

Deception Point Study Guide

Deception Point by Dan Brown

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Plot Summary

Deception Point is a mystery and suspense thriller that combines in-depth knowledge of classified intelligence with high-tech weaponry and presidential politics in a very fast-paced, suspenseful novel. There are many plot twists and surprises throughout the story, and a wealth of interesting characters.

On the Milne Ice Shelf in the far north, a meteorite has been discovered under the ice that contains fossils of large bugs; proof of life on other planets. NASA is there, along with four civilian scientists to verify that the meteorite and its fossils are authentic. Rachel Sexton, a highly-competent, intelligence analyst with the National Reconnaissance Office, is sent there by the President of the United States to also confirm what has been found. Rachel is the daughter of Presidential candidate Senator Sedgewick Sexton, who is running against the current President and is ahead in the polls.

The President goes live with a press conference to announce to the world NASA's discovery of proof of extra-terrestrial life. Rachel, after first verifying that the meteorite is real, begins to see some strange contradictions, and along with Michael Tolland, an oceanographer, and some others, embarks on a terrifying quest to find out the truth behind the meteorite. Along the way, they are attacked by assassins and barely escape with their lives from some terrifying situations.

Meanwhile, the race for the presidential election hangs in the balance, as a NASA victory will cement the current President's place in the White House, but evidence of a NASA conspiracy will ensure that Sexton wins the election. The book climaxes with Rachel and Michael finding all the evidence they need to prove that the meteorite is fake, while simultaneously escaping from a team of deadly assassins, and the mastermind of the conspiracy, William Pickering, Rachel's boss and the director of her intelligence agency.

The White House tells the world that the meteorite was planted; Sexton is betrayed by his closest adviser, disgraced by a sex scandal, and threatened with blackmail regarding illegal campaign practices. Michael and Rachel get together in the end, and the media speculates that the current President will keep his office for another term.

Prologue

Prologue Summary

Deception Point is a mystery and suspense thriller that combines in-depth knowledge of classified intelligence with high tech weaponry and presidential politics in a very fast-paced, suspenseful novel. There are many plot twists and surprises throughout the story, and a wealth of interesting characters.

Dr. Charles Brophy is on a dog sled in the far north when a helicopter appears. Two men disembark and force him at gunpoint to transmit a prepared message over his radio. They then force him and his dogs into their helicopter. At 4000 feet, the helicopter banks, and Dr. Brophy and his dogs are thrown out the open door into the snow below.

Prologue Analysis

This is a very dramatic opening, as it is not revealed where this takes place, who the men in the helicopter are, or what the message is that Dr. Brophy is forced to read. Dr. Brophy is both bewildered and terrified before he is killed. This chapter opens the novel with suspense and drama, which will continue throughout the story.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary

Rachel Sexton is meeting her father at a well-known restaurant in Washington, DC. Rachel's father is Senator Sedgewick Sexton, the republican candidate for President. Her father is trying unsuccessfully to get her to leave her job as intelligence liaison to the White House. While there, Rachel is paged. On her way to work, she is paged again. The message is the same as the first: that she is to report to her boss, the director of the National Reconnaissance Office immediately. As Rachel makes her way to the director's office, she is paged for a third time. When she meets with her boss, William Pickering, he informs her that the President of the United States wants to see her immediately. Pickering appears concerned that the President intends to capitalize on the rift between Rachel and her father, who is the President's political opponent. Pickering does not have any details regarding why the president wants to meet with Rachel, but he is suspicious of the President's motives. Rachel is escorted to a waiting helicopter that she assumes is taking her to the White House.

Meanwhile, three men are in a storm tent, carefully watching the happenings inside a structure several hundred feet away that was constructed just ten days ago. They are code-named Delta One, Delta Two and Delta Three. Outside, everything is calm, but inside there is information that will change the world; people have already died to protect the information. The three men have state-of-the-art surveillance equipment and weaponry. They activate a small, fly-sized robot, called a microbot that is inside the structure. They watch the live feed as the microbot hovers over the heads of the technicians, scientists, and specialists inside the habsphere, who are excitedly discussing their disbelief over a recent discovery. The three Deltas feel that things are progressing as they should and put the microbot away.

Chapters 1-5 Analysis

It is apparent from the start that Rachel and her father do not get along. The senator is condescending and belittles Rachel's job and her unmarried status. Senator Sexton is not at all a sympathetic character. This section introduces two of the main characters and indicates that the relationship between them is strained. The nature of Rachel's job means that she is privy to top secret intelligence. This knowledge will help her through the course of the novel. Having Rachel paged three times in thirty minutes creates a sense of urgency, which adds to the suspense. Rachel respects and admires Pickering and sees him as a bit of a father figure. The theme of deception is apparent here, as Pickering's looks are described by Rachel as deceiving. He is physically forgettable and unimposing, yet he has access to the country's top secrets. The theme of politics is also explored here, as Pickering is not a politician, but the information he manages has political implications and informs the political and military decisions made by the highest levels of government.

There is a small link created here that the three Deltas could be the same men that killed Dr. Brophy, and the location is described similarly - dark, cold, windy. More mystery and suspense is created here, as it is not apparent who the three men are, where they are, what they are watching, or why.

Deception Point

Summary and Analysis



Chapters 6 - 10

Chapters 6 - 10 Summary

Rachel is transported via helicopter to see President Zachary Herney aboard Air Force One, which is parked at an old NASA launch site. They go to his on-board office, and he admits to Rachel that he intends to use her for political purposes. The President tells Rachel that NASA has made a very important discovery and wants to know if Rachel shares her father's poor opinion of space exploration. Rachel admits that NASA has had its fair share of costly and well-publicized mistakes lately that her father has used to his advantage. President Herney admits that he has always been a huge supporter of NASA, and they have recently made a discovery that will justify all the money invested in the agency.

Meanwhile, Senator Sexton is in a limousine on his way to a live debate being broadcast by CNN. With him is his campaign assistant, Gabrielle Ashe. They are discussing the President and how he has not been seen or heard from in a week. Gabrielle tells the Senator that a contact in the White House has informed her that the President had a meeting with NASA last week, and when he emerged, he immediately cleared his schedule. Sexton and Gabrielle speculate that this must mean the President received bad news from NASA. Sexton has been attacking the president in the press on the issue of NASA and their overspending the past several months. NASA has become the cornerstone of Sexton's campaign, and Sexton refers to NASA as the epitome of government overspending. Gabrielle was the one who first brought the issue of NASA overspending to the Senator's attention, and it has made Sexton's campaign very successful. Gabrielle finds Sexton charismatic and admires how he has dedicated his life to public service in honor of his wife, who is dead. Gabrielle is also embarrassed by the night she had sex with Sexton in his campaign office. Somehow, word got out to the media about the affair, and although it was true, the Senator denied it vehemently and accused the White House of betraying the memory of his dead wife. In the end, the leak made the White House just look bad, which helped Sexton.

Chapters 6 - 10 Analysis

Wallops Island is a former NASA launch site, which is the first reference to NASA, which will be an important "player" through the course of the story. NASA is such a critical component of Sexton's campaign that he cannot afford even a minor NASA victory during his campaign.

It is revealed in this section that the Senator had a one-time indiscretion with his campaign aide, which will come back to haunt him as the story progresses. Sexton is portrayed as cold and self-serving, but Gabrielle sees him as charismatic and a great potential president. On the other hand, President Herney is described as friendly and



easy-going, with a wry sense of humor. Rachel is more at ease with him than she is with her own father.

Working closely with the Senator, Gabrielle has become a little disillusioned with politics. She sees how easily the Senator lies and also a little of how self-righteous he is. The Senator's duplicitous and self-serving nature is told from two perspectives now—that of his daughter and his closest aide. The theme of deception is also explored here, as it is apparent how easily and convincingly the Senator can deceive others.

The rift between NASA and the NRO is also discussed here, through Rachel's recollection of how Pickering feels about NASA. Both NASA and the NRO are space-related organizations, but the NRO's main goal is to keep its discoveries secret, while NASA publicizes every discovery, which Pickering feels is a threat to national security.



Chapters 11 - 15

Chapters 11 - 15 Summary

Rachel ponders what the President has told her. She thinks a monumental discovery must mean that NASA has discovered evidence of extra-terrestrial life, but at the same time, she believes this is impossible. President Herney further explains to Rachel that he has enlisted the expertise of four civilian scientists, who have their own reputations to protect and would only verify NASA data if it was in fact correct. He then brings Rachel to an airplane hangar, while he leaves via helicopter for the White House. The President is very aware of how disillusioned his staff have become and asks his secretary to arrange a meeting for all White House staff in the Oval Office at 4 pm.

Senator Sexton is taking a taxi to the lower garage of a local hotel. He has a secret meeting with an unknown man inside a white mini-van. This is not the first time that the senator has met with this man; the man, and other very powerful men that this man represents, have been directing large amounts of money to the Senator's campaign. Once he is President, the Senator promises he will do something for them. The man tells Senator Sexton that six other very powerful men want to meet with the Senator tonight at his home.

The Delta Force is still in position in the far north. Their mission thus far has just been to watch, a most unusual mission for them. They have received their assignment from an unknown, androgynous controller, who contacts them to let them know another person has become involved; a woman. The Delta Force informs the controller that everything appears to be going as planned. The controller notifies the Delta Force that the information is scheduled to go live in 8 hours.

Chapters 11 - 15 Analysis

Rachel is suspicious of the timing of the discovery, in that a monumental discovery is exactly what NASA and the President need to secure their futures. Suspense is created because the discovery is described as monumental, but it is not revealed what it is. Talk of scientists and a discovery provides a link to the three Deltas and what it is being observed in the North.

Politics are apparent in this section, as President Herney worries about how he is perceived by his staff. It is important to him that they are with him, as he knows that he needs his staff behind him to mount a successful campaign. Conversely, it seems as though Sexton is engaged in unethical campaign dealings. There is a great deal of secrecy surrounding his meeting; it is unknown at this point who the man is, but he is later revealed to be the head of the Space Frontier Federation. The secrecy of the meeting and the unknown identity of the person Sexton is meeting create suspense.



It is revealed that the team of Deltas are the Delta Force, an arm of the US military. There is also an allusion to how a microbot has caught a prominent senator having an affair with his aide. This is Gabrielle and Senator Sexton; the implication is that there are photos of their illicit affair, which will become important later in the story. The fact that the controller is aware of when the announcement is scheduled to go live indicates that the person has access to to very top secret information. This makes it sound as though the controller is from the White House. The woman that the controller is telling the Delta Force about is Rachel.



Chapters 16 - 20

Chapters 16 - 20 Summary

Rachel is flying over the Atlantic. She has a fear of open water from an accident as a child, where she fell through the ice and was saved by her mother. Her mother died a few years earlier, and Rachel blames her father for her mother's death. Since the death, the rift between Rachel and her father has increased. Rachel lands on the Milne Ice Shelf, a glacier in the far north, and is transported to a large NASA-made structure called a habisphere. Here, she is greeted by NASA administrator Lawrence Ekstrom, who informs her that he would prefer that she not be part of the announcement and NASA's victory. He explains to Rachel that a discovery has been made by NASA's Polar Orbiting Density Scanner, part of the EOS constellation. PODS scans the ice looking for indications of global warming by doing density scans; a pod discovered an anomaly in the arctic ice that turned out to be a meteorite that landed 300 years earlier. Rachel is unimpressed, and Ekstrom informs her that the significance of the discovery will be explained to her by the civilian scientists. A thousand meters away, the Delta Force watch Rachel's arrival through a pair of binoculars.

In Washington, the President is talking to his senior adviser, Marjorie Tench, about the upcoming CNN debate with Senator Sexton that afternoon. The President intends to send a junior adviser, but Tench suggests she go instead. Herney has reservations because Tench usually works behind the scenes and does not have looks that are TV friendly. Additionally, the President fears that sending his senior adviser will make him look desperate and scared. Tench explains why that image is actually a good thing, and Herney admires her incredible political savvy. Tench's presence at the CNN debate makes Gabrielle very uneasy. Gabrielle knows that Herney must realize that sending Tench makes him look desperate. Gabrielle tries to warn the Senator, but he does not seem to share her concern.

Tench is an avid supporter of NASA, who has had a very public string of failures recently and who has also been often bashed in the media by Sexton. Sexton wonders if this is a tactical error by Herney, or if he is setting up his senior adviser to take the fall for his support of NASA.

Chapters 16 - 20 Analysis

The fact that Rachel is afraid of open water will continue to play a large part in the story. The location is also very foreboding and dangerous; dark, very windy, and incredibly cold and desolate. Ekstrom is dismayed at Rachel's presence and knows she is there for purely political reasons. This is the reason for some of the friction between these two characters. In turn, his attitude is apparent to Rachel, which puts her off.



Tench is obviously aware of the NASA finding. More suspense is created here, as Tench's idea is a good one, but it is not revealed what it is. The theme of politics is important in this chapter, as the President wants to send a junior aide to frustrate Sexton, yet sending Tench will make the President look desperate. Politics is about appearances. Tench's political savvy is evident as well, as she is going to debate the Senator to lure him into looking stupid when the NASA discovery is made public. It does not occur to Sexton that the President may be setting up Sexton. His arrogance is very apparent. There is a hint of foreshadowing when Gabrielle thinks "plenty of campaigns had been lost by candidates who went for the knockout when all they needed was to finish the round" (p. 86). Gabrielle tells Sexton to take it easy, but Sexton is overconfident at Tench's presence, which will lead him into doing exactly what Tench wants.

The themes of politics and deception are intertwined here, as Tench's appearance makes it look as though the White House is desperate, but it is actually a political tactic.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

Ekstrom introduces Rachel to Michael Tolland, a well-known oceanographer with a highly-popular weekly television show, and Corky Marlinson, a world-renowned astrophysicist. Preparations are being made for President Herney's press conference announcing the discovery. Corky gives Rachel a lesson in meteorites, explaining what differentiates meteorites from rocks on earth. The first distinguishing feature is the outer fusion crust of the rock, which gets charred from contact with earth's atmosphere and gravitational pull. This also causes directional striations in the crust. The second feature is the presence of chondrules, small metallic blobs within the rock that are only found in rocks from space. The third feature is the nickel content, which is mid-range, while rocks on earth have either low or high nickel content.

Corky then shows Rachel a core sample from the meteorite found in the Milne Ice Shelf. Rachel can see the charred fusion crust and the chondrules, and Corky assures her that he tested the sample himself and it has a mid-range nickel content. Rachel is convinced by Corky that the sample is from a meteorite. Corky and Michael tell Rachel to flip the core sample over and look at the other side. When she does, she sees the fossilized imprint of a large bug. Michael watches as the implications of the fossilized bug sink in with Rachel. He explains that scientists have long believed that extra-terrestrial life would be in the form of bugs because of their resilience to environmental extremes and the sheer quantity that abound on earth; they outnumber all other species combined. Because insects can survive extreme environments, they are the most likely to survive the extremes in space and on other planets.

