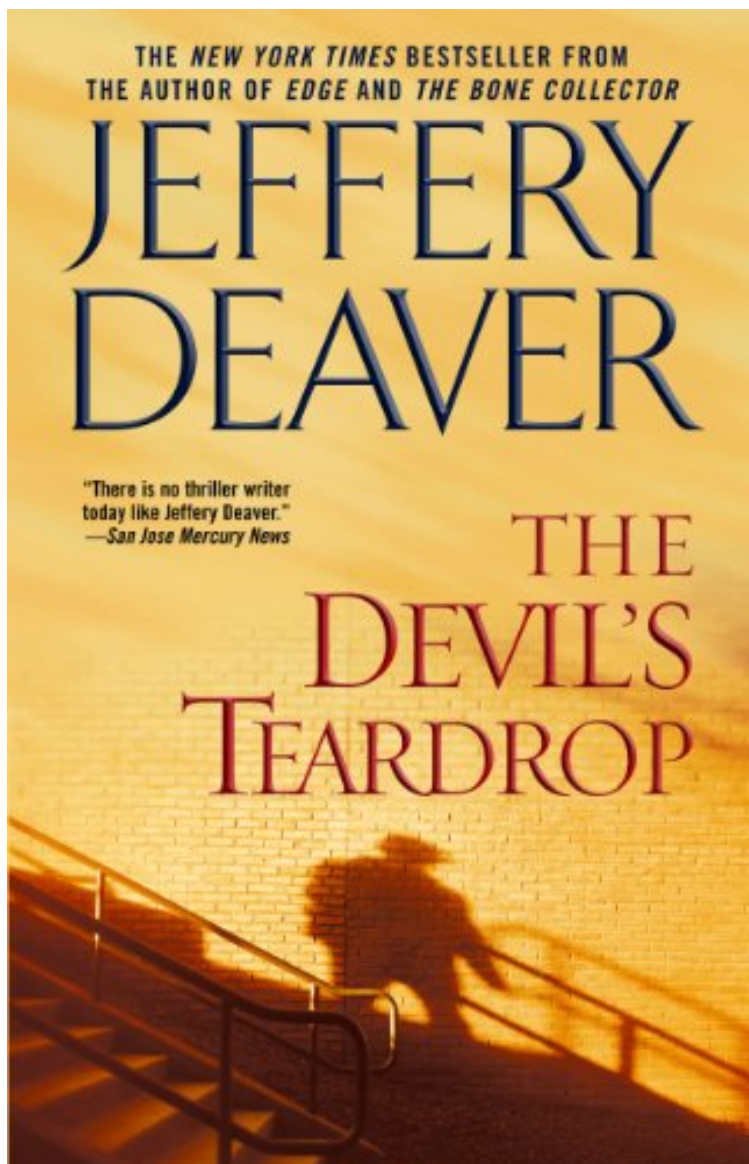


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The Devil's Teardrop: A Novel Of The Last Night Of The Century (English Edition)



Par Jeffery Deaver
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA classic thriller from New York Times bestselling author Jeffery Deaver featuring the intricate forensic detail, masterful plot twists, and harrowing breakneck pace that made A Maiden's Grave, The Bone Collector, and The Coffin Dancer national bestsellers. It's New Year's Eve, December 31, 1999, and Washington, D.C., is under siege. Early in the day, a grisly machine gun attack in the Dupont Circle Metro station leaves dozens dead and the city crippled with fear. A note delivered to the mayor's office pins the massacre on the Digger, a robotlike assassin programmed to wreak havoc on the capital every four

hours until midnight. Only a ransom of \$20 million delivered to the Digger's accomplice and mastermind will end the death and terror. But the Digger becomes a far more sinister threat when his accomplice is killed in a freak accident while en route to the money drop. With the ransom note as the single scrap of evidence, Special Agent Margaret Lukas calls upon Parker Kincaid, a retired FBI agent and the top forensic document examiner in the country. Somehow, by midnight, they must find the Digger before he finds them.

Thriller readers can always count on getting extra value from Jeffery Deaver--strong plots, fascinating research, believable characters, and plenty of surprise endings. Like in *The Terminator*, the bad guys in *The Devil's Teardrop* just won't quit, and they create enough havoc in the last 50 pages to fill a whole new book. Although Deaver's brilliant, wheelchair-bound forensic expert Lincoln Rhyme makes a guest appearance, the muscular scientist in charge here is Parker Kincaid--an expert in document analysis who'd much rather be checking the authenticity of letters from Thomas Jefferson than figuring out when a crazed shooter known as the Digger will strike again. But it's New Year's Eve, 1999, and the Digger has begun a reign of terror--promising to shoot into crowds in Washington, D.C., every four hours until he's paid \$20 million. As Kincaid searches an odd ransom note for clues (and tries to maintain a low profile so that his vindictive ex-wife won't get custody of his young kids), we get to know the Digger better. He is a frighteningly invisible character with serious brain damage, who methodically obeys a set of instructions from an unknown handler. We also learn many amazing facts about paper, ink, and handwriting analysis, and watch as a relationship slowly and reluctantly develops between Kincaid and the FBI agent in charge.

