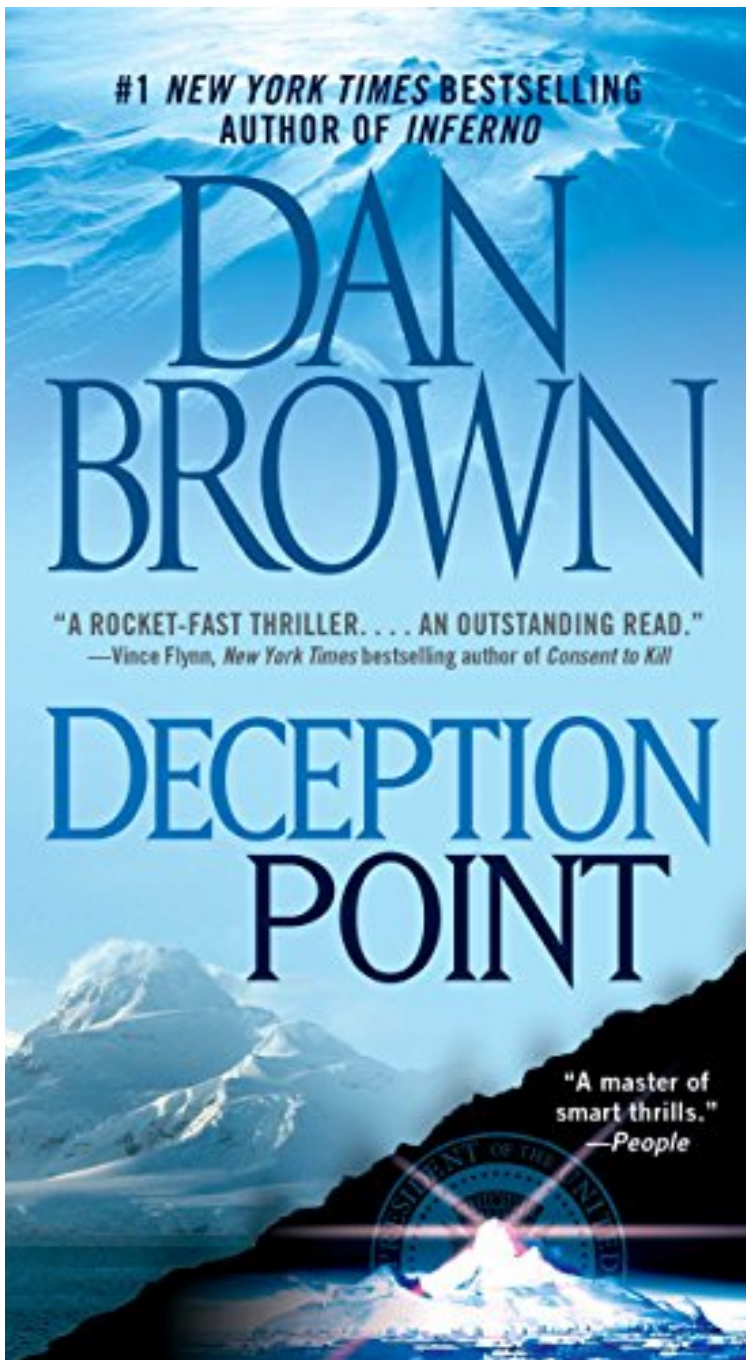


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Deception Point (English Edition)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurHeralded for masterfully intermingling science, history, and politics in his critically acclaimed thrillers The Da Vinci Code and Angels Demons, New York Times bestselling author Dan Brown has crafted another pulse-pounding novel in which nothing is as it seems -- and behind every corner is a

stunning surprise. A shocking scientific discovery. A conspiracy of staggering brilliance. A thriller unlike any you've ever read.... When a NASA satellite discovers an astonishingly rare object buried deep in the Arctic ice, the floundering space agency proclaims a much-needed victory -- a victory with profound implications for NASA policy and the impending presidential election. To verify the authenticity of the find, the White House calls upon the skills of intelligence analyst Rachel Sexton. Accompanied by a team of experts, including the charismatic scholar Michael Tolland, Rachel travels to the Arctic and uncovers the unthinkable: evidence of scientific trickery -- a bold deception that threatens to plunge the world into controversy. But before she can warn the President, Rachel and Michael are ambushed by a deadly team of assassins. Fleeing for their lives across a desolate and lethal landscape, their only hope for survival is to discover who is behind this masterful plot. The truth, they will learn, is the most shocking deception of all.