Rachel is introduced to another civilian scientist, a paleontologist named Wailee Ming. Corky pockets the core sample as Ming explains that the fossils fit into the earth's taxonomy system, and according to Darwinian classification, the fossils are the of same family as the louse. Corky shows Rachel a large cross-section of the meteorite showing dozens of the fossils. Ming explains that on earth, bug size is limited by gravity, but on planets with less gravity, bug size is not limited in the same way. Michael explains to a confused Rachel how life on another planet could fit into earth's taxonomy system. For Michael, the fossils prove the theory of panspermia, that life on earth came from another planet. Earth used to be a lifeless planet, but then a meteorite crashed into the seas and seeded the first microbial beings.

Corky tells Rachel that Michael has been asked by the President to prepare a short documentary explaining the significance of the meteorite to the American people. Corky assumes Rachel is there to be in the video, to lend even more credibility to the find, as the daughter of NASA's biggest opponent. Rachel herself wonders what her role is to be in the announcement of the discovery. The group makes their way over to where the meteor is being lifted out of the ice. Rachel is introduced to the fourth civilian scientist, a glaciologist named Norah Mangor.



In Washington, Tench and Sexton are ten minutes into their debate on CNN, and Sexton is discussing how he will fund his programs by cutting back on NASA's budget. Tench asks the Senator point blank, whether, if elected, he would choose to discontinue the space program. Sexton says he would. Tench further asks about his stand on the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence Program, and Sexton boldly states that if NASA has not yet found proof of extra-terrestrial life, it is obvious they never will.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

In this section, Rachel and Michael meet for this first time. They are two of the main characters, and through the course of the story, they develop romantic feelings for each other. It is also revealed that there is going to be a press conference about the meteorite that evening. This links back to when the controller told the Delta Team that the information was set to go live at 8pm. The fact that Corky has put the core sample in his pocket is important, as it plays a big part later in helping Rachel to uncover the deception.

The sample demonstrates to Rachel that advanced life forms exist elsewhere besides earth. It is also finally revealed what the import of the NASA discovery is, and the implications for the presidential elections. In light of the discovery, it is obvious that Tench is baiting Sexton into saying something that will make him look like a fool after NASA's discovery is announced. In his arrogance, Sexton plays right into Tench's hands. From the control booth, Gabrielle can tell something is up, but Sexton confuses Tench's manipulation for blundering. It is clear now why Tench wanted to face off against Sexton in the CNN debate. Not only did it make him overconfident, she also deftly maneuvered him into taking a strong stance against NASA. This is an indication of how politically savvy Tench is, as well as how much more impact the NASA discovery is going to have on the presidential campaign of both Herney and Sexton.

Politics and the implications of the meteorite are a cause for concern for Rachel as she wonders if she is going to be used as a political pawn because of who her father is. Rachel also recognizes Herney's strategic political move to have a well-liked television scientist explain the discovery. She also admires Herney's use of civilian scientists to back up NASA's claim, since they have nothing to gain by doing so, and their reputations are on the line if they endorse a fraud.

Corky's character is full of humor and adds comic relief amid the suspense and drama. Norah Mangor is also very sharp witted. These characters and their dialogue add humor and fun to the suspense, drama and mystery.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary

Senator Sexton and Gabrielle are leaving the CNN debate in Sexton's limousine. Gabrielle is still unsettled, while Sexton is clearly gloating. Sexton receives a call on his personal cell phone and schedules a meeting at his apartment for later that evening. Gabrielle is surprised by this, as Sexton is usually opposed both to having any meetings during his personal time and to having meetings in his personal space. Sexton explains to her that it is someone very important that needs that extra personal touch. Gabrielle has also received a message from her informant at the White House. This is the same source that had previously given her all of the information on NASA's failures and overspending. Gabrielle has been passing that information on to Senator Sexton, but has not told him from where the information has come. The informant's message tells Gabrielle that there is more information, but they want to meet Gabrielle in person just outside the East Gate of the White House. Gabrielle is to come alone.

On the Milne Ice Shelf, Norah is explaining to Rachel, Michael, Corky, and Wailee how she is extracting the meteorite from the ice without digging. They are winching the glacier up through the ice by heating it up, so that it melts the snow around it as it rises. Norah tells Rachel that she has taken random ice samples and has pegged the date of the meteorite to have fallen at about 1716, which is also the year that NASA had calculated, and the year that historical records indicate a northern exploration team seeing a ball of fire in the sky. As the meteor is lifted from the ice, Rachel sees that the pool that is created is a good four feet below the surface of the ice they are standing on, making it a deadly for anyone that may fall in. Rachel is then led to another room in the habisphere to receive a secure video call from the President.

Lawrence Ekstrom feels as though everything is falling into place. Though reluctant at first, he is now happy with the President's decision to bring Michael Tolland on board. The press room is being put together in the North quadrant of the habisphere, and the rest of the structure is dark.

Chapters 26-30 Analysis

Gabrielle is feeling increasingly as though she is being deceived by the Senator, which makes her uneasy. Though Gabrielle is aware that the Senator has other flaws, it is his deceit that causes the most concern for her. Gabrielle is also concerned because she has never been asked by the informant to meet in person before, and the location, so close to the White House, also makes her nervous. Politics is further explored in this chapter, as the source of the NASA information is revealed to be a secret informant inside the White House. Gabrielle suspects the informant wants to secure a position with Sexton's administration, since it seems apparent that Herney's administration is in trouble. This adds to the mystery and suspense of the novel.



The relationship between Michael and Rachel starts to develop in this section. The authenticity of the meteorite is also being proven on several fronts. The physical characteristics have been authenticated, but now, the date and location of the meteorite coincides with documented history of an actual meteoric event. Even in the awe of the discovery, Rachel realizes what a devastating blow this will be to her father's campaign. Even though alone it is an amazing discovery, it is the implications it has for the current political situation that adds more weight and urgency to the discovery.

There is also some foreshadowing with the mention of the pylons around the extraction pit and how they will prevent anyone from falling in. The extreme danger of the environment is again portrayed.

Deception Point

Summary and Analysis

T



Chapters 31-35

Chapters 31-35 Summary

The Delta Force is keeping an eye on what's happening inside the habisphere through the microbot. The habisphere is dark because the technicians are testing the television lighting. Delta Two sees that something strange is happening in the extraction pit.

Meanwhile, Wailee Ming is contentedly sitting at his work station alone, away from the press area where the others are celebrating. Ming feels a large vibration beneath his feet and realizes it is a large chunk of the glacier breaking away, creating a new iceberg. Ming gets up and walks to the extraction pit, noticing how beautiful the water is in the dark. He sees that something is wrong and wonders how NASA and the other scientists could have missed it. Ming is excited that he is the one to have made the discovery and runs to get a beaker for a water sample. The Delta Force is still watching the inside of the habisphere via microbot. They see Ming perched precariously on the edge of the extraction pit trying to collect a water sample. They have been authorized by the controller to use whatever means necessary to protect the secrets of the Milne Ice Shelf. They need to stop Ming from collecting the sample, but the microbot is not equipped with weapons.

Meanwhile, Rachel is talking to the President via secure video link. The President has indicated he does not want the recent controversy regarding NASA to taint the discovery of the meteorite. The President explains that Rachel's position as White House intelligence liaison, as well as the daughter of NASA's biggest critic, gives her enormous credibility, and he wants her to endorse NASA's find. Rachel mistakenly thinks the President wants her to publicly endorse the discovery, but he explains that he would just like her to brief his staff on the meteorite. His staff has been begging him to back off on NASA funding, and an endorsement of NASA's discovery by the daughter of the President's opponent will quell any hint of controversy. Rachel agrees to brief his staff, and the President links her via live video to the Oval Office, where his staff has assembled. At first, Rachel is nervous but then begins to speak confidently about the importance of the NASA discovery. Rachel tells the staff that it is her job to analyze and verify data and that in her professional opinion, the information she will share with them is true and unbiased. Rachel goes on to say she is about to share some of the most exciting news ever revealed in the Oval Office.

Chapters 31-35 Analysis

Rachel is very loyal to her father, and even though she backs the President, and believes in the NASA discovery, she resists the idea of publicly embarrassing her father. The theme of politics is also explored, as Herney uses Rachel in a political move to ensure his staff believes in the discovery. Rachel is not only intelligent, but also confident and funny. Even facing a group of people who are the political opponents of



her father, and therefore likely to reject anything she says, she demonstrates poise and wit and captures their attention. Rachel is a very likable character and basically the complete opposite of her father.

The darkness of the habisphere is mentioned several times. The significance of the darkness is now apparent, as it forces Ming to notice what the water looks like in the dark. Ming tells no one what he sees because he wants to be the one to break the news. The desire to have all the credit ultimately results in his death. The ice breaking off is also a hint as to another danger that lurks on the Milne Ice Shelf, as well as foreshadowing of what will happen to Rachel and the others later in the story. It becomes clear in this chapter that the discovery is not what it seems and that the Delta Force is there to ensure that no one discovers the true nature of the meteorite.

Deception Point

Summary

Analysis

|



Chapters 36-40

Chapters 36-40 Summary

Ming is trying to extract a water sample, balancing over the rim of the pit with one hand holding him up. Suddenly, a speck of metal flies into his eye, and he lets go of the rim to protect his eye. Doing so causes Ming to lose his balance and fall into the extraction pit. Quickly, the icy water engulfs him so completely that he is unable to even draw breath to call for help. Within minutes, he has drowned.

Meanwhile, Michael gives the finished documentary to a technician in the press area. Alone, Michael is remembering his wife Celia, who died of advanced lymphoma four years earlier. Celia was a school teacher, and Michael used to make documentaries for her that she would show her class. The documentaries became so popular that Celia sent one to NBC, which is how Michael ended up with a weekly television show. Rachel and Corky look for Michael and find him over by the extraction pit. As they approach, they see that the water is shimmering with blue-green flecks of phosphorescence. Rachel and Corky have no idea what the flecks are. Michael does, but is confused as to their presence in the extraction pit.

Michael explains to Rachel and Corky that the flecks are bioluminescent flagellates, a type of plankton found in the Arctic Ocean. The problem is that the extraction pit should be made up of freshwater, melted from glacial ice. Michael speculates that there must be a crack somewhere in the glacier and ice has seeped in. The glacier that they are on is not attached to land; it is a floating ice shelf, 100 feet thick and about a mile out to sea. Rachel is confused because according to Norah Mangor's core samples, the glacier is free of cracks and fissures, and this is the cornerstone of the ice dating that verifies the age of the meteorite. Michael sends Corky to find Norah and Wailee and notices that even as they speak, the specks are beginning to fade. Michael checks the salinity of the water by dipping his coat sleeve into the extraction pit and licking it.

The Delta Force has been listening to their conversation via microbot. What they have heard concerns them greatly, and they call the controller to say that there is a serious problem.

Gabrielle is at the East Gate of the White House waiting for her informant, who is fifteen minutes late. Gabrielle is about to leave when she is approached by a Secret Service guard, who tells her to go through the Gate. Gabrielle is momentarily stunned, but enters the White House Grounds. Gabrielle has a guest pass and is being led through the White House in plain view. Eventually, Gabrielle is led to the map room, the portal into the West Wing of the White House. When Gabrielle enters, she is greeted by Marjorie Tench.



Chapters 36-40 Analysis

The Delta Force, improvising, has crashed the microbot into Ming's eye. Ming's need to have sole credit for what he has found partially led to his death. Had he been willing to share the discovery, someone might have been able to help hold him back from the edge, or help him out of the pit. As Ming dies, he sees tiny specks in the water. This could be construed as a dying hallucination, but they are actually what Ming was trying to get a sample of when he fell into the extraction pit.

The theme of deception and truth are also evident, as Rachel does feel remorse for her father, but is also strongly on the side of truth. She is telling the truth and therefore feels as though her father is getting what he deserves, especially since she thinks he's a liar. Rachel's fear of being on the open water is apparent here again as well. She is very uneasy knowing they are floating on the ocean.

Gabrielle is concerned that someone will recognize her, since she is one of the President's opponent's most visible aides. As she enters the actual White House grounds, she becomes even more concerned. Gabrielle is unsettled because she is a known Sexton adviser and is in the White House for what is supposed to be a secret meeting. She is also very confused to have been led to the map room, which can only be accessed by very senior presidential staff. This indicates to her that her informant is an important player. This is confirmed when it turns out to be Marjorie Tench.



Chapters 41-45

Chapters 41-45 Summary

Norah Mangor refuses to believe that there are bioluminescent plankton in the extraction pit. Michaels says they must have died in the freshwater environment. To settle everyone's doubts, Norah takes a water sample and tests it. She is shocked to find three percent salinity and the presence of dead plankton. The four wonder how this is possible when Norah took fifteen ice samples that showed that the glacier is solid, and PODS did not pick up any change in density. Additionally, because the surface they are on is 100 feet above sea level, any crack would cause the water to flow down towards the ocean instead of up towards the surface, due to gravity. Ekstrom asks the group what they are doing and they tell him about the saline content. Rachel explains to the group that she once saw one of Michael's shows that dealt with plankton's ability to hibernate in frozen environments and then wake up when there is a thaw. Rachel speculates that there may be a fissure somewhere that opened and then filled with saltwater and froze again. PODS is not sensitive enough to have picked up the difference in density between freshwater ice and saltwater ice.

Norah quickly disagrees with Rachel's assessment for two reasons. First, ice pockets are very thin and the meteor could not have passed through enough of them to create a three percent salinity. Also, her core samples were taken from above the meteorite and all around it and indicate a pristine, freshwater glacier. Corky does not understand why all this is so important. There is still a meteor with extra-terrestrial fossils in it. Rachel says that if one part of the meteor comes into question, it hurts the credibility of the entire discovery. Norah continues to insist that there is nothing wrong with her ice data, and she can prove it if she can get an ice reading from 200 feet outside the habsisphere. Ekstrom allows her to go only if they will go as a group as a safety precaution. He chooses not to send any of his staff with them because he wants to limit the people that know about this. They must hurry because the press conference is only hours away.

At the White House, Tench tells Gabrielle that she is the one who has been providing the NASA data, but only after Sexton had already begun bashing NASA in the media. Tench tells Gabrielle about the Space Commercialization Promotions Act, which would open space exploration to private companies. Tench says that the Act has been passed by congress four times, and all four times shot down by presidential veto. Tench is concerned that if Sexton becomes President, he would pass the Act. Gabrielle argues that she has never heard Sexton endorse such an act, but even if he did, private companies could explore space cheaper, even if that means profit comes before knowledge. Tench believes that profit before knowledge is the least of their worries, since she has heard proposals such as ejecting trash and dead bodies into space and strip mining asteroids. Not only would the pursuit of scientific endeavor be lost, but there would be utter chaos. Gabrielle is unconcerned; she says Sexton would weigh those concerns carefully were he in a position to make a decision about the Act. Tench responds by removing an envelope from her drawer containing financial documents that



indicate Sexton has been accepting large, illegal campaign contributions from private space companies. There are also photos of Sexton meeting with the head of the Space Frontier Federation.