All this as the devious Deaver leads us down several garden paths overflowing with dead bodies. --Dick Adler

Chapter One: The Last Day of the Year

A thorough analysis of an anonymous letter may greatly reduce the number of possible writers and may at once dismiss certain suspected writers. The use of a semicolon or the correct use of an apostrophe may eliminate a whole group of writers. --Osborn and Osborn

Questioned Document Problems

The Digger's in town. The Digger looks like you, the Digger looks like me. He walks down the wintry streets the way anybody would, shoulders drawn together against the damp December air. He's not tall and not short, he's not heavy and not thin. His fingers in dark gloves might be pudgy but they might not. His feet seem large but maybe that's just the size of his shoes. If you glanced at his eyes you wouldn't notice the shape or the color but only that they don't seem quite human, and if the Digger glanced at you while you were looking at him, his eyes might be the very last thing you ever saw. He wears a long, black coat, or a dark blue one, and not a soul on the street notices him pass by though there are many witnesses here -- the streets of Washington, D.C., are crowded because it's morning rush hour. The Digger's in town and it's New Year's Eve. Carrying a Fresh Fields shopping bag, the Digger dodges around couples and singles and families and keeps on walking. Ahead, he sees the Metro station. He was told to be there at exactly 9 A.M. and he will be. The Digger is never late. The bag in his maybe-pudgy hand is heavy. It weighs eleven pounds though by the time the Digger returns to his motel room it will weigh considerably less. A man bumps into him and smiles and says, "Sorry," but the Digger doesn't glance at him. The Digger never looks at anybody and doesn't want anybody to look at him. "Don't let anybody..." Click. "...let anybody see your face. Look away. Remember?" "I remember. Click. Look at the lights, he thinks, look at the...click...at the New Year's Eve decorations. Fat babies in banners, Old Man Time. Funny decorations. Funny lights. Funny how nice they are. This is Dupont Circle, home of money, home of art, home of the young and the chic. The Digger knows this but he knows it only because the man who tells him things told him about Dupont Circle. He arrives at the mouth of the subway tunnel. The morning is overcast and, being winter, there is a dimness over the city. The Digger thinks of his wife on days like this. Pamela didn't like the dark and the cold so she...click...she...What did she do? That's right. She planted red flowers and yellow flowers. He looks at the subway and he thinks of a picture he saw once. He and Pamela were at a museum. They saw an old drawing on the wall. And Pamela said, "Scary. Let's go." It was a picture of the entrance to hell. The Metro tunnel disappears sixty feet underground, passengers rising, passengers descending. It looks just like that drawing. The entrance to hell. Here are young women with hair cut short and briefcases. Here are young men with their sports bags and cell phones. And here is the Digger with his shopping bag. Maybe he's fat, maybe he's thin. Looking like you, looking like me. Nobody ever notices the Digger and that's one of the reasons he's so very good at what he does. "You're the best," said the man who tells him things last year. You're the...click, click...the best. At 8:59 the Digger walks to the top of the down escalator, which is filled with people disappearing into the pit. He reaches into the bag and curls his finger around the comfy grip of the gun, which may be an Uzi or a Mac-10 or an Intertech but definitely weighs eleven pounds and is loaded with a hundred-round clip of .22 long-rifle bullets. The Digger's hungry for soup but he ignores the

