze-like, Hale navigated quickly through its basement—he had studied its layout through blueprints found in Sarah Stanton’s file cabinet (the fifth "victim"), an estimator at the flooring company that furnished the building.

The flooring office was opposite a parcel delivery company, allowing Hale to fabricate a complaint about a missing envelope supposedly bound for the museum—furthering the clock-theft illusion. (No sponsor existed; Hale planted the lie.)

He broke into Lucy’s apartment to photograph and then forge the special entry passes required for the ceremony. He also memorized a classified DoD memo she received detailing the day's security protocol.

Even the staged murder of fictional Teddy Adams had a purpose. Hale placed the fake hit-and-run body behind the HUD building. When Charlotte (as the distraught sister) arrived, security let her in through the back, allowing her to “use the restroom.” Inside, she stashed what Hale now retrieved from a hidden trash bin: a silenced .22 pistol and two detonator disks. These couldn’t have passed security otherwise.

Upstairs, Hale saw the core of his plan: two large floral arrangements by Joanne Harper. He had already broken into her Spring Street workshop to hide an object in each. Harper’s long-standing contract gave her immunity from scrutiny. Hale had poured **Astrolite**, a powerful explosive, into the flower pots—stronger than TNT and still active when absorbed by other materials.

He could’ve simply infiltrated the four locations without the Watchmaker narrative—but then someone might’ve asked: *What was he really after?* So he invented layered motives to mask his true intent.

His whole strategy hinged on a single principle: **Motive**. Remove motive, and you remove suspicion.

At the ceremony room, Hale adjusted one flower arrangement in a way any dutiful soldier might. When no one watched, he inserted one detonator disk, activated it, and covered it with moss. He did the same with the other vase. The second would detonate via radio signal from the

first. These stunning floral displays were now bombs—enough to obliterate the entire room.

Surrounded by soldiers and guests in the HUD conference room, Hale's phone vibrated. A message from Charlotte: FAA grounded all planes. Trains halted. National Standards Institute experts were inspecting America's master clock. **Success. Thank God.**

Perfect, Hale thought. The ceremony would begin at 12:00. The bomb was set for 12:15—enough time for everyone to settle, for the tardy to arrive, and for the guards to become complacent.

(Abstract Thinking, Critical Thinking, Divergent Thinking, Convergent Thinking, Associative Thinking, Lateral Thinking, Logical Thinking, Holistic Thinking, Linear Thinking, Application Thinking, Contingencies, Risk Assessment, Prediction, Misdirection, Fabrication, Indirect/Mass/Info/Logical/Emotional Manipulation, Psycho Analysis)