Tench shows Gabrielle the rest of the contents of the envelope, which includes letters, photos, faxes and transcripts of telephone conversations, all evidence of Sexton accepting large amounts of money from the private space companies. The Space Frontier Foundation is the union that loosely represents the other companies, and there are photos of Sexton meeting with the head of the SFF. Gabrielle insists the White House has no means of getting the information, and the documents could easily be falsified. Tench assures Gabrielle that the White House did not collect the information; it came from an anonymous source. Tench says she has not leaked the information to the media because a lot of honest and innocent people would be hurt by the allegations, and Herney does not want to use scandal to get re-elected. Instead, Tench wants to use the information to make Gabrielle go public about her affair with Sexton. Tench shows Gabrielle the photos of her and Sexton in his office, very obviously engaged in a sexual affair.

Chapters 41-45 Analysis

Norah is very sensitive to anyone hinting that her data is incorrect. She is not there to protect NASA's credibility, but rather her own. Ekstrom's insistence that they leave the habsphere as a group makes it look likely that he is the controller, since keeping them together and out in a deadly terrain will make it easy to kill them. However, Ekstrom is as he seems - genuinely interested in their safety. This section also furthers the development of the relationship between Michel and Rachel. She admits her fears to him, and he wants to keep her safe and invites her to his home. Rachel, though afraid of the water, thinks that the suits they are wearing for such a short trek are a bit much. The foursome end up not returning to the habsphere, and the suits keep them alive.

Gabrielle is loyal to Sexton and chooses to believe the best about him. Even though everything Sexton has said indicates his desire to shut down NASA and open space up to private exploration, Gabrielle believes he will think carefully about the decision. Gabrielle also naively believes that no one could possibly know about her affair with Sexton. Though she thinks the worst when she sees the envelope, she calms herself with the notion that no one could possibly know. Gabriele works in the middle of a Presidential campaign, but does not seem to believe that her candidate is corruptible; however, he is. The political astuteness of Tench is evident in this section as well. By feeding Gabrielle NASA data, she has hurt her candidate in the short run, but believes that the long run will make it worthwhile. With the discovery of the NASA meteorite, it has. This was a gamble by Tench, and also makes it seem as though she is in on the fraud.

Tench uses a metaphor when talking about space if it were privatized, comparing privatized space exploration to the Wild West - chaos, no rules, anarchy. Politics is also talked about in many ways. Herney does not want to use negatives in his campaign and

so does not want to leak the bribery and sex scandal information. Also shown is how leaks to the media can be used to discredit the other candidate. Tench is also using information as leverage to force Gabrielle to discredit her own candidate. Tench thinks she can use Gabrielle as a pawn and that Gabrielle would willingly go on Herney's team to save her own skin. However, Gabrielle is a loyal Sexton supporter and refuses to believe Tench. It is also interesting that Tench knows about the NASA find, and therefore does not need to use the evidence to discredit Sexton. The President is about to receive a large boost without using negative information about Sexton.



Chapters 46-50

Chapters 46-50 Summary

Rachel, Michael, Corky, and Norah have left the habisphere and are tethered together. Michael feels uneasy because it is pitch black; the katabatic wind is at eighty knots, and the Milne Ice Shelf is on a slight downgrade towards the ocean. Norah lights a flare and sticks it in the ice. The four are two hundred and fifty yards from the habisphere, and there is a straight line of flares lighting their way back. Rachel sees the flame of one flare disappear for a moment and then reappear. Norah is untying the tarp to set up the Ground Penetrating Radar she is going to use to show if there is saltwater in the glacier. The GPR will take a cross section of the ice and create a printout that will show saltwater ice as a shadow. Norah aligns herself with the flares so she can get a straight shot of the extraction pit. She, too, sees one of the flames disappear for a moment. Michael takes the shot and they all look at the printout. There is the obvious outline of a human body in the extraction pit; however, more shocking is that the radar has captured something peculiar about the ice beneath the extraction pit. Norah begins yelling obscenities towards the habisphere.

Fifty yards away, Delta One speaks to the Controller via radio to say that the group of four know. Michael is looking at the printout and sees that there is a column of saltwater ice directly below the extraction pit. Norah explains that someone has drilled under the glacier and inserted the rock from beneath. This would explain the presence of the plankton. Corky is confused as to why anyone would bother doing this. There is a meteorite with fossils in it; it should not make any difference where it is found. Norah is anxious to get back to the habisphere to tell the others and drill core samples beneath the extraction pit to show the presence of salt water ice. Norah is on her way back towards the habisphere when she is knocked backwards, then Corky is. Rachel grabs Michael and they duck down behind the sled. Rachel sees one of the pellets that has knocked out Norah and Corky and realizes that it is an ice bullet from a new experimental weapon. Rachel now knows that they are being attacked by a military special operations team because they are the only ones cleared to use experimental weaponry. Rachel is shot in the stomach by an ice bullet and tells Michael to run.

Back in Washington, Gabrielle has left Tench's office, mortified at seeing the photos of herself and the Senator. Tench catches up with her and tells her that Gabrielle can choose how the world finds out about the affair. Tench says she needs a signed affidavit from Gabrielle by 8pm, or the President is going live with the bribery and the affair. Tench also tells Gabrielle that the photos of her and the Senator came from the same source as the financial information. Tench gives Gabrielle the photos and reminds her of the 8pm deadline. On the subway, Gabrielle tries desperately to reach Sexton. His cell phone has been turned off, so she calls his office and his secretary says that Sexton has been trying to reach Gabrielle. His evening has been blocked off for personal time and he has left his pager at the office. Gabrielle is wondering what to do about the photos. She knows that the White House needs her to verify their authenticity, or Sexton



will argue that they are forgeries. Gabrielle wonders about the authenticity of the rest of the information Tench showed her. Because the photos were real, Gabrielle assumed the rest must be too, but now she thinks that that was what Tench intended, for her to assume that the financial information was real because the photos were. Gabrielle is starting to believe that she is being set up by Tench and that the Senator is not taking bribes after all. Gabrielle figures that Tench must have discovered that someone in the White House was leaking information to Gabrielle, and Tench fired that person and is now pretending to be the leak. Desperate to see the Senator, Gabrielle heads towards his apartment.

Chapters 46-50 Analysis

In this section, the imagery used makes it apparent that the Milne Ice Shelf is a terrifying environment. It is pitch black, cold, and very windy. Further, they are on an extremely slippery ice shelf that is on a downgrade toward the frigid ocean. Michael is always worried about the well-being of the others. Because he could not save his wife, he feels extra responsible for the safety of those he cares about. Norah is a glaciologist and therefore used to surviving in the type of environment they are in, but Michael worries about Rachel's and Corky's safety. Additionally, there is now physical evidence, a printout, that casts doubt on the meteorite. There is also foreshadowing in that both Norah and Rachel see the flares disappear for a moment, where the Delta team has approached them. The four have been attacked by the Delta Force because they have uncovered information relating to how the meteorite has been faked. Rachel's knowledge of intelligence is important here because she is able to make the connection that they are being attacked by trained military assassins. She tells Michael to run because she understands that the four are not equipped to fight military assassins.

Tench has cleverly given Gabrielle the deadline of 8pm, which is also the same time as the press conference to announce the meteorite. The president is going live, but not about Sexton. After the NASA discovery, the President does not even need the bribery or sex scandal to assure himself the election. Gabrielle's loyalty and integrity are evident here. Even faced with the loss of her own career, she will not abandon Sexton. Gabrielle is aware of the political maneuver she thinks in which Tench is engaged - using the authenticity of the photos to convince Gabrielle of the validity of the rest of the information. In fact, the rest of the information is actually true. Gabrielle's loyalty plays here, too, in that she wants to believe her candidate is honest. Deception and politics are again intertwined in that Gabrielle believes that Tench is using deception and misdirection as a political tool.



Chapters 51-55

Chapters 51-55 Summary

When the ice bullets stop, Michael peers over the sled and sees three figures in white weather suits with rifles approaching Norah, who is unconscious. Michael watches as they unhook her tether and pack snow down her throat. Once they are done with Norah, they move on to Corky. Rachel is telling Michael to run. Michael is searching the sled for a weapon and sees a Mylar fabric balloon, used to carry small loads of equipment through the air. With the high arctic wind, Michael thinks it might momentarily help them escape the attackers. He hooks himself to Rachel and throws the balloon in the air. It immediately fills with air and yanks the trio away from their attackers. The Delta force begins shooting them with ice bullets again, but to no avail. The trio is quickly propelled along the glacier towards the Arctic Ocean. The Mylar balloon is picking up more speed than Michael had anticipated and Rachel, Corky and Michel are being dragged very quickly towards the Arctic Ocean. Just before they are about to hit the ocean, the rope snaps, and they fall to the ground and immediately go sliding towards the edge of the glacier. They fall off the edge of the main glacier onto a smaller sheet of ice that is connected to the glacier, but just barely. They look up and see the Deltas looking over the edge at them. Delta One throws a flash-bang grenade into the crevasse between the glacier and the sheet of ice. When it explodes, it causes the sheet of ice, with Michael, Rachel and Corky on it, to break away and drop off into the ocean.

Tench is happy with how her meeting with Gabrielle went. Tench knows that the meteorite press conference is only hours away and that that will be enough to kill Sexton's campaign. Getting Gabrielle to admit to the affair is just a bonus and will ensure that Herney wins by a larger margin. Tench enters the White House communications office, where a bulletin is being prepared for release to all of the world's major media centers. It states that the president will be holding an urgent press conference at 8pm and the details are classified. Tench tells the communications staff to send the bulletin. It is 6:15.

At Senator Sexton's apartment, Gabrielle bluffs her way past the doorman by pretending she is supposed to be at the meeting the Senator is having. At Sexton's door, his bodyguard tries to prevent Gabrielle from entering the apartment. Gabrielle waves the envelope Tench gave her under his nose with the prominent White House seal and says that she has urgent information for the Senator. Failure to let her into the apartment will ruin Sexton's campaign, and they will all lose their jobs. Believing her, the bodyguard lets Gabrielle in. As she enters, she hears several men's voices coming from the den. As she walks towards them, she sees several briefcases and jackets in the hallway with logos of private space companies. Gabrielle remembers what Tench said about the Senator taking bribes and quietly moves closer to hear what they are saying



Chapters 51-55 Analysis

The Delta Team is trying to make the deaths look accidental. By stuffing snow down Norah's throat, there is no evidence of what killed her. It will just look like she fell and then died from exposure. The Delta force is incessant; it is not enough to assume their targets are dead—they have to make sure to make sure. Rachel is very afraid of open water and now she is set adrift on the Arctic Ocean. More information is presented on the types of tactics and stealth that the Delta Team uses. They decide to get rid of the three with the flash-bang because it will just sound like another chunk of ice breaking off. The imagery is also terrifying. The trio is about to be set adrift on the ocean. For Rachel, especially, who is afraid of open water, this is very scary.

More information about political tactics is presented here. Tench uses a metaphor to describe politics, saying that it is like war and that a smart politician will attack their opponent on two fronts. Tench is attacking Sexton's politics as well as his personal life. This also further demonstrates how well Tench understands politics. It appears as though Tench was correct and Sexton is dealing privately with the private aerospace companies. Gabrielle values honesty, but is able to use deception to get what she wants and she lies convincingly. However, Gabrielle is not using deception to save herself, but instead to get to the Senator so that she can tell him what is happening. When she thinks that Sexton may actually be engaged in illegal activity, like Tench said, then she decides not to announce her presence.



Chapters 56-60

Chapters 56-60 Summary

As the sheet drops into the sea, Michael, Corky and Rachel are engulfed by the frigid ocean water. As the new iceberg tries to gain its balance, the three, tethered together, keep each other from going over the edges. Michael figures they only have another 30-40 minutes before they die of hypothermia. Rachel is angry that whoever has set up the fraud may get away with it. She assumes that it is Ekstrom and wonders if President Herney is also in on it. Rachel is sure they are going to die, but begins hitting the ice with the blunt end of her ax, sending a message through the ice to be picked up by NRO's oceanic listening system. She knows that if it gets heard, their location can be calculated, and someone will come and find them, dead, but with the GPR printout in her pocket, so that the truth will get out about the meteorite.

Back in the habisphere, a NASA technician has discovered the body of Dr. Ming in the extraction pit and has pulled him out. He tells Ekstrom, who instructs the technician to stow the body and tell no one about the accident. NASA has already been overshadowed by the presence of the civilian scientists, and Ekstrom tells the technician he does not want the carelessness of one of them to further overshadow the announcement about to be made. Ekstrom further argues that news of Ming's death would be devastating to morale this close to the press conference. The technician agrees to hide the body and stay quiet.

In Washington, Senator Sexton is at his apartment, meeting with the heads of the private space companies. He is commiserating with them over NASA's monopoly of space. The private agencies are constantly underbid by NASA to launch satellites, and then NASA uses the taxpayer's money to make up for the shortfall. Sexton promises that once he is in the White House, he will open space exploration to private companies; he wants these men to invest in his campaign to ensure he gets elected. Gabrielle hears every word.

Chapters 56-60 Analysis

Rachel's knowledge of intelligence and the secret ocean network will save them. Without Rachel's knowledge of the secret ocean network, she may not have sent the SOS that will end up saving their lives. Also apparent here is Rachel's need for people to know the truth and for people to not get away with lying, as well as Michael's desire to save everyone. Even as he is dying himself, he wants to try to help Rachel and Corky. He could not save his wife and felt helpless and hates feeling that way again.

Gabrielle can no longer deny that Sexton is taking illegal contributions. Even more so than the fact of privatizing space, Gabrielle is horrified that he is making promises before he gets elected about on what he intends to pass legislation. Sexton is deceitful



and self serving. He wants the money from the private companies to help him get elected. He does not actually care about NASA or space.

Ekstrom's main concern is protecting NASA and ensuring they get due credit. Hiding Ming's death seems callous and could be interpreted as the actions of the mastermind behind the fraud. However, Ekstrom does seem genuinely shocked at Ming's death, which should be a clue that he is not behind the accident—he is just callous and cares more for how the death will impact their announcement than caring about Ming being dead. Ekstrom tells Herney that there is a storm coming. The storm is an arctic storm about to hit the Milne Ice Shelf, but is also a metaphor for the storm in politics that is about to happen with the announcement of the meteorite and the cover up of the deception. Ekstrom is worried. This can be construed as worried about the plan unraveling, but he is actually worried about Ming's death and where the others are.



