

Total Control Study Guide

Total Control by David Baldacci

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Plot Summary

A fatal sabotage of an airplane, murdering 130 people and the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, the apparent corporate espionage activities of a computer expert for a national technological corporation, and the murder of a gay investment analyst in New York, appear to be thoroughly unrelated crimes, except that tenacious and persistent FBI agent Lee Sawyer is determined to learn how the three events are connected. His investigations consume the bulk of this work by David Baldacci, and eventually climax in the revelation of a treacherous conspiracy involving murder, blackmail, and double crosses among the culprits.

Jason Archer uncovers criminal activity as he is compiling the records and integrating the information of his company, Triton Global, a corporate leader in the technology field. Triton is headed by partners Nathan Gamble and Quentin Rowe, who dislike one another intensely. As Jason alters his flight and sets out to deliver the documents to whom he believes are law enforcement officials, he avoids the crash of the sabotaged airplane, on which Federal Reserve Board Chairman Arthur Lieberman sits. Jason's trip does not go as he plans, and he is kidnapped by some culprits who want the documents he has and are ready and willing to kill him if necessary. Jason's wife, Sidney, is convinced that, contrary to Triton's accusations, her husband is not guilty of espionage, and she sets out to prove his innocence, unaware of his whereabouts and of the danger in which she is placing herself.

FBI agent Lee Sawyer, charged with the investigation of the airline crash, stumbles upon the story of Jason Archer and, as well, the death of a gay investment analyst, believed to have committed suicide, but actually murdered by those who wish to neutralize the possibility that he may expose crimes of Triton's leader, Gamble. Sawyer's powers of investigation, use of current forensic science, and basic "gumshoe" detective work, allow him to connect the three crimes and to uncover a treacherous array of criminal activity, all having begun with the blackmail of Fed Chair Arthur Lieberman, because of his homosexual affair with the analyst, Jeff Page. When Lieberman is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, he decides to expose the blackmail that forced his unilateral change in interest rates, in order to bring down his blackmailer, Nathan Gamble. Gamble arranges for the plane sabotage, in order to prevent Lieberman's confession, and, as well, the murder of Jeff Page, who he had paid to have an affair with Lieberman. Jason Archer, who has discovered the entire scheme through his integration of Triton's information systems, including incriminating emails from Gamble, must also be neutralized, but other forces are at work, including those of Quentin Rowe, whose desire is to rid himself of partner Gamble. Against the backdrop of all of this crime, important statements are made about the perils of technology, especially when in the hands of the "bad guys," and the potentially dangerous and disastrous nature of the power of the Federal Reserve Board to impact the entire global economy by whimsically altering interest rates and affecting the lives of millions of Americans, banking, and the economic health of the entire world.



Chapters 1-7

Chapters 1-7 Summary

A short Chapter 1 focuses on Arthur Lieberman, Federal Reserve Board Chairman, who has less than a year to live. Determined to go out in infamy, he will be completing one final act that will destroy certain individuals, and he is happy to do so. It will mean that he will fly to California today, from Dulles Airport in Washington, D.C. The plane, however, has been sabotaged, and, shortly after take-off, the right wing separates from the plane, and it crashes. There are no survivors.

Chapters 2-7 take the reader back through the month prior to the crash and into the lives of Jason and Sidney Archer, a young, successful couple with a small daughter, Amy. Jason works for Triton Global, a large technology firm that is about to become larger through the acquisition of CyberCom, a company which produces state-of-the-art software and engages in sophisticated research and development. This acquisition will make Triton the undisputed leader in technology throughout the world. Sidney is a lawyer with Tyler-Stone, a firm that happens to represent Triton, and she is a key member of the team negotiating the CyberCom acquisition.

Jason has been working long hours, even going back to the office in the middle of the night, in order to complete the compilation of Triton's financial records, which CyberCom wants to see prior to agreeing to the acquisition. In truth, Jason is scanning in documents he has found by accident, and is doing so at the request of an as yet unknown person. He has been instructed to deliver the documents in person, and to purchase an airline ticket on the flight from Dulles to Los Angeles - the same flight on which Arthur Lieberman is booked. To cover his actions, he has told Sidney that he is going to California for a job interview; he has told Triton that he is spending a few days at home with household projects. On the same day, Sidney has a day trip to Tyler Stone's New York office, for a meeting between Triton and CyberCom.

At the airport, by Chapter 4, Jason, following previous instructions, enters the restroom and changes clothes. At the same time, another individual, dressed like Jason, bumps into him, and they exchange tickets. Jason is now bound for Seattle, his conspirator now on the plane that will crash. Sidney arrives in New York for the meeting. Chapter 6 introduces Nathan Gamble, CEO of Triton and Quentin Rowe, President, two unlikely business partners who are interested in the CyberCom deal for very different reasons, as is clear from their exchanges with Sidney, who is attempting to finalize the final offer for purchase. As Chapter 7 ends, she has learned that her husband's plane has crashed, leaving no survivors.



Chapters 1-7 Analysis

These first chapters provide important information, which, at this point, appears to be unconnected. In addition to learning that Jason's and Sidney's professional lives are intertwined by Triton, it is clear that Jason is involved in some type of surreptitious activity, which he must complete in the middle of the night. He is obviously copying documents to which he is not supposed to have access and is communicating with someone who wants these documents. The identity switch at the airport makes his behavior even more suspicious, but he is obviously carrying these documents personally to whomever is willing to pay him mightily. The details of Arthur Lieberman's plans are even more vague, but it is obvious that someone is concerned enough to kill many innocent people in order to thwart his efforts. The introduction of Nathan Gamble and Quentin Rowe provides some insight into these two men's personalities and goals. Gamble is obviously in the technology business for the profit, understanding very little about the world of computer technology at all. Quentin Rowe, on the other hand, is the "tech" guy, the one who sees this acquisition as the one act that will bring research and development to the forefront of Triton and focus on informational systems rather than simply money. He is anxious to acquire the "brains" of CyberCom. Theirs is a partnership of convenience only, and they have very different goals.