sensation. Because he's the...click...the best. He looks toward but not at the crowd, waiting their turn to step onto the down escalator, which will take them to hell. He doesn't look at the couples or the men with telephones or women with hair from Supercuts, which is where Pamela went. He doesn't look at the families. He clutches the shopping bag to his chest, the way anybody would if it were full of holiday treats. One hand on the grip of whatever kind of gun it is, his other hand curled -- outside the bag -- around what somebody might think is a loaf of Fresh Fields bread that would go very nicely with soup but is in fact a heavy sound suppressor, packed with mineral cotton and rubber baffles. His watch beeps. Nine A.M. He pulls the trigger. There is a hissing sound as the stream of bullets begins working its way down the passengers on the escalator and they pitch forward under the fire. The hush hush hush of the gun is suddenly obscured by the screams. "Oh God look out Jesus Jesus what's happening I'm hurt I'm falling." And things like that. Hush hush hush. And all the terrible clangs of the misses -- the bullets striking the metal and the tile. That sound is very loud. The sounds of the hits are much softer. Everyone looks around, not knowing what's going on. The Digger looks around too. Everyone frowns. He frowns. Nobody thinks that they are being shot. They believe that someone has fallen and started a chain reaction of people tumbling down the escalator. Clangs and snaps as phones and briefcases and sports bags fall from the hands of the victims. The hundred rounds are gone in seconds. No one notices the Digger as he looks around, like everyone else. Frowning. "Call an ambulance the police the police my God this girl needs help she needs help somebody he's dead oh Jesus my Lord her leg look at her leg my baby my baby..." The Digger lowers the shopping bag, which has one small hole in the bottom where the bullets left. The bag holds all the hot, brass shells. "Shut it off shut off the escalator oh Jesus look somebody stop it stop the escalator they're being crushed..." Things like that. The Digger looks. Because everybody's looking. pardBut it's hard to see into hell. Below is just a mass of bodies piling up, growing higher, writhing... Some are alive, some dead, some struggling to get out from underneath the crush that's piling up at the base of the escalator. The Digger is easing backward into the crowd. And then he's gone. He's very good at disappearing. "When you leave you should act like a chameleon," said the man who tells him things. "Do you know what that is?" "A lizard." "Right." "That changes color. I saw it on TV." The Digger is moving along the sidewalks, filled with people. Running this way and that way.

Funny. Funny... Nobody notices the Digger. Who looks like you and looks like me and looks like the woodwork. Whose face is white as a morning sky. Or dark as the entrance to hell. As he walks -- slowly, slowly -- he thinks about his motel. Where he'll reload his gun and repack his silencer with bristly mineral cotton and sit in his comfy chair with a bottle of water and a bowl of soup beside him. He'll sit and relax until this afternoon and then -- if the man who tells him things doesn't leave a message to tell him not to -- he'll put on his long black or blue coat once more and go outside. And do this all over again. It's New Year's Eve. And the Digger's in town. While ambulances were speeding to Dupont Circle and rescue workers were digging through the ghastly mine of bodies in the Metro station, Gilbert Havel walked toward City Hall, two miles away. At the corner of Fourth and D, beside a sleeping maple tree, Havel paused and opened the envelope he carried and read the note one last time. Mayor Kennedy -- The end is night. The Digger is loose and there is no way to stop him. He will kill again -- at four, 8 and Midnight if you don't pay. I am wanting \$20 million dollars in cash, which you will put into a bag and leave it two miles south of Rt 66 on the West Side of the Beltway. In the middle of the Field. Pay to me the Money by 1200 hours. Only I am knowing how to stop The Digger. If you apprehend me, he will keep killing. If you kill me, he will keep killing. If you dont think I'm real, some of the Diggers bullets were painted black. Only I know that. This was, Havel decided, about as perfect an idea as anybody could've come up with. Months of planning. Every possible response by the police and FBI anticipated. A chess game. Buoyed by that thought, he replaced the note in the envelope, closed but didn't seal it and continued along the street. Havel walked in a stooped lope, eyes down, a pose meant to diminish his six-two height. It was hard for him, though; he preferred to walk tall and stare people down. The security at City Hall, One Judiciary Square, was ridiculous. No one noticed as he walked past the entrance to the nondescript stone building and paused at a newspaper vending machine. He slipped the envelope under the stand and turned slowly, walking toward E Street. Warm for New Year's Eve, Havel was thinking. The air smelled like fall -- rotten leaves and humid wood smoke. The scent aroused a pang of undefined nostalgia for his childhood home. He stopped at a pay phone on the corner, dropped in some coins and dialed a number. A voice answered, "City Hall. Security." Havel held a tape recorder next to the phone and pressed PLAY. A computer-generated voice said, "Envelope in front of the building. Under the Post vending machine. Read it now. It's about the Metro killings." He hung up and crossed the street, dropping the tape recorder into a paper cup and throwing the cup into a wastebasket. Havel stepped into a

coffee shop and sat down in a window booth, where he had a good view of the vending machine and the side entrance to City Hall. He wanted to make sure the envelope was picked up -- it was, before Havel even had his jacket off. He also wanted to see who'd be coming to advise the mayor. And whether reporters showed up. The waitress stopped by his booth and he ordered coffee and, though it was still breakfast time, a steak sandwich, the most expensive thing on the menu. Why not? He was about to become a very wealthy man. Copyright 1999 by Jeffery Deaver