Chapters 61-65

Chapters 61-65 Summary

The nuclear Submarine USS Charlotte is in the Arctic Ocean; it has been stationed there for the last five days. It is a US Navy sub designed for stealth . One of the technicians is listening to the ocean and hears a dull, repetitive thud coming from the surface about three miles from their current location. Michael is losing feeling in his extremities as his body fights the oncoming hypothermia. He has accepted that it is only a matter of time before he freezes to death, but wishes he could save Rachel and Corky. He sees a large black object rise from the sea and thinks he must be hallucinating. He is grabbed and then loses consciousness. Rachel regains consciousness in a shower. Someone is holding her down and encouraging her to move her muscles as much as she can to encourage blood flow. She is given an injection and the burning in her muscles gives way to a severe ache and pins and needles. She sees that Michal and Corky are also in showers undergoing the same treatment.

At Sexton's apartment, Gabrielle is dismayed to learn that the Senator is, in fact, taking bribes from the private space companies. One of Sexton's visitors gets a phone call on his cell phone about the President's press conference at 8pm. Sexton turns on the television, where newscasters are speculating that Herney is going to announce that he is withdrawing from the presidential race. Gabrielle hears this and fears that the press conference is going to expose Sexton's bribery and affair. She concludes that maybe Tench was not bluffing after all. Gabrielle leaves the apartment and takes a cab to ABC television studios to see Yolanda Cole, a content editor with ABC for the past sixteen years. They have been friends since Gabrielle first moved to Washington. ABC is buzzing with the news about the press conference as everyone wonders what it could be about.

Gabrielle tells Yolanda that she thinks she knows what the press conference is going to be about, and shares her fears about the Sexton affair while showing Yolanda the photos and telling her what she heard at Sexton's apartment. Yolanda tells Gabrielle that she doubts the president would call an urgent press conference to talk about Sexton's sex life or shady campaign deals. Yolanda is much more concerned when she hears that Gabrielle is thinking about going public with the information herself. There is a lot of money and power behind a presidential campaign, and if Gabrielle brings the Senator down, she will make a lot of enemies in Washington. Yolanda explains to Gabrielle that the photos mean nothing without Gabrielle's corroboration, that Sexton will convincingly argue that they are a fraud perpetrated by the White House. Yolanda also tells Gabrielle that campaign finance is a complex issue, and it is entirely possible that Sexton's meeting this evening was well within legal parameters.

A source inside the White House calls to tell Yolanda that the press conference is NASA related. Yolanda speculates that the president is going to announce plans to scrap the Space Station. After meeting with Tench earlier, Gabrielle thinks that whatever the press



conference is about, it is bad news for Sexton. Gabrielle gives the incriminating photos to Yolanda to keep in her desk for safe-keeping. The press conference is in twenty minutes.

Chapters 61-65 Analysis

The Charlotte is picking up Rachel's SOS and they are only three miles away. The SOS is growing fainter, indicating that Rachel's energy is fading as she starts to freeze. The sub has been stationed there since five days ago, approximately since people started arriving on the Milne Ice shelf to look at the meteorite. Aboard the sub, the crew are trying to help Rachel, Michael and Corky fight hypothermia.

Gabrielle is growing more and more disillusioned with her candidate. She values truth and integrity and has come to realize that the Senator is sorely lacking those qualities. The press conference is approaching quickly, which adds urgency to whatever decision Gabrielle is going to make. What Yolanda says makes sense, but Gabrielle is still uneasy. She wants to believe Sexton, but it is hard after what Tench has said and what she has heard herself at Sexton's apartment. Gabrielle is struggling to do what she thinks is right.



Chapters 66-70

Chapters 66-70 Summary

Rachel, Michael and Corky are wrapped in blankets and being given shots of adrenaline to invigorate their muscles. Rachel feels rough, but wants to know where she is. The Captain of the Charlotte, Harold Brown, recognizes her name and says that Rachel has written many gists for him. Rachel fears that Michael and Corky will want to talk about the meteorite, but Rachel still understands that what they know is classified information and does not want it shared with others. Rachel sees the time and realizes that it is nine minutes until the President's press conference. She demands to speak with the President immediately, telling the Captain that the President is about to make a terrible mistake. She insists that the Captain put her in touch with the President right away.

A White House operator tries to get a cordless phone to the president when she is stopped just a few feet away by Marjorie Tench. Tench takes the phone and Rachel tells her that the meteorite data is wrong and that the President cannot go public. She further says that she believes the meteorite is an elaborate hoax set up by the NASA administrator, that the meteorite was inserted from beneath the ice shelf. Tench is furious and informs Rachel that she is relieved of her White House post effective immediately and threatens her that she better not make unfounded allegations regarding the meteorite again. Tench then calls Rachel's boss, William Pickering. Pickering is angry himself that he was not informed earlier of NASA's discovery. Tench tells Pickering that Rachel is trying to say that the meteorite is a fake and will probably be calling him shortly to make the false allegations. When he hangs up, his secretary informs him that Rachel is trying to contact him via encrypted AV. Rachel tells Pickering that there is something wrong with the meteorite.

President Herney is about to start the press conference and sees Tench angrily speaking on a cordless phone with a terrified White House operator next to her. He wonders what that is about, but starts the press conference. Herney tells the world that NASA's PODS satellite has found a 190-million-year-old meteorite that contains evidence of alien life forms. He tells the public that he has waited two weeks to make the announcement because he wanted to be absolutely sure of what they had. Along with NASA, top civilian researchers have endorsed the finding of the meteorite. Herney introduces Ekstrom, who tells the public more about the meteorite and plays Michael's documentary

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Sexton is completely distraught by this news.



Chapters 66-70 Analysis

Even on the brink of death, Rachel needs to ensure that the President gets the information he needs. Rachel has a very commanding presence, to come from the brink of death and give orders to a submarine captain. Rachel's knowledge of classified intelligence also plays a part here, in that she wonders what the Charlotte was doing so close by, knowing that it was not stationed in the Arctic Ocean.

Rachel has incorrectly suspected NASA of masterminding the deception. Tench accuses Rachel of being a "typical Sexton," trying to discredit the President. But Rachel is actually acting with integrity, trying to prevent the President from going public before he has all of the information, and so Rachel insisted on getting the truth out.

There is great use of irony in this chapter in that Sexton is the only one looking forward to the press conference and he is the one most hurt by it. Ekstrom admits here that he has "endorsed lies," which makes it seem as though he has masterminded the fraud, but this is not what he is referring to. Irony is also apparent in that Pickering is trying desperately to ensure no one knows that the meteorite is a fake, yet tells Tench that she should have listened to what Rachel said about meteorite being fake.

The use of intelligence and state of the art equipment is important here. Rachel is taking steps to ensure what she tells Pickering does not get intercepted. It is ironic, however, that she has now shared her suspicions with the person who is responsible for everything



Chapters 71-75

Chapters 71-75 Summary

Rachel, with Michael and Corky, is explaining her findings to Pickering. She is careful to give only the facts and not implicate anyone. Pickering tells Rachel that Tench has called him regarding Rachel's allegations, but he did not know there were three of them or that they had proof. Pickering speculates that the meteorite was inserted to give credibility to the fact that it's a meteorite, and Corky says it is definitely a meteorite. He shows Pickering the core sample that he has and says that the nickel content, chondrules, and fusion crust indicate that it is definitely a meteorite. Rachel says she assumes the meteorite was inserted in the Milne Ice Shelf so that PODS could lay claim to the discovery, and it would be associated with a known impact. Pickering asks Michael for his opinion on the meteorite situation. Michael feels strongly, like Corky, that the meteorite and fossils are real. Rachel tells Pickering that they should alert the White House. Pickering tells Rachel to wait because the President may already be part of it, and all the scientific data backs up NASA's claim. Once the White House is involved, Pickering can no longer protect Rachel. Pickering tells the trio it is only a matter of time before someone discovers where they are, and he wants to move them somewhere safe. He sends a chopper to get them from the sub and transport them elsewhere.

Back in Washington, Sexton is in his apartment alone. All his guests left in a hurry after the President's announcement. He is blaming Tench, Ashe, the White House, the President and the world for what has happened to him. The news is still on, and newscasters are speculating that Sexton is done. Reporters are calling incessantly and Sexton is cursing the timing of NASA's find.

Meanwhile, Gabrielle is still at ABC studios and is stunned by the President's announcement. Yolanda tries to convince Gabrielle that although this is bad news for Sexton, it's good news for Gabrielle personally because the President doesn't need to use the sex scandal to bring down Sexton. Gabrielle feels as though everything is her fault, even though she knows there is nothing she could have done to stop it.

The storm has hit the Milne Ice Shelf. Ekstrom is beginning to worry because people have started asking where the civilians are. A technician tells Ekstrom that he has an urgent call on the secure phone line. He also mentions the Sub off the coast of the Ice Shelf, assuming that it was Ekstrom that arranged for it to be there. Ekstrom takes the call and it is Marjorie Tench, saying that they have a serious problem with Rachel.

Chapters 71-75 Analysis

By having Michael and Corky with her during her call to Pickering, Rachel has unknowingly put them in danger. Pickering is also aware now that they have the printout and the core sample. This chapter again uses irony, since Pickering hates NASA but is



trying to make them look good and save them. The theme of deception is also evident, as Pickering is speculating with the others as to why the rock was inserted under the glacier, when he actually already knows why.

The difference between Sexton and Gabrielle is very evident here. Gabrielle blames herself, while Sexton blames everyone but himself. Although Gabrielle was the source of the information about NASA, it is Sexton who chose to make it the cornerstone of his entire campaign. It is also apparent that Sexton and Gabrielle were fed the information on purpose to bring them down when the "discovery" was made. It is interesting that Sexton laments the timing of the discovery. Not only was the timing staged, but Rachel also thought the timing was convenient when she learned that NASA had made a discovery.

The metaphor of the storm moving in is mentioned again. The storm coming towards the Milne Ice Shelf is imminent, as is the storm that is about to happen when the meteorite is discovered to be a fake. The theme of deception is also explored in a different way here in how the military uses wide-spread deception to keep the public in the dark for the purposes of National security, so no other nations can steal the technology.

Ekstrom and Tench worrying about Rachel makes it seem as though they are colluding to hide the true nature of the meteorite, when in fact they are worried about Rachel casting doubt on what they believe is a real meteorite with real fossils. It is interesting phrasing to say that Ekstrom is worried that people have noticed the others are missing, rather than he himself is concerned that they are missing. This makes it seem as though his only concern is that people have noticed, rather than what has actually happened to them.



Chapters 76-80

Chapters 76-80 Summary

The President of the Space Frontier Federation visits Sexton at his apartment. Sexton feels as though all is lost, and there is no way to recover. The President of the SFF seems much less concerned and tells Sexton that there is still hope. The man shows Sexton a tape of two press conferences featuring Chris Harper, the section manager for PODS. In the first, Harper is informing the public that PODS has had a malfunction in its computer, but they hope to have it fixed shortly. In the second, given just two weeks ago, Harper is telling the public that they have found a work-around for the PODS computer malfunction. He looks very uncomfortable, much more so than in the previous press conference. The man tells Sexton that he believes Harper is lying, which makes both men wonder how the meteorite was discovered. Sexton is feeling hopeful for his campaign again and thinks he may be able to discredit the NASA find from within their ranks. Sexton assumes Gabrielle must have a contact inside NASA, since she has been bringing him classified information for months. Sexton's bodyguard also reveals that Gabrielle was at the apartment earlier, and Sexton realizes she must know enough now to understand what is going on. He worries about what she will do with the information because he needs her on his side right now.

Rachel, Michael, and Corky are aboard a military aircraft. While Corky sleeps, Rachel ponders the mystery of the meteorite. Rachel is also concerned for her father, since making NASA such an issue has now come back to hurt his campaign badly. Rachel takes the core sample from Corky while he is sleeping and brings it to Michael. She wants the two of them to forget all of their assumptions about the sample and start again from scratch.

Meanwhile, the Delta Force is also on a military aircraft, continuing their mission. Their controller is very upset about their results thus far and has given them new orders.

Back in Washington, Gabrielle is still at ABC Studios when Sexton calls her on her cell phone. He volunteers the information that he had met with the heads of the space agencies earlier but wanted to keep it private because it would look bad. He assures Gabrielle that everything is above board and any contributions are well within the legal limits. He also tells Gabrielle that he may have a way for them to get back in the presidential race. Sexton tells Gabrielle that he needs her to get him some information and tells her his plan. Gabrielle believes in Sexton again and wants to redeem herself, whatever it takes.

Tench calls Pickering and tells him that she knows he has spoken to Rachel and demands to know where they are, saying that Rachel poses a direct threat to the presidency. Pickering tells Tench that given the choice between whether Tench is lying or Rachel is lying, he believes Tench is lying. Tench tells him that she can explain



everything, but needs to do so in person. They agree to meet at the FDR Memorial in an hour. Tench then phones Ekstrom to say that Pickering is going to be a problem.

Chapters 76-80 Analysis

The President of the SFF is never referred to by name, only title. The deception of the meteorite is starting to come apart from two sources - Rachel, and now her father. Piece by piece, it is coming out. In politics, things can change quickly, and for Sexton, they have. He has gone from being the front runner, to out of the race, to having a hope again of getting back in. Sexton does not worry about what Gabrielle thinks of him, just about how that will affect whether she will help him or not. Sexton's bodyguard also has no name.

Rachel still searches for the truth. Also, though she does not agree with her father, she feels badly for him that his campaign has taken such a hit. It is ironic that Rachel seeks truth, but works in Washington, mainly for politicians. Gabrielle also wants to believe she is doing the right thing, so as soon as Sexton gives her a plausible explanation, she believes in him again. Sexton is a savvy politician who knows what to do to ensure that Gabrielle stays on his team.

This section reveals more about Pickering and his past, and what motivates him. His daughter has been killed overseas and he blames NASA, which makes him even more concerned for national security.



Chapters 81-85

Chapters 81-85 Summary

Gabrielle wants to help Sexton, but she cannot use her informant, since that person turned out to be Tench. She has to find another way. Knowing that Sexton believes Chris Harper is lying, she wants to locate him directly at NASA headquarters, and Gabrielle prepares to go there. Before she leaves, Gabrielle explains to Yolanda what Sexton has told her and their plan. Yolanda is skeptical, pointing out that no one at NASA is going to allow Sexton's most visible supporter inside, much less talk to her. Also, if Harper lied to the world, he is not likely to reveal the truth to Gabrielle.

On the airplane on the way to Washington, Rachel, Michael, and Corky are examining the core sample. Michael is doing as Rachel asked and trying to imagine that he knows nothing about the rock in his hand. He concludes that if he knew nothing about it, he would have to assume it was from earth. Corky adamantly believes the rock is a meteorite. Michael explains that the fossil imprint fits in with earth's classification system and could exist in a low gravity environment on earth; i.e., the ocean. The fossilized imprints are the same size as lobsters, shrimp and crab, so the specimen could exist on earth. Furthermore, there are parts of the ocean floor that are 190 million years old, the same age given to the meteorite.

Corky argues that none of that explains the fusion crust, chondrules, or mid-level nickel content. Rachel asks for clarification on these points again, and Corky explains that terrestrial rocks have either a very high or very low nickel content, and the meteorite had a nickel content just outside the range of mid-level, towards high. This means that it is like no other rock on earth and must therefore be a meteorite. Rachel disagrees, saying that that logic only makes sense if they have seen every single rock on earth.