Chapters 8-12

Chapters 8-12 Summary

The next five chapters move the reader back and forth among three places. In Chapter 8, Jason is met in Seattle by an Anthony DePazza and is driven to a warehouse. Increasingly nervous about this entire scenario, Jason is glad that he copied the contents of the files he is about to hand over onto a separate disk which he has mailed to himself. In the warehouse he turns over the documents to a small older gentleman, flanked by two large men with sunglasses. He hands Jason an electronically locked case, supposedly filled with money, and sends him away with DePazza. Jason's pager has news of the crash, and he decides to call Sidney. At this point, DePazza pulls off the road, tears off his disguise, and reveals his true identity - Kenneth Scales, a sociopathic killer for hire. Holding a gun, he seizes Jason's pager, laptop, and cell phone, then drives off.

Chapter 9 is set at the crash site, a farmer's field in Virginia. Most evidence has been destroyed, creating a difficult situation for the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation, led by George Kaplan. On the scene as well is FBI Special Agent Lee Sawyer and his partner, Ray Jackson. Sawyer's team has located the missing wing quite a distance away and, at first look, it appears that the plane may have been sabotaged. This is confirmed by Chapter 12, after a thorough forensics look at the wing. Sawyer has also learned that Arthur Lieberman was on board.

Chapters 10 and 11 focus on Sidney. She has flown home on Triton's corporate jet, uncomfortable in her grief, because Nathan Gamble now knows that her husband was not at home as he claimed. She insists that she has no idea why Jason was flying to California, though Gamble does not believe her. She is met at home by her parents, who agree to take her daughter, Amy, away for a few days in order for Sidney to have time to grieve and make arrangements for a memorial service. On a hunch, she decides to call the company in California with whom Jason was to have the interview, only to discover that he was never scheduled for one. Now she is determined to learn why he had lied to her.

Chapters 8-12 Analysis

Jason is obviously not in the hands of the "good" guys, leading the reader to speculate that he may have been engaged in industrial espionage and now will not be allowed to live to tell about it. As well, his fabrications to both Triton and to his wife have been revealed, leading both to obviously question just what Jason was up to. Sidney, although obviously devastated by the apparent death of her husband, vows to find out just what was going on in his life that put him on that plane.



The revelation that the plane was sabotaged means that both the NTSB and the FBI will have a full force of investigators on the case. Sawyer has learned that the Fed Chairman was on board, and this will obviously be his start point, along with an attempt to locate the saboteur. He knows that, to get close enough to sabotage a wing, the perpetrator had to have been an airline employee, so he will begin there as well.



Chapters 13-18

Chapters 13-18 Summary

Typical of the author's style, the next 6 chapters move the reader from scene to scene and from character to character. Chapter 13 describes the small room in which Jason is being held, the location of which is a complete mystery, given that he was blindfolded during the car trip. Smashing his glasses, he is able to attack his guard, grab his laptop and cell phone, and send a message, before being re-apprehended, beaten and thrown back into the limo by Scales, who now threatens death if Jason does not cooperate. They have another task for him. Meanwhile, FBI Agent Jackson searches Lieberman's home, which is a tiny hovel and demonstrates an amazingly austere lifestyle for such a prominent figure. A forensics team is due to arrive shortly.

Chapter 14 finds Sidney grieving in solitude. She moves into Jason's office and checks the computer for condolence messages from friends. There are several, but, just as she is about to sign out, a message notification pops up, addressed to Jason. Checking his desk, she finds an access card for Triton and determines to return it at some point. Moving into the living room, she turns on television and, as expected, is seeing live footage of the crash site. Astonishingly, behind the newscaster, a member of the investigations team is carrying Jason's duffel bag, almost unharmed. Determined to retrieve it, Sidney gets into her car, arriving at the crash site in the early morning hours. There, she is told that the bag has been taken to an evidence room to be kept until the investigation concludes. On her way home, in Chapter 15, Sidney receives a call from Quentin Rowe, asking why Jason was going to California. He states that others are suspicious that Jason was perhaps selling Triton secrets, especially financial records, to RTG. Sidney honestly states that she does not know. The scene shifts to Seattle in Chapter 16, with a lone figure entering the warehouse and retrieving a videotape from a video camera, leaving just as quietly. The tape is ultimately turned over to Frank Hardy, former FBI agent who now has a private firm that holds Triton's external security contract.

Chapter 17 is comprised of two important meetings. Lee Sawyer is in the office of Fed Vice-Chair, Walter Burns, attempting to gain information about Lieberman and perhaps who would benefit from Lieberman's death. Burns explains the functions of the Federal Reserve Board, how interest rates are changed, and the overall impact of those changes. No rate change had occurred at the most recent meeting. For some reason, however, Lieberman was anxious to meet with Charles Tiedman, head of the Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco, though Burns has no additional information. At the same time, Nathan Gamble is in the office of Henry Wharton, his chief counsel. He is concerned that Jason was selling financial records and perhaps Sidney was a conspirator. Gamble threatens to pull his business from Tyler Stone if the acquisition fails. Once Gamble leaves, Wharton contacts Sidney. Both agree that she will not be working on the CyberCom deal, and she states that she intends to investigate Jason's suspicious trip herself, if only to clear his name. She begins by calling Jason's secretary,



Kay, who is obviously nervous to be hearing from her. She asks that Sidney call her at home later that evening.