comPenzler Pick, December 2001: In the world of page-turning thrillers, Dan Brown holds a special place in the hearts of many of us. After his first book, *Digital Fortress*, almost passed me by, he wrote *Angels and Demons*, which was probably one of the half-dozen most exciting thrillers of last year. It is a pleasure to report that his new book lives up to his reputation as a writer whose research and talent make his stories exciting, believable, and just plain unputdownable. The time is now and President Zachary Herney is facing a very tough reelection. His opponent, Senator Sedgwick Sexton, is a powerful man with powerful friends and a mission: to reduce NASA's spending and move space exploration into the private sector. He has numerous supporters, including many beyond the businesses who will profit from this because of the embarrassment of 1996, when the Clinton administration was informed by NASA that proof existed of life on other planets. That information turned out to be premature, if not incorrect. (This story is true; I repeat, Dan Brown's research is very, very good.) The embattled president is assured that a rare object buried deep in the Arctic ice will prove to have far-reaching implications on America's space program. The find, however, needs to be verified. Enter Rachel Sexton, a gister for the National Reconnaissance Office. Gisters reduce complex reports into single-page briefs, and in this case the president needs that confirmation before he broadcasts to the nation, probably ensuring his reelection. It's tricky because Rachel is the daughter of his opponent. Rachel is thrilled to be on the team traveling to the Arctic circle. She is a realist about her father's politics and has little respect for his stand on NASA, but Senator Sexton cannot help but have a problem with her involvement. Adventure, romance, murder, skullduggery, and nail-biting tension ensue. By the end of *Deception Point*, the reader will be much better informed about how our space program works and how our politicians react to new information. Bring on the next Dan Brown thriller! --Otto Penzler

ExtraitChapter 1
Toulos Restaurant, adjacent to Capitol Hill, boasts a politically incorrect menu of baby veal and horse carpaccio, making it an ironic hotspot for the quintessential Washingtonian power breakfast. This morning Toulos was busy -- a cacophony of clanking silverware, espresso machines, and cellphone conversations. The maitre d' was sneaking a sip of his morning Bloody Mary when the woman entered. He turned with a practiced smile. "Good morning," he said. "May I help you?" The woman was attractive, in her mid-thirties, wearing gray, pleated flannel pants, conservative flats, and an ivory Laura Ashley blouse. Her posture was straight -- chin raised ever so slightly -- not arrogant, just strong. The woman's hair was light brown and fashioned in Washington's most popular style -- the "anchorwoman" -- a lush feathering, curled under at the shoulders...long enough to be sexy, but short enough to remind you she was probably smarter than you. "I'm a little late," the woman said, her voice unassuming. "I have a breakfast meeting with Senator Sexton." The maitre d' felt an unexpected tingle of nerves. Senator Sedgwick Sexton. The senator was a regular here and currently one of the country's most famous men. Last week, having swept all twelve Republican primaries on Super Tuesday, the senator was virtually guaranteed his party's nomination for President of the United States. Many believed the senator had a superb chance of stealing the White House from the embattled President next fall. Lately Sexton's face seemed to be on every national magazine, his campaign slogan plastered all across America: "Stop spending. Start mending." "Senator Sexton is in his booth," the maitre d' said. "And you are?" "Rachel Sexton. His daughter." How foolish of me, he thought. The resemblance was quite apparent. The woman had the senator's penetrating eyes and refined carriage -- that polished air of resilient nobility. Clearly the senator's classic good looks had not skipped generations, although Rachel Sexton seemed to carry her blessings with a grace and humility her father could learn from. "A pleasure to have you, Ms. Sexton." As the maitre d' led the senator's daughter across the dining area, he was embarrassed by the gauntlet of male eyes following her...some discreet, others less so. Few women dined at Toulos and even fewer who looked like Rachel Sexton. "Nice body," one diner whispered. "Sexton already find himself a new wife?" "That's his daughter, you idiot," another replied. The man chuckled. "Knowing Sexton, he'd