At NASA headquarters Gabrielle is immediately recognized by a staff person. She runs towards the elevators to hide out. Seeing a directory, Gabrielle is able to deduce that Harper works on the 4th floor, but the elevators require key cards. Cleverly bluffing her way on with another NASA staff member, Gabrielle makes it to the fourth floor and looks for Harper's office.

At the White House, President Herney and his staff are in a celebratory mood as they watch television recaps of the press conference. President Herney wonders where Tench is and marvels at how quickly things change in politics

Ekstrom is still on the Milne Ice Shelf, wondering how to deal with Pickering and what he might know. Ekstrom is aware that Pickering's disillusionment with NASA has gotten worse over the years and fears the worst for what Pickering will do with the information he has.



Chapters 81-85 Analysis

Yolanda recognizes the situation for what it is, but Gabrielle is committed to helping Sexton now. She is also resourceful and able to lie convincingly. Gabrielle is clever and able to think on her feet. She, like others in the book, also uses deception to get what she needs.

Rachel has just poked a hole in one of the three characteristics that make the sample a meteorite. They already know the rock has been inserted, and they are now beginning to learn more about how large scale the deception is.

President Herney begins to get an inkling that something might be wrong. Tench has left to meet Pickering at the FDR memorial. Politics is explored here, as Herney marvels at how quickly things can change in politics. This is something that Sexton experienced earlier also.

The metaphor of the storm is apparent in this section. The storm on the Ice Shelf is getting worse, just as the storm in Washington is about to get worse.



Chapters 86-90

Chapters 86-90 Summary

Rachel, Michael and Corky are still discussing the core sample. Corky is explaining that the striations on the crust, as well as the lack of residue indicates that the fusion crust was created when the meteor hit the earth's atmosphere, so it has only atmospheric elements on it - nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen. Rachel explains to Corky and Michael that streaking through the atmosphere is not the only way the fusion crust could show elevated levels of ionic hydrogen.

Rachel tells them about a NASA prototype for an expander cycle engine (ECE) that runs on liquid hydrogen. Corky does not think this is possible, but Rachel has top secret information and lets the two know that NASA has found a way to make it work. The result is that the engine burns several times hotter than anything previously developed, and a rock placed behind it would be scalded, creating something similar to a fusion crust. It would look like a meteorite because the fusion crust would have striations like it fell through the atmosphere, with no chemical residue.

Corky still believes the rock must be a meteorite because of the chondrules, which are created through extreme heating and cooling. They were also dated and found to be 190 million years old. Michael is troubled because two out of the three characteristics that make the sample a meteorite now have alternate explanations. He feels like there is something they are missing.

At the same time, the Delta Force are on a jet, a few hours behind Rachel, Corky, and Michael. The controller calls to tell the Delta Force that they must eliminate another mark before going to Rachel, Corky and Michael. The name of the mark is a name the Delta Force knows well.

At NASA headquarters, Gabrielle strides confidently into Chris Harper's office and tells him that Senator Sexton is aware that he lied about the PODS software anomaly, but that Sexton is unconcerned about that. He is, however, planning to call a special senatorial review because he has evidence that Harper and a very high-up NASA official have been embezzling NASA funds. Sexton wants the name of the higher-up. Harper denies both charges. Gabrielle says that after his poor act, lying at the PODS press conference, no one is likely to believe him. Harper continues to deny, but Gabrielle sticks by her bluff, and eventually Harper says that NASA administrator, Ekstrom, must be setting him up. Harper tells Gabrielle that Ekstrom forced him to lie at the PODS press conference about the anomaly-detecting software being fixed. PODS initially launched smoothly, but they didn't know until it was in space that there was a programming error. PODS was supposed to be able to scan acres of ice and detect anomalies that would indicate global warming. It scanned the ice fine, but couldn't detect the anomalies, which meant that someone would have had to review the data by hand, which would have been extremely laborious. Ekstrom was furious and put Harper



on leave. Two weeks ago, Ekstrom called, telling him there was a way to redeem himself.

Ekstrom insisted that Harper hold a press conference saying the programming error was fixed. Harper refused, but then Tench came and furiously told Harper that his mistake is responsible for putting the presidency and NASA on the brink of collapse and if he wanted to save the administration, he would do what they told him. Harper explains to Gabrielle that the meteorite was actually discovered by a Canadian geologist, Charles Brophy. NASA intercepted the transmission from Brophy, and set up PODS so that NASA could take credit for making the discovery. Gabrielle wonders why the Canadian geologist is not angry that NASA is taking credit for his find, and Harper tells her that it's because he is dead.

Chapters 86-90 Analysis

Rachel is about to discredit another characteristic of the sample. When Corky told Rachel in the habisphere that the core sample was from a meteorite, she was willing to believe it. Now that they know the rock has been staged, she begins to question the information she was given earlier. What Rachel said at the beginning of the novel about one part of the meteorite being discredited will cast doubt on the entire discovery has held true. Rachel's knowledge of classified information gives her more ideas about the meteorite than others, but her integrity is apparent. She does not want to share the classified information, but feels as though she needs to tell them a little about the ECEs so they can help her solve the mystery. Still, she tells them only what they need to know to help.

This chapter also explains what has happened in the prologue. The message Brophy was forced to transmit regarded the discovery of the meteorite. Brophy did not actually discover the meteorite, but he was set up to look as though he had and then killed. It is revealed that Ekstrom knows that PODS didn't find the meteorite. This is actually the lie that he and Tench are worried about Pickering discovering.

The chapters are beginning to get longer as it is being revealed how the deception is being uncovered by the different characters.



Chapters 91-95

Chapters 91-95 Summary

Michael calls the Goya to tell his crew that he will be away for another few days. The outgoing message says that they have left to go ashore for the evening. When he checks his messages, he hears that they have left one person back to watch the ship, Xavia, a marine geologist. Xavia's message tells Michael that his documentary had an error, but not to worry, there are only 2-3 people in the world that would know the difference. Xavia does not say what the error is, only that it has to do with the structure of the meteorite. Michael tries to call Xavia back but cannot reach her. Rachel wants to know what the problem could be, and whether it might have anything to do with the chondrules. The ship is docked not very far from Washington, so they decide to take a detour to the ship, in New Jersey, so that Rachel has as much information as possible to tell to Pickering. Rachel calls Pickering to request that they make a stop. She does not tell him where and they speak in code, since she is on an unsecured phone line. Rachel lets Pickering know that she may be able to get proof of meteorite's authenticity. Pickering also tells Rachel that he is on his way to meet Tench, and warns her to tell no one where she is heading, but to call him from a secure line when she gets there.

The Delta Force lands in Washington and immediately boards a Kiowa stealth military helicopter. They are to assassinate a prominent American official and fly towards the FDR Memorial.

Back at NASA, Harper tells Gabrielle more about the meteorite discovery. He explains that the meteor would have been found by PODS a week earlier if the anomaly detecting software had been working. Gabrielle wonders about the coincidence: after more than three hundred years, the meteor suddenly would have been discovered twice in the same week, and the only other person that knows about the meteorite is dead. She is also suspicious of such an elaborate set-up so that PODS could fake detecting a mere meteorite. Gabrielle tells Harper she will be in touch and leaves to get a taxi to Sexton's apartment

Chapters 91-95 Analysis

The Kiowa helicopter is loaded with missiles and designed to fly silently and jam radios. This is a deadly special ops team aboard a deadly helicopter. Flying towards FDR, the target must be either Pickering or Tench. Tench has made comments about Rachel and Pickering being a problem, so it is assumed that the target must be Pickering. This is not actually the case, but because Tench and Ekstrom are part of a small piece of the fraud, they look guilty of everything. This helps to misdirect the reader.

Gabrielle is concerned about the coincidence factor and seems to think there is something strange going on. However, this does not distract her from her primary



purpose, which is to get information to help Sexton. What Yolanda said earlier about the power and money that goes into presidential politics is interesting in light of the fact that the NASA discovery has single-handedly rejuvenated the presidency, and the Canadian had to be dead to make that happen.

Rachel's knowledge of and access to intelligence information and top secret transport is important in this section. She understands the use of codes, need for secrecy, and fear of calls being intercepted. All these covert operations add to the drama and suspense of the story. Pickering goes out of his way to ensure Rachel does not tell him where she is going, but does not need her to tell him because he has the means to find out. By being so concerned for her safety, it lulls her into believing he is watching out for her, and misdirects suspicion away from him.

There are clues in this chapter that Pickering believes the privatization of space would be worse for national security than NASA and all their blundering. Again, it is ironic, though, that Pickering chooses to mastermind a plot that would save the future of the presidency and NASA when he has such anger against them.

Deception Point

Summary and Analysis



Chapters 96-100

Chapters 96-100 Summary

The Delta Force is heading towards the FDR Memorial. Hitting such a high profile target, they need to make a lot of noise and commotion so that the assassination will be blamed on foreign terrorists. A dark sedan pulls up and Delta One confirms that it is being driven by their target. They aim and fire a missile, blowing the car apart and then stealthily fly away. The controller ponders the difficulties of what has been orchestrated. The meteorite was inserted into the Ice Shelf months ago and the plan was to just allow PODS to discover it. Then the software didn't work, so an alternate solution had to be found, which included the death of the Canadian. Since then, Ming, Mangor and the target at FDR have been added to the body count. Soon, Michael, Rachel and Corky would also be dead. Although the controller feels bad that it has come to this, it had to be done because far too much is at stake.

Meanwhile, Rachel, Corky, and Michael are taking a helicopter to the Goya. Rachel is very nervous flying out over open water. On the thermal imaging system, Michael shows them all a large, swirling heat mass that shows up on the screen and explains that it is a cyclone of warm water called a megaplume. It is created when a pocket of magma under the sea floor churns up and creates a hot spot, resulting in a giant spiral of warm water. This one is about a mile across and the Goya is anchored in the center of it. Michael also tells them that the warm water attracts great hammerhead sharks, so there are a lot of them also swimming in the waters around the Goya. Rachel expresses concern about the cyclone of water and the presence of sharks, and Michael assures her there is nothing to worry about.

Back in Washington, Gabrielle is in a taxi on her way to Sexton's apartment. She is stuck in traffic due to a large accident at the FDR memorial. Gabrielle is thinking that Harper's lie by itself would not sink the presidency, but Sexton can use the information to make that happen. Ruminating on this, Gabrielle realizes she is tired of politics. The car radio announces that there has been a potential car bomb and act of terrorism.

Chapters 96-100 Analysis

There is deception and misdirection in this section, as the Delta Team wants to make their attack look like the fault of a team of terrorists. Suspense is created because they have only said that their target is a high profile person. Flying towards the FDR Memorial, the target must be either Pickering or Tench and the other is the controller. The identity of the controller is still being closely guarded. Any reference to the gender of the controller would give away who masterminded the meteorite plot. However, Tench is described throughout as being cold and methodical, while the controller is feeling a growing remorse about the body count. This could be considered a clue that it is not Tench, since she is consistently portrayed as cold, without remorse.



Rachel's fear of open water is again referenced in this section. Time is also an important element. At first, it was the time counting down to the press conference. Now, it is the wee hours of the morning, and in less than twenty-four hours, Rachel has flown to the far north and back again, an attempt has been made on her life, and she is still looking for answers. The three characters have gone from one deadly environment to another - from a dangerous, barren glacier to a giant underwater tornado full of sharks. Quite naturally, Rachel's fear of open water is exacerbated by the presence of deadly water and sharks.

Politics is also revisited in this section, as Gabrielle thinks about the importance of information in politics. It is not just having the information, but what you do with it. Gabrielle knows that Sexton can use information to boost his campaign, just as Tench tried to do with her information earlier about Gabrielle and the Senator.

Deception Point

Summary and Analysis



Chapters 101-105

Chapters 101-105 Summary

On the Goya, Rachel, Michael and Corky can feel the heat rising off the water and see the shadows of the hammerhead sharks. Michael explains that the sharks have a heightened sense of smell and only attack when they smell blood. Micheal says that unless you are bleeding, you have nothing to worry about, and you can swim next to them without their realizing it. Rachel tries calling Pickering, but gets static and a series of clicks, and she quickly disconnects the call. Rachel then asks the helicopter pilot to turn on his radar and notify her immediately if he sees anything.

Michael finds Xavia and asks her if the problem with his documentary had to do with the chondrules. Xavia says that it did, but the information she has about it is very obscure and no one would really know the difference unless they read this article she has. Xavia tells Michael that his statement that chondrules are only found in space is incorrect. According to her article, a geologist had found a rock sample from the Mariana Trench that exhibited strange characteristics. One anomaly was the presence of little blobs of metallic structures that resembled chondrules, but were found to have a different chemical composition. The geologist theorized that the deep water, pressurized environment of the Mariana Trench, as well as its location between two major tectonic plates, created enough pressure to change the structure of the rock. Another anomaly was that the nickel content was not at the extreme high or low of terrestrial rocks, but was also not quite the mid-range of a meteorite either. Corky reluctantly gives Xavia the core sample he has so she can test the chemical make-up of the chondrules.

Back in Washington, Gabrielle decides to take a detour to her office to get any information that she has on PODS. She tries calling Sexton several times, but the line is busy. While at the campaign office, Gabrielle gets a call from Yolanda, who says that two of her reporters have been following a story that Sexton has been taking bribes from the Space Frontier Federation. Desperate to get in touch with Sexton, Gabrielle calls his bodyguard and asks him to knock on the Senator's door. The guard lets Rachel know that he told Sexton earlier about Gabrielle's visit. Gabrielle quickly tells the guard not to bother knocking on Sexton's door after all and hangs up the phone.

Chapters 101-105 Analysis

Gabrielle is again experiencing doubts. She doubted Sexton when she overheard him talking to the space agencies, but then when he admitted it to her without her asking, she thought everything must have been above board. Now, knowing that Sexton has told her about the meeting because he knew that she already knew, and that two reporters have independently discovered that Sexton may be accepting illegal campaign funds has made Gabrielle begin to doubt the Senator again.



Sexton and Herney have both made reference to the fact that in politics, things can change in an instant. In this chapter, with a very brief phone call, Gabrielle has gone from wanting to do what she can to help to the Senator to doubting him.

Rachel is in a hurry to get off the Goya because she fears that their location has been traced through Pickering's cell phone. Again, Rachel's knowledge of covert operations and classified information has helped her to equate the clicks and static with the line being traced. The use of using a call trace to get Rachel's location is a suspense-creating mechanism. Rachel was calling Pickering to tell him her location, but by using the location tracer, it leaves open the mystery of who the controller is, and also creates fear and urgency in Rachel and the others.

The third characteristic that made the rock a meteorite has now been found to have an alternate explanation. Even Corky, who firmly believed the rock was a meteorite, is starting to see that it is highly likely that the meteorite could be a fake. Ekstrom earlier mentioned that the military and NASA are twelve years ahead technology-wise than the public is aware of. The Mariana Trench was previously unexplored because pressure was too high, but NASA could have made it feasible to find rocks down there, just as the geologist that wrote the article did.