A short Chapter 18 reveals that the exact device used to tear the wing from the downed aircraft has been found.

Chapters 13-18 Analysis

Jason is obviously in trouble he certainly had not planned for, and the reader is still unaware of exactly what he was turning over to these unknown individuals. Obviously, however, the recipients of the documents are ruthless enough to turn Jason over to a sociopathic killer for hire. If Sidney can manage to open Jason's email, perhaps she will learn something important. The secretive arrival of a stranger to the warehouse in order to retrieve a videotape and then to turn it over to Triton's external security firm, moreover, adds another piece of this yet unsolved puzzle. Obviously, someone wanted the exchange recorded.

The evidence is building that Jason was selling Triton secrets, probably its financial records, to its competitor RTG. This information would be vital to RTG, as it, too, is attempting to acquire CyberCom. The interconnection of Sidney, Tyler Stone, Triton and Jason is clearly evident. While Wharton is the chief counsel for Triton, another partner is the chief counsel for RTG. Both Sidney and Jason have access to confidential Triton information, but, at the same time, Sidney also has access to RPG's chief counsel. It is obvious that conspiracy could have occurred, and Sidney may be implicated along with her husband. Because the reader knows, however, that Sidney did not know the true nature of Jason's trip, she is without guilt in any wrongdoing.

Arthur Lieberman is a bit of a mystery himself. As Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, he lives like a pauper, and one wonders how such a powerful individual chooses that lifestyle. As well, he was urgently attempting to get to friend Charles Tiedman, who may hold some knowledge of Lieberman's plans to reap vengeance on others. While Sawyer finds it difficult to believe that a murderer would bring down an entire plane to kill one man, he also notes that, with the announcement of Lieberman's death, stock markets around the world tumbled for two days.



Chapters 19-29

Chapters 19-29 Summary

Chapter 19 opens with Sidney at her office, talking with Jason's secretary by telephone. Kay relates her concerns about Jason's recent behavior, including a computerized lock system installation on his door. Sidney realizes that she has a card key to that system. At the end of the conversation, Sidney notices a shadow passing by her door. She jerks open the door, finding Philip Goldman, another Tyler Stone attorney. After a few curt words, Sidney leaves, and Goldman enters her office, using a key of his own. Sidney proceeds to Triton, and the night guard, who knows her, allows her into Jason's office area, under the guise of retrieving some of his personal belongings at his secretary's desk. She enters Jason's office but is unable to find anything of import and is almost discovered by Quentin Rowe.

A very short Chapter 21 finds Agent Sawyer breaking in to the apartment of the purported saboteur. He is dead, shot 12 times. Chapter 22 returns to Sidney. As she leaves Jason's office building, a limo pulls up. Richard Lucas, Triton security grunt, with gun in his jacket, requests that Sidney accompany him to Nathan Gamble's home for a conversation. During this meeting, Sidney admits that Jason had lied to both Triton and her regarding his trip. Gamble indicates his suspicion that she and Jason perhaps colluded to sabotage the Triton-CyberCom deal. Clearly angry, Sidney leaves and telephones her boss to protest. The reader is also informed that, for the second time, Sidney has not noticed a tall individual, clearly following her.

Chapter 23 returns to Agent Sawyer's efforts to move the crash investigation forward. Fingerprint expert, Marsha Reid, arrives to inform him that Robert Sinclair, the fueler who sabotaged the plane, was really Joseph Riker, a criminal with a long rap sheet. Evidently, he had used synthetic fingerprints and created the identity of Robert Sinclair, in order to pass the employment background check of the airlines. Agent Jackson, meanwhile, has been digging into Lieberman's history, finding that he had pancreatic cancer and about 6 months to live. He lost most of his assets in a nasty divorce and was essentially broke and in debt when he died. Sawyer adds Vice-Chairman Burns to a potential suspect list. Operation "Rapid Start" is instituted, an electronic clearinghouse for all bits of information, leads, tips, etc., using the newest computer technology to organize this information into a massive database.

In Chapter 24, Sidney is visited by Quentin Rowe, who apologizes for his previous behavior toward her and expresses his condolences for Jason's death. He further explains the importance of the CyberCom deal to Triton. CyberCom has the technology to take the Internet to the next level and has developed artificial intelligence that will organize information through a satellite-based network that will communicate with newly developed software, soon to be available on every computer. Users will be able to access information in new and sophisticated ways. Triton stands to make millions with the acquisition of CyberCom, but, more important, the technology will truly help



societies all over the world. He is also obviously trying to discern Jason's travel purpose, but Sidney simply does not know.

Through Chapters 25-27, Frank Hardy contacts Agent Sawyer with crucial information regarding the case. He explains to Sawyer that, as Triton's security firm, he has been secretly monitoring activities of RTG, especially at their west coast facilities. He presents Sawyer with the tape showing Jason handing off a briefcase in an RTG warehouse, an activity that occurred long after the plane crash. The additional information is that a quarter of a billion dollars is missing from a Triton account, money that Gamble was planning to use for a deposit on the CyberCom purchase, and an account to which Jason had computer access as he was working on Triton's financial records. Sawyer now realizes that Jason is alive and puts out an APB on him, knowing, as well, that he will have to visit Sidney Archer again, in order to determine possible collusion.