probably screw her anyway." When Rachel arrived at her father's table, the senator was on his cellphone talking loudly about one of his recent successes. He glanced up at Rachel only long enough to tap his Cartier and remind her she was late. I missed you, too, Rachel thought. Her father's first name was Thomas, although he'd adopted his middle name long ago. Rachel suspected it was because he liked the alliteration. Senator Sedgewick Sexton. The man was a silver-haired, silver-tongued political animal who had been anointed with the slick look of soap opera doctor, which seemed appropriate considering his talents of impersonation. "Rachel!" Her father clicked off his phone and stood to kiss her cheek. "Hi, Dad." She did not kiss him back. "You look exhausted." And so it begins, she thought. "I got your message. What's up?" "I can't ask my daughter out for breakfast?" Rachel had learned long ago her father seldom requested her company unless he had some ulterior motive. Sexton took a sip of coffee. "So, how are things with you?" "Busy. I see your campaign's going well." "Oh, let's not talk business." Sexton leaned across the table, lowering his voice. "How's that guy at the State Department I set you up with?" Rachel exhaled, already fighting the urge to check her watch. "Dad, I really haven't had time to call him. And I wish you'd stop trying to --" "You've got to make time for the important things, Rachel. Without love, everything else is meaningless." A number of comebacks came to mind, but Rachel chose silence. Being the bigger person was not difficult when it came to her father. "Dad, you wanted to see me? You said this was important." "It is." Her father's eyes studied her closely. Rachel felt part of her defenses melt away under his gaze, and she cursed the man's power. The senator's eyes were his gift -- a gift Rachel suspected would probably carry him to the White House. On cue, his eyes well with tears, and then, an instant later, they would clear, opening a window to an impassioned soul, extending a bond of trust to all. It's all about trust, her father always said. The senator had lost Rachel's years ago, but he was quickly gaining the country's. "I have a proposition for you," Senator Sexton said. "Let me guess," Rachel replied, attempting to refortify her position. "Some prominent divorcee looking for a young wife?" "Don't kid yourself, honey. You're not that young anymore." Rachel felt the familiar shrinking sensation that so often accompanied meetings with her father. "I want to throw you a life raft," he said. "I wasn't aware I was drowning." "You're not. The President is. You should jump ship before it's too late." "Haven't we had this conversation?" "Think about your future, Rachel. You can come work for me." "I hope that's not why you asked me to breakfast." The senator's veneer of calm broke ever so slightly. "Rachel, can't you see that your working for him reflects badly on me. And on my campaign." Rachel sighed. She and her father had been through this. "Dad, I don't work for the President. I haven't even met the President. I work in Fairfax, for God's sake!" "Politics is perception, Rachel. It appears you work for the President." Rachel exhaled, trying to keep her cool. "I worked too hard to get this job, Dad. I'm not quitting." The senator's eyes narrowed. "You know, sometimes your selfish attitude really --" "Senator Sexton?" A reporter materialized beside the table. Sexton's demeanor thawed instantly. Rachel groaned and took a croissant from the basket on the table. "Ralph Sneed," the reporter said. "Washington Post. May I ask you a few questions?" The senator smiled, dabbing his mouth with a napkin. "My pleasure, Ralph. Just make it quick. I don't want my coffee getting cold." The reporter laughed on cue. "Of course, sir." He pulled out a minirecorder and turned it on. "Senator, your television ads call for legislation ensuring equal salaries for women in the workplace...as well as for tax cuts for new families. Can you comment on your rationale?" "Sure. I'm simply a huge fan of strong women and strong families." Rachel practically choked on her croissant. "And on the subject of families," the reporter followed up, "you talk a lot about education. You've proposed some highly controversial budget cuts in an effort to allocate more funds to our nation's schools." "I believe the children are our future." Rachel could not believe her father had sunk to quoting pop songs. "Finally, sir," the reporter said, "you've taken an enormous jump in the polls these past few weeks. The President has got to be worried. Any thoughts on your recent success?" "I think it has to do with trust. Americans are starting to see that the President cannot be trusted to make the tough decisions facing this nation. Runaway government spending is putting this country deeper in debt every day, and Americans are starting to realize that it's time to stop spending and start mending." Like a stay of execution from her father's rhetoric, the pager in Rachel's handbag went off. Normally the harsh electronic beeping was an unwelcome interruption, but at the moment, it sounded almost melodious. The senator glared indignantly at having been interrupted. Rachel fished the pager from her handbag and pressed a preset sequence of five buttons, confirming that she was indeed the person holding the pager. The beeping stopped, and the LCD began blinking. In fifteen seconds she would receive a secure text message. Sneed grinned at the senator. "Your daughter is obviously a busy woman. It's refreshing to see you two still find time in your schedules to dine together." "As I said, family comes first." Sneed nodded, and then his gaze hardened. "Might I ask, sir, how