Chapters 106-110

Chapters 106-110 Summary

Gabrielle knows a secret way into Sexton's locked, private office and sneaks in there to see if she can find evidence of illegal campaign contributions. Gabrielle is in the Senator's office about to log into his computer. She knows his password because she saw him enter it just last week. She enters the Senator's initials, SSS, but access is denied. Gabrielle speculates that Sexton must have changed his password when he discovered that she knew it.

On the Goya, Rachel and Michael search through a large database of newly-discovered species to see if they can find any photos of an organism that might look similar to the fossilized remains in the core sample. They find a near exact match and print it off, knowing that after 190 million years, evolution would explain the slight differences between the fossil and their photo. Meanwhile, Xavia and Corky discover that the chemical ration of the chondrules indicate that it is, in fact, a terrestrial rock, similar to the one that the geologist found in the Mariana Trench. As they all prepare to leave, they discover that all of the radio and communications equipment on board the ship is dead.

The Delta Force is closing in on the Goya and jams all the radio and radar signals. This masks their approach and leaves anyone on board unable to call for help. They begin shooting bullets at the Goya, and as everyone ducks for cover, a bullet grazes Rachel's arm. As the helicopter passes overhead and turns around, the helicopter pilot starts the chopper on the Goya's deck and Xavia motions for the others to hurry and get in. Before Michael, Corky and Rachel can get there, the Kiowa launches a missile at the chopper and it explodes and falls into the ocean, along with the pilot and Xavia.

Chapters 106-110 Analysis

Though Gabrielle is tired of politics, she searches for additional information, knowing that in the political world, information is power. Also, because she is unsure who to trust, she seeks the truth about what is going on. Gabrielle is not as trusted by Sexton as she thought she was. Sexton is not trustworthy, and so he trusts no one else either, not even his closest aide and biggest supporter. It is typical of Sexton's character that his password would be his initials.

Gabrielle's character also offers more insight into the world of politics, as she expects to find evidence of the space companies' contributions on Sexton's computer. She knows he would not have destroyed incriminating evidence, as he could use it as a form of "Siamese Insurance." That is, in case his contributors ever decide to sell him out, he can remind them that he has evidence as well that they did something illegal. This insures that both parties stay loyal to each other.



In addition to the GPR printout and the core sample, they now have the photo of the matching organism and the results of the chondrule testing, along with the article. The four have quickly gathered enough information to conclusively prove that the meteorite is a fake. However, they are now trapped on a ship in a whirlpool, surrounded by sharks as a deadly assassin team is moving in. They have the evidence, but now they need to get it to someone. Rachel assumes the fraud must have been masterminded by NASA because they have the most to lose if it is discovered and someone has been trying to kill them.



Chapter 111-115

Chapter 111-115 Summary

Ekstrom calls the President and tells him that PODS faked the discovery of the meteorite and that it was actually discovered by someone else, who is now dead. NASA faked the PODS discovery because Herney needed a NASA victory in order to stay in the presidential race, and they were trying to help. Herney is very angry that he has been duped into lying to the American people.

At the campaign headquarters, Gabrielle is still trying to get into Sexton's computer. She has tried several passwords with no luck. She even tried POTUS, the secret service acronym for President of The United States, but this doesn't work either. She gets a call from Sexton on her cell phone asking what is holding her up and she tells him about the accident at FDR and how she came to the office to get files on PODS. She looks at Sexton's clock and sees that it is 4 am. Sexton sounds confused that she is in her own office. Gabrielle is about to leave Sexton's office when she decides to try one more password: POTUSSS, which stands for President of the United States Sedgewick Sexton. This password works and she gains access to his computer.

Michael sees that Rachel has been shot as Rachel, Michael and Corky run below decks for cover. Below the deck is just a metal catwalk, which is all that is separating them from the sharks. Michael gets a flare gun and points them towards a small motorboat. Corky is just getting into the boat when the Kiowa drops down and sprays bullets, hitting Corky in the leg and knocking him into the boat. The Kiowa shoots a missile at the motorboat at the same time that Michael shoots a flare gun, and the missile misses and ends up hitting one of the struts of the boat, knocking it off balance. Corky starts the motorboat and takes off. He wants to radio for help, but sees that all of the equipment has been destroyed by the gunfire. He looks back at the Goya in time to see the Kiowa drop two passengers off on the deck and then head towards him.

On board the Goya, Delta Delta Two and Delta Three are looking for Rachel and Michael. Delta Three sees Rachel and is about to close in on her when Michael shoots his foot off with a shark attack defense stick. Delta Three's machine gun goes overboard, and Michael instructs the man to use his radio to tell the helicopter to back off Corky. Instead, Delta Three instructs the helicopter to keep going.

Chapter 111-115 Analysis

Ekstrom's conscious has won out and he has decided to tell the President about what lies he has told; that PODS did not discover the meteorite. This chapter demonstrates that Herney is not part of the conspiracy. His biggest concern is that he lied to the American People. Like Rachel and Gabrielle, Herney values truth and integrity. This



chapter also demonstrates that it is highly unlikely that Ekstrom is behind the fraud, as he feels tremendous guilt over his part in the deception.

Sexton is confused as to where Gabrielle is because he can hear the distinct tick of his clock in the background. Gabrielle is now the one that is lying to the Senator.

Corky, like Rachel, has now been wounded and is in a small motorboat in shark infested waters. Corky has taken off in the motorboat, which will also force the Delta Team into making a choice about whether to go after the motorboat or stay and finish off Rachel and Michael. Rachel is forced to face her fears as she gets closer and closer to the open water. Michael's need to protect everyone is also still apparent, as he notices Rachel's wound and tries to herd everyone into the motorboat. Michael is very resourceful and uses what he has to defend himself and Rachel, while still also trying to keep Corky safe. Corky, meanwhile, is trying to lead the chopper away to give the others a chance to escape.

Deception Point

Summary and Analysis



Chapters 116-120

Chapters 116-120 Summary

Corky is letting the boat guide itself while he wraps his injured leg in duct tape, assuming the boat will just go in a straight line. Corky hopes that duct tape will prevent the sharks from smelling his blood, but as a further measure he also urinates all over himself to try to cover any lingering smell of blood. When Corky looks up, he realizes that the boat did not go in a straight line; it followed the current of the megaplume and went in a wide arc and is now headed back to the Goya. At that moment, the Kiowa also finds the motorboat and prepares to fire a missile.

On the Goya, Delta Two is looking for Delta Three and finds him bound and gagged lying on the trap door beneath the Triton submersible. The Triton grabs Delta Two in one of its claws and Delta Two sees Michael at the controls. Delta Two fires his machine gun at Michael inside the Triton, but the bullets do not penetrate the glass. Michael uses the Triton's other claw to grab Delta Two's radio communicator. At the same time, Rachel is in the laboratory preparing the proof of the meteorite conspiracy and putting it in the fax machine. Rachel dials one of the only fax numbers she knows from memory and checks to make sure that the fax machine will keep dialing until it gets a dial tone.

The controller is in the Kiowa with Delta One and the two are dismayed to see the rest of the Delta Team immobilized by Rachel and Michael. Rachel uses Delta Two's radio to inform the two people in the Kiowa that they are too late, others already know. Rachel tags off the gag on Delta Three and instructs him to tell the Kiowa to back off. Delta Three spits on her, angering Michael, who opens the trap door and sends Delta Two into the water, where he is immediately devoured by the sharks. Rachel tells the Kiowa that she has sent Jim Samiljan at NRO all of the information regarding how the meteorite hoax was set up. The controller is unsure whether Rachel is bluffing and decides to call NRO and find out. To do so, Delta One has to turn off the radio jammers. With communications back up, the fax that Rachel prepared automatically sends.

At the White House, The President is looking for Marjorie Tench. An aide informs him that she left an hour ago and is answering neither her cell phone nor her pager. The President is also informed that it is possible she was on her way to NRO, since it is known that she spoke with William Pickering before she left. Another aide comes to inform the President that there has been a terrible accident at the FDR Memorial and the FBI has identified the victim.

At the campaign headquarters, Gabrielle accesses the Senator's computer and finds several checks written to Sexton from private space companies. They range from \$15,000 to \$250,000. Gabrielle is upset and angry at the proof of Sexton's betrayal but is unsure what to do next.



Chapters 116-120 Analysis

Corky is preparing to dive in the water, since he knows it is just a matter of time before the Kiowa finds the boat. He is trying to prevent getting eaten by the hammerheads by using whatever means he can find.

Rachel knows that the communication systems are down right now, but she wants to ensure the fax will send once communications are restored. Michael's need to protect others is apparent here, as his growing affection for Rachel, when he reacts angrily to Delta Three spitting on her. There is still no indication of who controller actually is. Rachel's fax has now been sent, but suspense is created because it is not known who will receive the information.

Gabrielle is gathering the evidence of Sexton's illegal campaign contributions. The deception in the sub-plot has also now been discovered, Sexton is accepting illegal contributions. Gabrielle, like Rachel, also wants the truth to be known, regardless of the consequence to herself.



Chapters 121-125

Chapters 121-125 Summary

Rachel has sent the fax to her father's office. She knows it was a good place to send it because the Senator will ensure that the information is shared and his office is very secure. The controller realizes too late that a fax has been sent off the ship and decides to speak to Rachel in person. When the controller exits the Kiowa, Rachel is dismayed to see that it is William Pickering. Pickering tells Rachel that her father has accepted illegal bribes and plans to privatize space for profit. In the interest of national security, Pickering had to ensure that Sexton never made it to the White House.

With the Kiowa landed on the deck, Delta One sneaks out of the cockpit while Michael and Rachel are talking to Pickering. Delta One can clearly see that Michael's gun clip is empty and he begins heading towards Delta Two. Pickering is trying to explain to Rachel why the true nature of the meteorite must remain a secret. He keeps insisting that it was a mistake to send the data off the ship. Michael gets the impression that Pickering is stalling for time and wonders why. Meanwhile, Delta One has recovered the pages from the fax machine and writes down the number where it was sent. Delta One returns to the deck and Michael tries to shoot him only to discover that he has no ammunition. Delta One tells Pickering he has retrieved the fax number.

Delta One tells Michael to unclamp Delta Two, and to ensure compliance, he makes Rachel climb on top of the Triton submersible while Micheal works the controls. Micheal tells Rachel to jump into the Triton while he dives for the anchor and lets it up, causing everyone to lose their balance. The hatch on the triton closes as Michael once again drops the anchor and the ship lurches. This causes the strut damaged by the missile to give way and everything slants towards the ocean, including the Kiowa helicopter. Delta One tries unsuccessfully to get the helicopter in the air, but before it falls into the water, its rotors cut the cable of the Triton and send Rachel and Delta Two into the Ocean. Delta Two is quickly eaten by sharks as Rachel tries to open the hatch and jump to safety. The hatch is stuck, and the Triton, with Rachel in it, bobs away from the Goya and begins to sink.

President Herney has learned that Tench was to meet Pickering, and she is now dead. Herney fears that Pickering may also be dead. Herney recalls how Pickering attempted a few months previously to help Herney by sending evidence of Gabrielle's and Sexton's affair, as well as evidence that Sexton was accepting bribes from private space companies. Herney refused to use the information, making Pickering angry, so Pickering leaked the information himself, which just made the White House look worse. Herney knows that Pickering does not particularly care for him, but given the choice between Herney and Sexton, Herney knows he is the lesser of two evils in Pickering's mind.



Sexton goes rushing to his campaign headquarters, expecting to find Gabrielle inside his private office, but she is not. When Gabrielle emerges from the ladies room, Sexton demands to know if she was in his office. Gabrielle responds by asking how she was supposed to get past all of his security to get into his office. Together they go into his office, and while Sexton goes to the washroom, Gabrielle checks the fax machine and finds Rachel's message. Along with the evidence of the meteorite fraud, Rachel has included a note saying that someone is trying to kill them and to please help. As Sexton looks at the fax, a message comes through his fax machine from Pickering, who says that Rachel is being held hostage and her life depends on Sexton not doing anything with the fax until Pickering gets there. Sexton ignores the message and starts making copies of the evidence Rachel has sent him.

Chapters 121-125 Analysis

The controller has been revealed, as has the reason for setting up the meteorite deception. The meteorite was a desperate and elaborate hoax to ensure that Herney stays in the White house and NASA continues to have a monopoly on the space program—all in the interest of national security. The final details of how the hoax was perpetrated are also revealed. Pickering is stalling until Delta One could find out where the information was sent. In doing so, he reveals more information on why the hoax was necessary and how it was accomplished. Pickering is very cunning. Once he finds out where the fax was sent he is able to concoct a story on the spot that will help him get the information back before it goes public. The only problem is that he appeals to Sexton's decency, of which Sexton apparently has none. Rachel was smarter to appeal to Sexton's self-serving nature, and he is doing exactly what Rachel expected him to do; make the information public.

Rachel also reveals that she does not go to her father because he will help her; she goes to him because he is self-serving, and she knows he will act in a self-serving manner, which will be to reveal that the meteorite was a set-up. Rachel has been getting progressively closer to the water of which she is so afraid. Now she is trapped in a bubble while she sinks in shark-filled, open water.

Gabrielle has learned from Sexton that the best defense is a good offense. When the White House accused Sexton of having an affair with Gabrielle, he went on the offensive, even though it was true. Gabrielle does the same thing when Sexton accuses her of being in his office, which she was.



Chapters 126-130

Chapters 126-130 Summary

Sexton has made ten copies of the evidence Rachel sent him and is preparing media kits so he can go to the press with the news. Gabrielle begs Sexton to wait until he knows Rachel is safe, but he ignores her. Gabrielle tries to call the White House herself, but Sexton slaps her and she leaves in tears.

As Michael dives for the water to rescue Rachel from the Triton, Pickering fires at him with the machine gun, but misses. Michael tries to undo the hatch of the Triton but sees that it has sealed unevenly, making it impossible to open. The Triton is sinking quickly and Michael realizes it is because it was damaged in the earlier gunfire. Trying to save Rachel, he wants to increase the pressure inside the cabin so that the glass will pop out. Michael undoes the pressure hose and sticks it into the area pressurizing the cabin. Inside the Triton, the incredible increase in pressure is very painful for Rachel, and she begins to black out, not understanding what Michael is intending to do. Out of air, Michael breaks for the surface.

Rachel loses her balance and falls against the glass, releasing some of the pressure. Now understanding what Michael was trying to do, she kicks out the glass and frees herself from the Triton, but in the darkness of the ocean, she is not sure which way to swim to get to the surface.

At that exact moment, the Kiowa helicopter collides with the magma dome, igniting the missiles and causing the underwater volcano to erupt. A large whirlpool is immediately created and in the light from the eruption, Michael can see Rachel. He grabs her and they swim for the surface.