Chapter 28-29: While Sawyer and Jackson are on their way to visit Sidney Archer, she is preparing for Jason's memorial service, and receiving an additional visitor - Paul Brophy, another attorney with Tyler Stone who has evidently been sent to represent the law firm and to assist Sidney through the ordeal. She finds this strange, as she does not know Paul well, but allows him into her home nevertheless. The telephone rings just as the FBI agents arrive. While Sidney's parents are busy at the door, and Sidney on the phone in her bedroom, Brophy picks up the extension in the kitchen, only to hear Jason Archer's voice on the other end. He quickly slips out a mini-recorder and tapes the conversation, which includes instructions from Jason to Sidney. He informs Goldman immediately, without revealing the information to the FBI agents now speaking with Sidney.

Chapters 19-29 Analysis

This section is full of important pieces of the puzzle, although, clearly, Sawyer can still not determine whether he is dealing with two separate crimes or one larger crime, involving numerous players and suspects. A few things become clear, however. The most shocking information is that, indeed, Jason Archer is still alive, and Hardy is quite happy to provide the videotaped evidence, in order to demonstrate that Archer is clearly a scoundrel. Gamble's tactics are a bit suspect as well. Somehow, he is aware that Sidney is at her office in the evening and sends a driver and Richard Lucas, complete with visible gun, to retrieve her for a meeting. He minces no words with Sidney, moreover, accusing her of collusion with her husband in stealing secrets and money from Triton. Further suspense is added with the mysterious stranger who is also following Sidney, and the reader is, at this point, lead to believe that it must be someone from Triton.

The fact that a common criminal such as Riker has the ability to create a fictitious identity and acquire synthetic fingerprints certainly points to much more sophisticated individuals behind his activities. His execution, clearly an overkill with 12 bullets emptied into his body, has Sawyer a bit stumped as well. Obviously, he was murdered in order to

ensure that he would never be captured and interrogated, but the overkill indicates strong emotion on the part of the killer.

Quentin Rowe is the antithesis of Gamble, and they indeed make strange "bedfellows." Quentin's concern for money is only as a tool to accomplish lofty goals of societal improvement; Gamble's concern for money is strictly in accumulation, in order to use this money to purchase power and influence. They have a symbiotic relationship which, at this point, works quite well.



Chapters 30-37

Chapters 30-37 Summary

During his visit with Sidney, Sawyer reveals that the plane was sabotaged and that he is aware that Jason's purpose for travel was not a job interview. Sidney admits this much but insists she does not know why he was traveling either. Sawyer does not reveal that Jason is alive, nor does Sidney admit her knowledge of the same. As Chapter 30 ends, Sawyer places 24-hour surveillance on Sidney. Another puzzle piece is inserted in Chapter 31 with a meeting between Phillip Goldman, Tyler Stone's partner, and his largest client, Alan Porcher, president of RTG. Porcher is concerned that Triton is openly accusing RTG of espionage but is reassured by Goldman that it will come to nothing. The critical point of this meeting is to inform Porcher of Triton's latest offer for CyberCom, so that RTG can trump the offer in advance. Goldman is also aware that if RTG acquires CyberCom, Triton will fire Tyler Stone, leaving Goldman with the largest client (RTG) and thus the ability to assume the position of managing partner.

Chapter 32 finds Agent Sawyer at the offices of Triton Global, where he is meeting with Gamble, Richard Lucas, Director of internal Security, Frank Hardy, president of a contracted external security firm, and Quentin Rowe. There, he is presented with their theories and evidence. He is shown how Jason accessed the secure information systems regarding Triton's efforts in securing the CyberCom deal and its bank accounts. In their opinion, he then faked his own death by blowing up the plane. At meeting's end, Rowe invites Sawyer for a tour of the facilities, where he is shown the production of computer chips and hard drives in completely sterile environments. Sawyer admits that he still uses an electric typewriter and worries about information in cyberspace being available to anyone with the ability to access it for potentially evil purposes. Rowe contends that the benefits far outweigh the dangers. As the chapter ends, Sawyer is informed that Sidney is "on the move."

Chapters 34-37 detail Sidney's unsuccessful efforts to avoid being followed by the FBI as she heads to New Orleans, following her husband's telephone instructions. Her parents have taken her daughter, Amy, back to their home, leaving Sidney's home open to a stranger's intrusion, in order to search Jason's office and to put a device on the computer which may provide future information someone obviously needs. In their haste to leave, Sidney's father retrieves the mail and, not wishing to go back into the house with it, places it in Sidney's car and closes the garage door. In the mail, he fails to notice, is a small brown bubble envelope addressed to Jason.

Sidney settles into La Fitte Guest House on Bourbon Street and waits for contact from Jason. Sawyer and other agents are stationed across the street. When Sidney leaves to stroll around Jackson Square, followed by a few agents, Sawyer is shocked to see Paul Brophy enter the guest house and, through binoculars, observes him searching Sidney's room. Sidney, meanwhile, is receiving a shoeshine from a thoroughly persistent peddler, who secrets a note to her. She is to call her office phone, and, when she does so, she



hears Jason's voice telling her to return home as the police are watching. In fact, this is a recorded message from Jason, attached by a device to Sidney's phone, which is then removed by Kenneth Scales. On the flight home, Sidney is seated across the aisle from a man she recognizes as one who has been following her. He explains that he is not FBI, that he wants to help her find Jason, and gives her a card with his name and phone number. The remainder of the conversation involves his description of the identity switch at the airport, his insistence that he is involved because of a personal interest in this case, and a warning that she is to trust no one. Following the flight, this stranger is murdered by Kenneth Scales.

Chapters 30-37 Analysis

Loyalty among executives of both Tyler Stone and Triton Global appears only convenient when it serves individual purposes. Phillip Goldman obviously has no loyalty to fellow partner Henry Wharton and is certainly willing to sabotage the Triton/CyberCom merger in order to benefit his client and boost her position in the firm. Quentin Rowe, as well, has no loyalty to Nathan Gamble, and it appears that if he had financing from elsewhere, he would end his partnership with a man he feels has no commitment to improving society through technology.