you and your daughter manage your conflicts of interest?" "Conflicts?" Senator Sexton cocked his head with an innocent look of confusion. "What conflicts do you mean?" Rachel glanced up, grimacing at her father's act. She knew exactly where this was headed. Damn reporters, she thought. Half of them were on political payrolls. The reporter's question was what journalists called a grapefruit -- a question that was supposed to look like a tough inquiry but was in fact a scripted favor to the senator -- a slow lob pitch that her father could line up and smash out of the park, clearing the air about a few things. "Well, sir..." The reporter coughed, feigning uneasiness over the question. "The conflict is that your daughter works for your opponent." Senator Sexton exploded in laughter, defusing the question instantly. "Ralph, first of all, the President and I are not opponents. We are simply two patriots who have different ideas about how to run the country we love." The reporter beamed. He had his sound bite. "And second?" "Second, my daughter is not employed by the President; she is employed by the intelligence community. She compiles intel reports and sends them to the White House. It's a fairly low-level position." He paused and looked at Rachel. "In fact, dear, I'm not sure you've even met the President, have you?" Rachel stared, her eyes smoldering. The beeper chirped, drawing Rachel's gaze to the incoming message on the LCD screen. -- RPRT DIRNRO STAT -- She deciphered the shorthand instantly and frowned. The message was unexpected, and most certainly bad news. At least she had her exit cue. "Gentlemen," she said. "It breaks my heart, but I have to go. I'm late for work." "Ms. Sexton," the reporter said quickly, "before you go, I was wondering if you could comment on the rumors that you called this breakfast meeting to discuss the possibility of leaving your current post to work for your father's campaign?" Rachel felt like someone had thrown hot coffee in her face. The question took her totally off guard. She looked at her father and sensed in his smirk that the question had been prepped. She wanted to climb across the table and stab him with a fork. The reporter shoved the recorder into her face. "Miss Sexton?" Rachel locked eyes with the reporter. "Ralph, or whoever the hell you are, get this straight: I have no intention of abandoning my job to work for Senator Sexton, and if you print anything to the contrary, you'll need a shoehorn to get that recorder out of your ass." The reporter's eyes widened. He clicked off his recorder, hiding a grin. "Thank you both." He disappeared. Rachel immediately regretted the outburst. She had inherited her father's temper, and she hated him for it. Smooth, Rachel. Very smooth. Her father glared disapprovingly. "You'd do well to learn some poise." Rachel began collecting her things. "This meeting is over." The senator was apparently done with her anyway. He pulled out his cellphone to make a call. " 'Bye, sweetie. Stop by the office one of these days and say hello. And get married, for God's sake. You're thirty-three years old.'" "Thirty-four," she snapped. "Your secretary sent a card." He clucked ruefully. "Thirty-four. Almost an old maid. You know by the time I was thirty-four, I'd already -- ""Married mom and screwed the neighbor?" The words came out louder than Rachel had intended, her voice hanging naked in an ill-timed lull. Diners nearby glanced over. Senator Sexton's eyes flash-froze, two ice-crystals boring into her. "You watch yourself, young lady." Rachel headed for the door. No, you watch yourself, senator. Copyright

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