Rachel and Micheal break the surface and are immediately winched up by a Coast Guard helicopter. They are just getting safely into the helicopter when the whirlpool breaks the surface and sucks down Pickering and the Goya. The coast guard had heard the explosion from one of the earlier missiles, and when they went to investigate, they found Corky and the burning remains of the speedboat.

Chapters 126-130 Analysis

Sexton sees everything in terms of how it can help or hurt him and nothing else matters. He is willing to let Rachel die so he can be the one who announces the deception to the American people. The information is to be released within a day anyway, but Sexton wants to use the information to his greatest advantage, despite the consequences for his daughter. The relationship between Gabrielle and Sexton is now definitely severed, and she has information that could hurt him. Sexton doesn't even think about any of this because he believes he is untouchable.

Corky is also discovered to be alive, and the three are finally safe from the dangerous environment, the deadly assassins, and the mastermind of the meteorite hoax.

Deception Point

Summary and Analysis



Chapters 131-133

Chapters 131-133 Summary

Senator Sexton is holding a press conference. No one knows yet what it is about, but he has the media kits and plans to break the news about the falsified meteorite. Rachel appears from a helicopter and takes her father aside to beg him not to do the press conference, to let the White House admit their own wrong-doing. Sexton refuses. Meanwhile, at the podium, a woman with an ABC press pass knocks over the envelopes and begins picking them up. Sexton rushes over to help her and immediately hands the envelopes out to the crowd.

Sexton tells the waiting crowd that the contents of the envelope need no explanation, and he waits while everyone opens them. As they do, they are in shock and ask Sexton if everything inside is authentic and not touched up. Sexton attests to the validity of the contents of the envelope, and a reporter then shows Sexton what they are all looking at. Sexton is shocked and dismayed to see photos of him and Gabrielle naked in his office. He turns to Rachel and the woman at her side, the ABC press agent, who is actually Gabrielle. After leaving Sexton's Office that morning, Gabrielle got the photos of herself and Sexton and a press pass from Yolanda, then went and prepared replicates of Sexton's media kits, substituting the photos of the two of them having sex. She also made copies of the evidence of the bribery she had earlier found on Sexton's computer. She told Sexton to let Herney reveal the information about the meteorite, or she would release the evidence of the bribery.

The President offers Gabrielle a position in his administration, but she refuses because she has chosen to leave Washington. The President then leaves to give another press conference to tell the world the truth about the meteorite.

Rachel awakens at the White House. Earlier, the President had offered Rachel, Michael and Corky each a bedroom at the White House to get some rest after their ordeal. Rachel turns on the television, and the media are speculating that even in light of the faked meteorite, the President will still win the election. An agent knocks on Rachel's door and escorts her to the Lincoln bedroom, where Michael is staying. Finally alone, they go to bed together.

Chapters 131-133 Analysis

The theme of truth and deception are intertwined in this chapter, as Gabrielle uses clever deception to ensure that Sexton doesn't share the information about the meteorite. To do this, she uses the truth about her affair with Sexton. Again, things for the Senator have changed in an instant. Gabrielle understands how politics works. She needed to use the bribery information as further leverage against Sexton to ensure he did what she wanted. Gabrielle is leaving Washington because she is no longer

interested in politics. Her time serving on Sexton's campaign has made her tired of the political game and image.

The story ends with good outcome is predicted for President Herney, which means a bad outcome for Sexton. Rachel and Michael have also forged a relationship out of the experience of the past twenty-four hours and are becoming romantically involved. This is fitting, as Rachel has no one else, considering her father would have let her die.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Ekstrom is in a jet over the Atlantic, leaving the Milne Ice Shelf. The cargo doors are released and the meteorite falls back into the ocean.

Epilogue Analysis

The story has come full circle; the rock is sent back to the water, where it was found.



Characters

Rachel Sexton

Rachel Sexton is an intelligence analyst with the National Reconnaissance Office in Washington, DC. She prepares briefs that are read by the president, his advisers and other high-ranking military and intelligence officials. Rachel is the daughter of presidential hopeful, Senator Sedgewick Sexton, but their relationship is strained, as Rachel believes her father is selfish, greedy, and a liar. Rachel's mother died a few years before in a car accident, and Rachel blames her father for the death.

Rachel is very intelligent and compassionate with a great deal of integrity and a strong attachment to truth. She is thirty-four years old, an only child, and single with no other living relatives except her father. Rachel values her job highly and takes a great deal of pride in her work. She also admires her boss and values her relationship and rapport with him. She is very shocked and upset to discover that he has masterminded the meteorite fraud and is prepared to kill her.

Rachel's specialized knowledge of top secret technology and weaponry, as well as classified information, helps propel the story forward and explain to the reader what is happening. Her knowledge also creates fear and urgency in her character because she is aware of the capabilities of government agencies, special ops teams, and classified weapons.

Rachel mistakenly suspects that Lawrence Ekstrom has masterminded the plot behind the meteorite, possible with help from Marjorie Tench, and questions whether the President himself is involved. Rachel highly values honesty and integrity and is dismayed to think President Herney could have had anything to do with the fraud, because she found him very open and genuine.

Throughout the course of the book, Rachel develops a relationship with Michael Tolland as they escape death together and try to find the truth about the meteorite. Rachel has lived alone up to this point, and with her demanding job has not had time for relationships.

Senator Sedgewick Sexton

Senator Sexton is the republican hopeful for President of the United States. When the book opens, he is ahead of the current President in the polls. The cornerstone of his campaign has been rallying against NASA and their overspending. At every opportunity, he takes advantage of any mistake or overspending on the part of NASA and admits that if he were President, he would shut down the space agency and divert funding to educational programs.



Sexton had an affair with his young campaign aide, Gabrielle, which he denies vigorously. He is also taking illegal contributions from several private space agencies, which are funding his campaign for presidency. He has told the private space agencies that once he is in power, he will end the NASA monopoly of space and open it up to exploration and profit for their agencies.

Sexton is self-serving at the least, but also egotistical and a liar. He sees and does only what will help him attain power and cares little for the feelings or situations of others. He wants Rachel to quit her job because he fears how it looks for him that his daughter works indirectly for the current President. Towards the end of the book, he is willing to let Rachel die so that he could be the one to tell the American people that the meteorite is a fraud.

Sexton also regularly underestimates his opponents. In a live CNN debate, he is baited by Marjorie Tench into taking a firm stand against NASA, which hurts him badly after the meteorite is discovered. He walks blindly into Tench's trap because he assumes she is blundering, rather than he is being baited. He also assumes that he has control over Gabrielle and is shocked when she releases the photographic evidence of their affair.

William Pickering/Controller

William Pickering is the director of the National Reconnaissance Office, where Rachel works. He is later revealed to be the mastermind behind the meteorite fraud. Pickering is a mentor to Rachel, and she admires him greatly. His daughter, Diana, was killed while stationed overseas, and Pickering blames NASA for her death.

Pickering's primary concern is national security. He despises NASA because they announce every technological advancement they ever make and make blunders, which affect the NRO and other intelligence agencies' ability to protect the nation. Pickering wants to put NASA under the umbrella of intelligence so he can ensure that there are no security leaks. The President refuses to allow this, which also makes Pickering angry.

However, though Pickering despises NASA and has no love for the current President, he is even more fearful of what would happen if Sexton attained power and space were opened to the private sector. There would then be no way to maintain control over the satellite images that get captured, and any enemy nation could much more easily gain access to US classified information. This is Pickering's rationale for contriving the meteorite; he wants to ensure a victory for President Herney, as well as ensure that NASA will continue to have a monopoly on space.

Pickering is very crafty and intelligent. His looks and stature are deceptively average, though he is actually one of the most powerful men in the world. He almost completely fools everyone into believing his fraud. Though he is somewhat remorseful about the deaths he ordered to protect his secret, he feels that the safety of the American nation is of the utmost priority.



Michael Tolland

Michael is a world-renowned oceanographer with a weekly television series. He is asked by the President to fly to the Arctic to make a documentary about the meteorite because the American people love him. He does this, but soon discovers, with Rachel and the others, that there has been a set-up, and the meteorite is an elaborate hoax. He is instrumental in helping unravel the deception.

Michael's wife died four years earlier of cancer, and he detests feeling powerless to help and protect the people about whom he cares. Throughout the story, he is concerned with protecting Rachel and Corky and saves their lives on a couple of occasions.

Michael cares deeply for Rachel and wants to begin a relationship with her. He is intelligent and compassionate and, like Rachel, also seeks the truth. His crew and others that know him care deeply about him. His ship, *The Goya*, is the scene of the climax of the story, and his knowledge and use of the equipment on board protects them from the attacks of the Delta Force.

Gabrielle Ashe

Gabrielle is Senator Sexton's primary aide and adviser to his campaign. She is in her early twenties and is beguiled by Sexton's charisma and politics. Through the course of the story, she slowly begins to realize that he is egotistical and self-serving. After having a one-night affair with him, she is surprised and a little disturbed at his exceptional ability to lie and turn the tables on others. Gabrielle also wants to believe the best about her candidate. When shown evidence of his having taken bribes and illegal funding from the private space agencies, she at first refuses to believe it. Slowly, as the evidence mounts, she begins to believe that the Senator is capable of such a thing.

Gabrielle, though at the beginning naive, proves to be exceptionally clever and resourceful. She manages to get the manager of PODS to admit that he lied to the public; she sneaks into the Senator's highly secure office to obtain proof of his illegal activity, and she successfully prevents the Senator from sharing the information about the falsified meteorite with the public.

Gabrielle, like Rachel, is also very concerned with truth and integrity. She jeopardizes her own career and image by sharing photos of herself and Sexton having an affair in order to protect the White House and the President. Gabrielle has a need to do what is right. At first, she thinks that this includes helping Senator Sexton, but when he shows his true nature, she sacrifices herself to bring him down.

President Zachary Herney

Zachary Herney is the beleaguered current President of the United States. He has been taking a beating in the polls against Sexton. The discovery of the meteorite and fossils



reinvigorates his campaign. However, when they are discovered to be false, he is upset to discover that he lied to the American people. President Herney also has integrity and wants to be honest. Throughout the story he is portrayed as likable and charismatic.

Lawrence Ekstrom

Ekstrom is the administrator of NASA and throughout the book is the suspected mastermind behind the falsified meteorite. In fact, he did lie about how his agency discovered the meteorite, but does believe in its authenticity and wants to protect the people that work for him.

Ekstrom is a cold and not very likable character. He cares most about how his agency looks and wants his people to get credit. He does not appreciate that the President brought in civilian scientists and that they are going to share the credit with NASA for the discovery of the fossils.

Dr. Corky Marlinson

Corky is an astrophysicist and one of the four civilian scientists that President Herney sends to the Arctic to verify the authenticity of the meteorite. Corky is very committed to the meteorite data and often disagrees with Michael and Rachel's alternate explanations for how the characteristics of the sample he has could make it a Earth terrestrial rock. Corky is adamant that the sample is from a meteorite.

Corky is a fun character, with a great sense of humor that he often uses at Michael's expense, cracking jokes about the oceanographer. Corky is the one who has taken the core sample from the meteorite that they examine and eventually test to discover that the meteorite is a fake.

Marjorie Tench

Marjorie Tench is the senior adviser to President Herney. She is a tall, very thin and scary-looking woman, who constantly smokes. She is very politically savvy and wants to ensure that President Herney wins re-election. She knows that NASA did not discover the meteorite but is instrumental in setting up PODS to make the discovery.

Tench also goads Sexton into making a fool of himself live on CNN hours before the announcement about the meteorite. Tench is unwavering in her support of the President and NASA and tries to add to their sure victory by also forcing Gabrielle to admit to their affair. Tench is suspected of being in on the hoax with Ekstrom, but is actually killed by Pickering after Rachel tells her that she believes the meteorite is a fake



Delta One, Delta Two, Delta Three

Collectively, these three men are a highly-trained special forces team hired by Pickering to ensure that no one discovers the true nature of the false meteorite. They kill Brophy, Ming, Mangor, Tench. They are eventually killed on the Goya as they try to eliminate Rachel, Michael and Corky.

Dr. Wailee Ming

Ming is one of the civilian scientists that President Herney sends to the Arctic to verify the authenticity of the meteorite. He is the first to discover that there seems to be a problem when he notices the presence of bioluminescent plankton in the extraction pit. Ming is also the first of the four civilian scientists to be killed by the Delta Force.

Dr. Norah Mangor

Norah is the fourth civilian scientist to be brought to the Arctic by President Herney. She is a glaciologist and very precise and accurate. She is offended at the notion that something could be wrong with her data. When her ice samples are questioned, it is Norah who suggests leaving the habsphere to get more data, where they are attacked by the deadly assassin team. Norah is killed by the assassins as Rachel, Corky, and Michael make their escape.

Dr. Charles Brophy

Charles Brophy is a Canadian geologist doing work on the Milne Ice Shelf when he is abducted and forced to send a radio message saying that he discovered a large anomaly in the ice that he thinks is a meteorite. He is then killed. His message is the catalyst that gets NASA up to the Arctic to find the false meteorite, and his death paves the way for NASA to make their announcement about the discovery of alien fossils, and thereby ensure a victory for President Herney in the upcoming election.

Yolanda Cole

Yolanda is a content editor for ABC studios and is a friend of Gabrielle's. It is she that convinces Gabrielle not to go public with the information about the affair when Tench tells her to, and later it is Yolanda that again convinces Gabrielle that Sexton may be taking illegal campaign funds. Yolanda's press pass allows Gabrielle to get to Sexton's press conference and swap his media kits.



Katherine Wentworth Sexton

Katherine is Sexton's wife and Rachel's mother. She died years ago in a car accident after being left home alone on Thanksgiving. Sexton cheated on Katherine repeatedly, which is part of the reason Rachel and her father do not get along. Katherine also saved Rachel's life when she was a child, rescuing her after she fell through the ice. It is this incident that has made Rachel so afraid of open water.

Diana Pickering

Diana Pickering is William Pickering's daughter, who was killed in a terrorist attack in a foreign country. Pickering blames NASA for her death, and the incident is part of the reason he wants NASA to become part of the intelligence community, to prevent such incidents from happening in the future.



Objects/Places

Milne Ice Shelf

The Milne Ice Shelf is in the far north, a floating glacier just off the coast of Ellesmere Island. It is where the meteorite was inserted for discovery by NASA.

Washington, DC

This is the seat of American politics and where the press conference announcing the meteorite is broadcast from, as well as the two press conferences concerning PODS, and the failed Press conference by Sexton, where it is revealed that he had an affair with Gabrielle

NASA Headquarters

NASA headquarters are located in Washington, and it is the location where Gabrielle gets Harper to admit that he lied to the country about PODS.

The Goya

This is Michael Tolland's ship and the scene of the final showdown between Pickering and Rachel, Michael, and Corky. Pickering and the entire Delta Team are killed here.

USS Charlotte

The USS Charlotte is the submarine that rescues Rachel, Corky, and Michael from the iceberg in the Arctic Ocean. It is from the USS Charlotte that Rachel calls both Tench and Pickering to tell them that something is wrong with the meteorite.