Sidney Archer and Lee Sawyer obviously place little trust in one another and are certainly unwilling to share the information both have that Jason is alive. While all evidence is certainly pointing to Jason's guilt, Sawyer still sees it as speculation, and for this seasoned FBI agent, actual proof of Jason's guilt and Sidney's involvement is not yet within his grasp. His plan continues to be one of gathering information about and from all of the major "players" in this situation, and his focus is on the death of many innocent people whose only fault was getting on the wrong airplane. The personal jealousies and squabbles among rich lawyers and businessmen are important only in so far as they relate to discovery of the criminals who blew up a plane.

Sidney's trip to New Orleans is completely pointless, both for her and for the FBI. Sawyer's detection of Paul Brophy leads him to deduce that there is certainly something that others want from Sidney, and that these others include fellow Tyler Stone attorneys.



Chapters 38-46

Chapters 38-46 Summary

Sawyer is in his office, mulling over the information gained thus far, is at a dead end, and believes that if their current suspicions of Jason is leaked to the press, perhaps Sidney will be pressured into being more forthcoming with him. Sidney, however, is having problems of her own, as Goldman has convinced Wharton to terminate her for the good of the firm. When she sees the leaked newspaper article, Sidney experiences a new emotion - anger. She storms into Nathan Gamble's office, only to be shown the videotape of her husband handing over a briefcase in one of RTG's facilities. She returns home, reads the remainder of the front page, and learns that Edward Page, the stranger on the plane, has been murdered. She realizes, now, how much danger she faces, and responds by arming herself and preparing to leave. Unfortunately, she is accosted by Sawyer and Jackson, who relieve her of her gun, just as she slips the envelope from Jason into her jacket. Throughout Chapter 39, Sawyer and Jackson summarize for Sidney the evidence they have gathered thus far, leading them to believe that this is more than a one-man operation. Sidney considers revealing her experience with Edward Page on the plane but decides against it. Because Sawyer believes that the trip to New Orleans was a diversion in order for someone to enter her home, he requests that they be allowed a full search. Sidney consents and leaves, with the disk safely tucked into her jacket. By Chapter 40, Sidney realizes she must take major action. Using a pay telephone, she instructs her parents to take Amy to their beach house in Maine and then returns home to load the disk into Jason's computer. Fortunately, she knows enough to realize that there is far less memory than her last log-on and decides to use the services of her company's computer guru, Jeff Fisher, instead. A brief Chapter 42 finds Sawyer dining at an upscale restaurant with Frank Hardy, where he observes Quentin Rowe at another table, obviously having a romantic meal with another male. At Jeff Fisher's home, during Chapter 42, Sidney receives a short lesson on hacking and the ease with which it can be accomplished, with computers, faxes and phones. He inserts Jason's disk, which is found to be encrypted. A code is needed, and Sidney does not have it. Jeff is clearly suspicious, and Sidney finally spills the entire story to him, convincing him to attempt to decode the disk.

Chapter 43: As Sawyer returns home from dinner, he is met by Gamble, who invites him to the Bullets-Knicks game, stating that he would like to discuss the case. Gamble requests that Sawyer immediately publicly announce an investigation of collusion between Jason Archer and RTG, knowing that this will knock RTG out of the running for the CyberCom acquisition. Sawyer, of course, refuses, insisting that there is simply not enough evidence. They continue onto a discussion of priorities and values, and it is clear that these two men are polar opposites. Angry, Sawyer leaves, informing Gamble he will take the bus home.

Chapter 44 finds Jeff still attempting to decode the disk, with no success. Sidney decides to take it home and attempt to find the encryption code in one of Jason's



emails, and Jeff downloads the contents of the disk onto his computer so that he may continue his efforts as well. In the meantime, Sawyer is at home reading the rest of his newspaper when he discovers the story about Edward Page. He arrives at Sidney's home and confronts her with the story, having discovered that Page was on the same plane as she, returning from New Orleans. Sidney reveals the contents of her conversation with Page, and they set out together for Page's office. Discovering that a file cabinet has been removed, they head off for Page's home. A great deal of information is revealed about Edward Page during Chapter 45. His home is reflective of a quiet lifestyle, and he has a number of family photos. Interested in one with "Jeff" written on the back, Sawyer takes it and delivers Sidney back to her home, which is now guarded by FBI agents. Turning out the lights, Sidney slips out the back door, calls a cab, and heads for her office where she can attempt to access Jason's email and obtain the encryption code. Agent Jackson meets Sawyer at the office with the information he has gathered about Edward Page. He was a New York cop, divorced with two adult children, and lost his younger brother, Jeff, to an apparent suicide. Convinced that it was murder, he moved to Virginia to investigate. According to his daughter, he had begun to carry a gun and refused to allow his children to visit him, stating that it was too dangerous. When the New York Police Department file on Jeff arrives by fax, it is learned that he was a diabetic and had contracted HIV as well, killing himself with a combination of alcohol and an overdose of insulin. Looking at Sawyer's picture of Jeff, Jackson is shocked to discover that it is the same individual whose picture was in Arthur Lieberman's apartment. Finally, Sawyer has one link between two deaths.

Chapter 46: Sidney is able to obtain the pass code from Jason's email, when she is accosted by Goldman and Brophy in the library of Tyler Stone. They take her gun and offer her ten million dollars to give them access to the latest Triton offer for CyberCom. As well, she will also receive the tape of her phone conversation with Jason, a piece of evidence that could result in criminal charges against her. She decides to go along with the bargain and then to turn everything over to Sawyer. As they settle into the car, the driver, wearing a ski mask, shoots both Brophy and Goldman, grabs the disk, and motions for Sidney to exit the car. Grabbing Brophy's gun as she exits the car, she streaks back into the building, running for the bathroom in order to clean off the blood spatter, and the realization hits her. The gun used by the driver had a crack in the handle and is, indeed, hers. She now understands that she was allowed to leave, in order that the murders of Goldman and Brophy may be attributed to her.

Chapters 38-46 Analysis

This section has both stunning action and a number of revelations. The reader now understands that the deaths of Lieberman and Edward Page's brother are clearly connected, that there are a number of conspirators, and that these conspirators may, indeed, be divided into different camps with different goals. The fact that Jason's disk is encrypted is certainly strange. If the disk contains only the financial records of Triton, there would probably be no reason for this, unless he had discovered some potentially dangerous and/or incriminating evidence of some type when he was organizing the records. This would also explain his need to work on these records at night, when no



one else was around. As well, others want the disk who could easily gain access to Triton's financial records through other means.

The basketball game meeting between Sawyer and Gamble reveals important insights into the characters of Nathan Gamble and Lee Sawyer. Gamble, as the reader has suspected all along, does not like to lose, and tries to use Sawyer to blacken RTG's reputation in order to gain the advantage, attempting to sweeten the pot further with an offer of employment at a huge salary. He is completely unsympathetic with Sawyer's priorities - the law, justice, and the deaths of an entire airplane full of innocent people. Sawyer is clearly disgusted with Gamble's complete lack of moral character and concludes that Gamble would stop at nothing to get what he wants. This conclusion places Gamble on his suspect list, certainly, but he must somehow find the connection between Gamble and Lieberman.

Sidney now fully understands Edward Page's warning. She has witnessed murders for which she will be charged, is a potential target for murder herself, and has no one in whom to place her trust. While Sawyer may be her best bet, she cannot risk talking to any law enforcement officers until she is able to somehow obtain enough information to clear herself.



Chapters 47-51

Chapters 47-51 Summary

This section begins with Sawyer surmising that Steven Page was Arthur Lieberman's lover, had possibly contracted HIV from Lieberman and was probably blackmailing him. Perhaps Lieberman had him killed. Sawyer decides to visit Charles Tiedman who, fortunately, is in Washington for a meeting. Chapters 48-51 recount Sidney's activities and movements, as she attempts to survive and to protect her parents and daughter. She is now in survival mode, retrieving her passport from her office, attempting small disguises and packing Brohpy's pistol into her belt. She takes a cab to the train station, buying a ticket for New York and making a large cash withdrawal from the ATM there. She then calls Jeff Fisher, informing him that she has the pass code but has lost the disk. Fortunately, Fisher has made a back-up disk as well as saved the file on his hard drive. Sidney tells him that, for his own safety, he must take the disk, check into a hotel and mail the disk to her parents' beach home in Maine. Unfortunately, Fisher observes that he is being followed and proceeds to a cyber cafe, whose owners he knows well, and accesses his computer from there. The owners slip him a postage paid bubble envelope in which he inserts a disk and which he addresses to the home in Maine. Realizing that the bad guys are outside the cafe, he pretends to be drunk, is arrested by police as he drives erratically off, and, prior to making his allowed phone call, requests that the desk sergeant place the envelope in the station's outgoing mail.

The following day, Sawyer locates Tiedman and gains much more information about Lieberman. It is obvious that Tiedman did not agree with many of Lieberman's decisions, especially his whimsical alteration of interest rates for no apparent reason, changes that had major impact on a number of economic sectors. Tiedman admits to knowledge of Lieberman's affair with Steven Page and believes that Lieberman's wife knew this as well. For this reason, Lieberman was willing to give her everything in the divorce, in order to buy her silence.

By Chapter 49, Sidney is on her way to New York via train. She arrives at Penn Station and calls Jason's secretary, learning that Jason was actually working on two projects for Triton. First, were the actual financial records that had been requested by CyberCom. The second project, however, related to categorizing and developing databases for all of the other records, integrating them into the newer system that Quentin Rose had devised. Armed with this additional information, Sidney climbs into a cab for JFK but notices Kenneth Scales following her. Diverting the destination to Tyler Stone's New York office, Sidney enters with her security card, and Scales cannot gain admittance. There, she telephones a neighbor of her parents, discovering that they have left for Maine but that there was a suspicious vehicle in the neighborhood. Knowing that her parents are being followed, Sidney realizes she must now go to Maine, not leave the country as planned.



Scales has killed the security guard and is coming after Sidney. She pulls her gun on him, forces him into a closet and races out of the building, and returns to Penn Station. There she calls Sawyer, recites the pass code to him but refuses to disclose her location, stating only that, no matter what he discovers, she has done nothing wrong. She describes her potential killer to Sawyer as well. Sawyer then receives a call from his partner, Jackson, informing him of a triple homicide in the Tyler Stone parking garage. Dead are Phillip Goldman, Paul Brophy, and their driver, Parker. The limousine in which they are found is registered to RTG. The gun, found in a plastic bag nearby, is registered to Sidney Archer. The tape of Sidney's phone conversation with Jason is found under Brophy. While all evidence points to Sidney as the murderer, Sawyer calls in his own forensics team.