National Reconnaissance Office

The National Reconnaissance Office is where Rachel and Pickering work. It is located in Fairfax, Virginia, just outside Washington. The NRO is a heavily-guarded, tightly-secure, secret organization that encompasses six other US agencies and has a multi-billion dollar budget.



Habisphere

The habisphere is a man-made structure that NASA builds on the Milne Ice Shelf to conduct tests regarding the meteorite and its fossils. It is where the press conference announcing the meteorite is broadcast from, and where Dr. Ming is killed.

Triton Submersible

The Triton Submersible is a small, plexiglass bubble that Michael uses to explore the ocean. During the final showdown with Pickering, Rachel is trapped inside the Triton as it sinks.

PODS

The Polar Orbiting Density Scanner is a satellite used by NASA to detect indications of global warming in the arctic. It is credited with discovering the meteorite, but it was not actually working when this claim was made.

Bioluminescent Plankton

Bioluminescent plankton are a small ocean species found in saltwater environments. Their presence in the extraction shaft is the first indication that there is an issue with the authenticity of the meteorite.

Mariana Trench

The Mariana Trench is one of the deepest parts of the ocean of extreme oceanic pressure that it is nearly impossible to explore. The rock that is set up to look like a meteorite is from the Mariana Trench.

Westbrooke Place Luxury Apartments

This is Senator Sexton's apartment in Washington, DC. It is where he hears the news about the discovery of alien fossils, and where Gabrielle overhears Sexton making illegal promises to the heads of private space agencies.



Themes

Truth and Deception

Deception and the search for the truth is one of the main themes of the book. The title, *Deception Point*, even reinforces this. The main plot is hinged on a large-scale fraud designed to ensure NASA's future. The subplot of Senator Sexton accepting illegal campaign contributions is also about Sexton deceiving others, and throughout the novel, Sexton is described as a consummate liar. References to high tech military and intelligence equipment are also generally described as secret, and Pickering's concerns about security relate to keeping information from the public so as to protect national security.

Throughout the story, Rachel is seeking the truth behind the meteorite and trying to ensure that others discover that truth. One of Rachel's primary reasons for disliking her father has to do with his lack of honesty and lying to her mother. Rachel's feelings about other characters tend to hinge on how honest they are. Her initial feeling about President Herney were warm, but then changed momentarily when she thought he might be involved in the meteorite deception.

Gabrielle, like Rachel, is also trying to find out the truth. In this case, the truth about whether Sexton is accepting money from private space companies. Her disillusionment with Sexton began when she saw him lie convincingly about their affair. She is on Sexton's side when she thinks he is being honest, such as when he volunteered the information about meeting with the private space companies. Then she thinks about exposing him when she discovers he is not being honest with her.

Throughout the story, many of the characters use minor deceptions to get what they want: Gabrielle lies to Harper to make him admit he lied about PODS; Rachel bluffs the controller, Ekstrom, and Tench and Harper lie about PODS being fixed. At the end of the book, the truth about the meteorite is revealed in a press conference.

Truth is also seen as one of the traits that make a character likable or unlikeable. Rachel, Gabrielle and President Herney are portrayed as honest and sympathetic characters. One of Sexton's main character flaws is portrayed as his ability to lie convincingly, and this is the first thing that makes Gabrielle doubt him. Ekstrom also admits to having lied about things, and his character is not sympathetic.

Politics and Presidential Campaigning

Politics is key to the plot of the book, since it gives weight and urgency to the discovery of the meteorite. The discovery is exactly what the current administration needs, while being a severe blow to Sexton's campaign. The underlying race for the presidency gives important weight and context to the discovery, and consequently to the discovery that it was a set-up. The entire set-up was master-minded for political reasons so that



Pickering could ensure that Sexton never became president, and NASA maintained its monopoly of space.

Also referenced throughout the story is the power and money that goes into a presidential campaign. Yolanda warns that bringing down Sexton will result in making powerful enemies, since there is a lot of power and money behind his bid for the presidency. Pickering uses a vast amount of resources and technology in an effort to ensure Herney's success in the election. Also, Sexton accepts the money from the space agencies, but in return has to make promises to them that he will open space to the private sector.

Part of the political theme throughout the story is what the various politicians and their people do with the information they acquire. Tench uses the photos and financial information to try to force Gabrielle to admit her affair with Sexton, which is much more effective than Tench leaking it herself. Tench also uses the information she has about the NASA discovery to lure Sexton into looking stupid on the CNN debate. Both of these incidents are meant to illustrate how shrewd Tench is at playing the political game, and they both showcase her ability to use information. Gabrielle also speculates that the information about Harper lying about PODS would not usually be enough to put a damper on the discovery, but because Sexton is a consummate politician, he has the ability to use that information to bring Herney down. Gabrielle also rises to be one of Sexton's closest advisers after feeding him information regarding NASA that she herself received from a secret informant.

Several characters acknowledge that situations can change in an instant in politics. Sexton, after hearing the news about the fossils being discovered, is distraught and doesn't think he can recover. With just the hint that someone else (Harper) might be lying, he suddenly has hope again and thinks about how quickly things change in politics. Herney also expresses this sentiment when the fossils are discovered. Hours earlier, political pundits were speculating that he was about to withdraw, and then he was suddenly the front-runner. Sexton himself goes from being ahead by a large margin, to almost being out of the running again, to just about to announce the meteorite was a fraud, thereby putting himself on top, to being exposed for having an affair and threatened with blackmail - all in the space of twenty-four hours.

Several political tactics are also referenced in the story. Tench says that politics is like war, where you attack your opponent from two sides. She chose to attack Sexton on his politics and his morals. Gabrielle also alludes to Sexton's use of "Siamese Insurance," in which he kept evidence of his illegal activity in order to ensure that those who gave him money would not try to expose him. Doing so would expose themselves as well. Gabrielle also notes that politics is a media game, and the story features five press conferences: One from the White House to announce the meteor; two from PODS to announce that their computer program was malfunctioning, and then the malfunction was fixed; one from Sexton that ended up announcing his affair with Gabrielle, and the final press conference from the president to tell the public that the meteorite is not real.



Suspense and Secrecy

Suspense is one of the key themes of the book and helps to create mystery and drama, which add to the story. Suspense is created in the book by using short chapters that often end with a cliff-hanger that leaves the reader wondering what will happen next. The next chapter often switches to another character, situation, or setting.

Suspense is also created by keeping much key information secret. The controller is not revealed until the end of the book, which ensures that suspicion falls on several of the other characters. Misdirection also helps to cast doubt on some characters. The underlying use of secret informants, top-secret military weapons and equipment, and allusions to classified information also help to add mystery and drama to the plot.

The dangerous environments that the characters find themselves in, and the implications for the upcoming presidential elections also create suspense. Rachel's fear of water, combined with several open-water situations in which she finds herself also add to the unpredictability of the story and help to create interesting plot twists.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person and is told from the different perspectives of the various characters. This point of view is effective because many of the characters do not know each other, so it gives background knowledge, emotions, and motivations of each of the characters. One of the major themes of the novel is presidential politics, so this point of view helps to translate what happens behind the scenes with the various people and issues involved in a presidential campaign.

The story is told through equal parts descriptive narration and dialogue between the various characters, which helps to tell the story as well as build the relationships among the characters. There are also passages that involve one or more of the characters reminiscing about events that happened in the past, which helps to explain the characters' motivations and why they act in certain ways.

Setting

The novel has three main settings: The Milne Ice Shelf, where the meteorite has been discovered, the Goya, Michael's ship, where the final climax takes place, and Washington, D.C., where the President and Senator Sexton are located.

The Milne Ice Shelf is a terrifying and dangerous location. In the high arctic, the characters cannot go outside without protective clothing, and they are surrounded on all sides by the frigid Arctic Ocean. This is where the habisphere has been built and the meteorite has been found to contain fossils of alien life forms. It is also the setting for the press conference that announces to the world that NASA has discovered the fossils.

The Goya is Michael Tolland's ship, and Rachel, Corky, and Michael go there to find more evidence of the falsification of the meteorite. This is where Pickering reveals himself to be the mastermind behind the hoax, and where Michael, Rachel and Corky escape Pickering and his deadly Delta Force, all of whom eventually die there. This is also a terrifying location because the Goya is anchored on a megaplume, created by an underwater volcano. This is a large swirling mass of water that has created a strong current and attracted a large number of deadly hammerhead sharks. In the battle between Pickering and the others, the Goya is eventually destroyed.

Washington, D.C., is where President Herney, Marjorie Tench, Senator Sexton, and Gabrielle Ashe are located. The setting jumps around Washington, from the White House, to Sexton's Apartment, to the NASA headquarters, to ABC Studios and Sexton's campaign headquarters. It is also where the NRO headquarters are located, and where Rachel resides.



The setting does not move smoothly from one setting to the next, but instead skips between various locations in Washington, to the Milne Ice Shelf, and to the Goya. Occasionally, when characters are remembering previous experiences, the setting moves to those places, such as the Sexton family home.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is modern and easy to understand, while also incorporating intelligence and military jargon and acronyms. This introduces the reader to the world of politics, intelligence gathering, and state-of-the-art military equipment and techniques.

Throughout the novel, there is a storm about to blow onto the Milne Ice Shelf, which is a metaphor for the storm that the meteorite is going to create in Washington. The storm hits the Shelf, just as all the pieces of how the fraud was developed are put in place by Rachel and the others. Irony is also used frequently. Examples include the irony that Pickering would stage a fraud to help NASA when he loathes the agency; the irony that Sexton is the only one unconcerned about the President's press conference, when he is the one most hurt by it; and the irony that Rachel goes to Pickering for help when he is actually the mastermind behind faking the meteorite.

Imagery is used in the novel to create terrifying settings and situations that the characters have to escape. The Milne Ice Shelf is barren, frigid, dangerous—the manner in which it is described really gets that across. The Goya, which, being over open water would be fearful enough for Rachel, is also anchored in the middle of a cyclone and surrounded by sharks. The language and imagery used to describe the situations and settings helps to create the suspense and drama that are a key element of the story.

The use of names for the characters is not consistent throughout the story. Some characters, such as Gabrielle, Rachel, and Corky, are referred to throughout by their first name. Others, such as Senator Sexton, Tench and Ekstrom, are often referred to by their last name. Still others, such as the team of Delta's, Sexton's bodyguard, and the helicopter pilot, are never referred to by name at all. The most sympathetic and likable characters tend to be addressed by first name, while less likable characters, such as Sexton and Ekstrom, tend to be referred to by last name. Those with no name are generally referred to by occupation. In the case of the Delta Force, this is particularly effective, since they are portrayed as a deadly team of trained killers, and giving them no name makes them seem more like machines than people—deadly killing machines.

Structure

The novel is comprised of 133 chapters and a prologue and epilogue. The chapters are numbered and not named, and are often very short and abrupt. The settings between chapters often switch back and forth between the high arctic and various locations in Washington, as well as the Goya and other settings. Most of the chapters end with a cliff-hanger, creating suspense about what is happening, about to happen, or what a

character knows or is about to tell. The next chapter usually then switches to another character and location. While creating suspense, this also adds drama to events or dialogue that would otherwise be mundane.

The plot of the novel is complex, with a few subplots that intertwine to create the main plot. The course of the book unravels a large-scale deception, which has implications for the two major candidates running for president. Within this are also minor sub plots relating to Sexton's bribery and affair with Gabrielle, and the events and situations that have fueled Pickering's dislike of NASA and the President. Throughout, there is a also a relationship developing between Rachel and Michael. All these come together and are related to the major plot-line about the meteorite.

The novel's pace is very fast, and much of the novel takes place in the course of 24 hours. It is also a story-driven plot, so the fast pace adds to the suspense of the book and creates a feeling of urgency as to what is happening with each of the characters. The storyline is mainly linear, with some flashbacks from the main characters, which adds depth to their motivations and emotions. The novel is very easy to read and covers a lot of ground very quickly.



Quotes

"Keeping information from the director of the NRO was like keeping Vatican secrets from the Pope. The standing joke in the intelligence community was that if William Pickering didn't know about it, it hadn't happened." p.15, Ch. 4

"Marjorie Tench had been blessed with all the brains of a supercomputer - and the warmth of one too." p.72, Ch. 17

"The cavernous main chamber of NASA's habisphere would have been a strange sight anywhere on earth, but the fact that it existed on the Arctic ice shelf made it that much more difficult for Rachel Sexton to assimilate." p.86, Ch. 20

"Up ahead he saw the extraction shaft - the point from which the most magnificent fossils in all human history had been taken." p. 145, Ch. 33

"When in doubt just spit it out! The old Yankee proverb embodies one of her mom's basic beliefs - that all challenges can be overcome by speaking the truth, no matter how it comes out." p.148, Ch. 34

"All around him in the water, Ming saw tiny glowing specks of light. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen." p. 154, Ch. 36

"Ladies and gentlemen, several hours ago, NASA pulled from the ice an eight-ton meteorite, which contains fossils of a life form. Unequivocal proof of extraterrestrial life." p. 291, Ch. 68

"What a difference a day makes, the president thought. In politics, your world can change in an instant." p. 354, Ch. 84

"The pilot sighed, gazing out now at the ocean rushing all around the ship. The sensation was a ghostly one - that of sailing full speed despite being anchored." p.434, Ch. 104

"Never underestimate the ego of a politician." p. 472, Ch. 115

"Unfortunately, as was often the case in the world of covert operations, the grandest of plans could be undone by the smallest of snags. Yesterday, the entire illusion had been shattered by a few bioluminescent plankton." p.485, Ch. 120

"With its bow proudly in the air, the Goya slipped backward over the watery ledge, sucked down the steep spiraling wall of water. Her lights were still glowing as she disappeared beneath the sea." p. 540, Ch. 130

"Then, like a meteorite striking the dark side of the moon, the rock crashed into a vast plain of mud on the ocean floor, kicking up a cloud of silt. As the dust settled, one of the

ocean's thousands of unknown species swam over to inspect the newcomer." p.558,
Epilogue



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the novel's use of high tech weaponry and other high tech equipment. Do you believe such things as improvised munitions and other experimental prototypes could be created? Why or why not?

From the information presented in the novel, do you think the author is for or against the privatization of space? Discuss your choice.

Do you agree with the theory of panspermia? Why or why not?

Did you suspect Lawrence Ekstrom and/or Marjorie Tench to be the masterminds behind the meteorite fraud? If so, what led you to these conclusions? If not, who did you suspect and why?

Do you feel that American politics was portrayed positively or negatively in this novel? Discuss.

By the end of the novel, it is revealed how the meteorite was faked, and the Director of NRO was behind the deception. With all the mystery and misdirection in the novel, was there anything that was left unexplained? Discuss.

The author has written other highly-regarded books. If you have read any of these, was Deception Point among your favorite or least favorite? Why?

Do you believe space should be opened up for private space agencies to explore? Discuss your answer.