Chapter 50 finds Sidney altering her clothing and physical appearance in the Penn Station restroom. She boards a train for Stamford, Connecticut, home of her brother who is currently in France. Gaining access to his home by a known hidden key, she stocks up on guns and ammunition and takes his Land Rover, a vehicle which will get her through the coming predicted snowfall, as she winds her way toward the beach house in Bell Harbor, Maine. Arriving at the house, she finds no evidence that her parents have yet arrived, though newly fallen snow would have covered any tire tracks. She parks the car and enters the house, failing to notice a car passing slowly by. In the meantime, the FBI forensics team has concluded that, although Sidney was definitely in the limo, given the position of the bodies, the entry wounds, and the blood spatter, Sidney was not the shooter.

Lee Sawyer continues to be frustrated in Chapter 51, still unable to connect the plane sabotage, Jason Archer's purported crimes, and the murders of the Tyler Stone attorneys. He has surmised, however, that, given the tape left in the limo and the ease with which authorities found Sidney's gun, that someone has obviously set her up for these latest murders

Chapters 47-51 Analysis

Sawyer's conversation with Charles Tiedman reveals the rather unrealized power of the Federal Reserve Board. According to Tiedman, a small change in interest can virtually impact entire segments of the economy, not just within America, but across the world. This type of power is not known by the general populace, moreover, and it is Tiedman's view that any alteration of rate should not occur without lengthy debate and analysis by the entire Federal Reserve board. And yet, Arthur Lieberman, through his power as Chairman, was changing rates on his own authority to do so, and these changes had disastrous effects on American businesses and families. Tiedman, though a friend of Lieberman, was, nevertheless, concerned about his friend's behavior and thought it completely reckless. As well, Tiedman admits that Lieberman was having an affair with Jeff Page, and this reinforces the growing belief on the part of Sawyer that perhaps Lieberman was being blackmailed into changing rates to benefit powerful capitalists, perhaps individuals like Nathan Gamble. It would certainly be revealing if Sawyer were able to find some connection between Gamble and Jeff Page.



When Sidney discovers that Jason was actually working on two projects for Triton, she is intrigued. The first project, compiling the financial records of Triton, in anticipation of the CyberCom deal, does not appear all that important. Plenty of others would have access to those records as well, including, of course, Quentin Rowe. Perhaps the second project is the key to all recent events. Jason was engaged in compiling back-up databases for all Triton documents and emails of all Triton employees, presumably Gamble's as well. Perhaps there was incriminating or damaging information within these records that Jason uncovered in his project, information that others are willing to kill for.



Chapters 52-53

Chapters 52-53 Summary

Sidney cannot understand why her parents have not arrived and why the disk has not been delivered by Fed Ex, as she had instructed Fisher; she is not aware that he has used "snail" mail instead. When she calls Fisher's home, the police answer, and she is consumed with grief and guilt, believing him to now be dead. She retreats into the beach house, collapsing into a corner with a shotgun in her lap. She has come a long way from her former Virginia life. Back in Virginia, Frank Hardy has invited Sawyer to a news conference, announcing the Triton-CyberCom deal. At the conference, Sawyer's suspicion that Gamble and Rowe dislike one another is confirmed, as they avoid even cursory contact. Returning to his office, Sawyer receives a call from Tiedman, who has gathered the dates of the rate changes Lieberman unilaterally made. In each instance, the rate change was in the opposite of what was expected, throwing some financial markets into turmoil. Together, they develop the theory that Lieberman was probably blackmailed into the changes, in order that some unknown individual(s) might profit and/or achieve revenge on others. Once Lieberman developed cancer, he decided to expose the blackmailer, and this, perhaps was the reasons for his trip on the ill-fated plane. Steven Page had probably been murdered when his usefulness ended, even though the cause of death was ruled suicide. Edward was murdered as he got too close to the truth.

Chapter 53 returns to Bell Harbor. Sidney's parents are not at the home, because they had to travel to a distant town for groceries, the local ones being closed for the season. While they return, Sidney musters the courage to use the car phone to call Sawyer. Despite his belief that she is indeed innocent, Sidney refuses to disclose her location. Both conclude, moreover, that, since Paul Brophy was obviously working for RTG and had full access to Triton's financial data, RTG would not need Jason for this task. Kenneth Scales follows Sidney back into the house, in order to retrieve the disk and the pass code, but Sidney surprises him with a shotgun blast. A serious battle ensues, with Sidney injuring Scales and escaping. As she is traveling away, she sees her parents' car, being followed by a sedan. The Land Rover easily forces the sedan into a ditch, but her parents, frightened by the events, take off. Eventually, they unite and go to a motel. Meanwhile, the sedan driver rescues Scales from the house, and the email with the pass code is found on the floor. Now they only need the disk. Retrieving the sedan from the ditch, they call for reinforcements.

Chapters 52-53 Analysis

Finally, the pieces are beginning to fall together. While Lieberman's death and the Triton/CyberCom/RTG mess have not yet been linked, Sawyer is getting close and is convinced that, somehow Edward and Jeff Page are those links. The question is, who was paying Jeff Page to have an affair with Lieberman, so that federal interest rates



could be manipulated? Obviously, it has to have been a major player in the corporate world, and the executives of any of these three companies could be suspect. Because the information being sought by everyone appears to be held on a disk Jason Archer possessed, however, Triton is probably the first choice.

In her fear and grief, Sidney has certainly managed to engender the courage and ferocity necessary to protect her child and parents. She has now emerged victorious over Scales a second time, injuring him significantly. Unfortunately, he has allies close by who both rescue him and call for reinforcements, and, as well the pass code. Unfortunately for them, however, there are others who now have the information. Sawyer has the pass code, and the disk is on its way to the Bell Harbor post office. The other hope is that Jeff Fisher has somehow taken Sidney's advice and gone to his family in Boston. As well, the reader knows that whatever incriminating information is on that disk also exists within the new integrated computer system back at Triton.



Chapters 54-56

Chapters 54-56 Summary

Sawyer is pulling an "all-nighter" in the conference room, attempting to make sense of the myriad of pieces of information he has accumulated. He telephones the in-house technological expert, Liz Martin, asking about computer back-up tapes. When he inquires about the lengthy numeric pass code Sidney had given him, Liz explains that the pass code is much larger than necessary. Confused, Sawyer returns to a study of the pass code and discovers that they comprise all of the dates that Lieberman changed the fed rates. Now, he has the link. As he reviews the videotape from the Seattle warehouse, he notices something strange on the neck of one of the participants. His lab technician confirms, once the still shot is enlarged, that the individual was wearing a full-face mask. Continuing to engage in mental exercises, Sawyer acts upon a hunch as morning comes. He calls Columbia University, where Steven Page attended college. Steven and Quentin Rowe were roommates, and both graduated the same year. He believes he now has the identity of the two other men in the warehouse as well, and knows he must find Sidney Archer immediately.

Chapter 55: Sidney is on her way back to Bell Harbor with her father, followed by a van containing Richard Lucas, Kenneth Scales and six mercenaries from a militia group, known to Lucas from his CIA days. The goal is to obtain the disk, though Scales' interest lies in killing the woman who has gotten the better of him twice. In the meantime, Sawyer has used all of his investigative skills to track down the link between Sidney and Jeff Fisher and knows, from the police desk sergeant, that he had mailed an envelope to Bell Harbor Maine for Fisher. It is further revealed that Sawyer is very much alive. The police at his home were there because his computer equipment had been stolen. Sawyer and Jackson are now attempting to get out of Washington in the midst of a snowstorm.

Chapter 56: Sawyer and Jackson enlist the help of six Air Force Hostage Rescue team members and pilot George Kaplan, in order to get to Sidney as quickly as possible. They will land at an abandoned airfield ten miles from Bell Harbor, and state police will be waiting for them. Unknown to Sawyer, a private jet from elsewhere in the D.C. area is on its way to Bell Harbor, and will arrive well before his group, at a private airstrip on the grounds of a Bell Harbor resort. Meanwhile, Sidney and her father have retrieved the envelope from the post office. Sidney realizes that she has lost the pass code, but her father has his laptop at the beach house. When her father enters the house, he is captured, and Sidney, attempting to avoid capture herself, must speed off.

Chapters 54-56 Analysis

Sawyer's creative and critical thinking have paid off, and he has managed to fit much of the case together, convinced that he now knows the identities of the criminals and the



purpose for their activities. Realizing that Sidney is in serious danger, he must get to Ball Harbor immediately. Taking reinforcements is a wise move, even though he has no idea that there are strong opponents already gathering at a Bell Harbor resort. Further, they have Sidney's father and will use him to get to Sidney and the disk.

The plot is moving toward its climax, and it appears that there will be a battle between the private militia forces of Lucas and Scales and the elite Hostage Rescue team of the Air Force. The suspense builds around the arrivals of both forces and the hope that Sawyer and his crew can arrive in time to save Sidney and her family, in addition to capturing the culprits. The reader now knows that Richard Lucas, internal security chief for Triton, is the man controlling sociopath Kenneth Scales. If so, then Lucas must have been one of the individuals in the Seattle warehouse where the original exchange of documents took place. Sawyer believes he knows the identities of all of the "players," but, of course, the reader does not.



Chapters 57-59

Chapters 57-59 Summary

Sidney realizes that the only method of communication with the men holding her father is through her home phone. She accesses her message machine and is given a phone number to call. Mustering all of her skills as a litigator, she insists they meet her on the main street of town and allow her father to enter a diner alone. She will then leave the disk on the sidewalk and drive away. They agree. Sidney arrives first and sets a trap, relieving the bad guys of their van and driving off with her father. She drops him off at a car rental agency, telling him that his mission is to protect his wife and grandchild.

Sawyer and crew have seen the mess at the beach house and are now combing the area for Sidney. She is leaving town in the white van, when a call comes in on the van phone. Sidney hears Amy's voice and then the instruction to come directly to the resort in order to exchange the disk for her daughter. At almost the same time, her cell phone rings, and she is thrilled that she is now talking to Sawyer. Sidney pulls up to the resort, tying a rope to the steering wheel and gas pedal, she hops out and lets the van speed up the drive and into the main house. She slips in the back door and manages to capture Richard Lucas, knocking him out. Eventually, she is caught, and Nathan Gamble has the disk taken from her. At this point, she realizes that the voice of Amy was recorded and that her daughter is, indeed, safe.

Gamble admits he knew Jason had discovered his blackmail scheme and the manipulations of the interest rate. He admits, as well, to the plane sabotage, in order to prevent exposure of his criminal activity. All along, the plan was to place the blame on Jason, and he had the assistance of Lucas and Scales in this effort. While it was never his plan to kill Sidney, he now has no choice, and she will be blamed for collusion with her husband. Richard Lucas brings in Kenneth Scales for this deed.

Quentin Rowe surprisingly appears, having secreted himself in a lounge on the private jet. He informs Gamble that, with the CyberCom deal, he now has no need of Gamble, and instructs Lucas to turn his gun on Gamble. The additional revelations now come. Rowe was Steven Page's original lover and gave Page HIV. Steven was angry and threatened to expose the blackmail scheme of which he became a part by seducing Arthur Lieberman. Rowe killed Steven with an overdose of insulin. Jason, while compiling Triton's records, uncovered the blackmail scheme through backup tapes of Gamble's emails to Lieberman. While Gamble's plan was to set Jason up for the fall, it has been Rowe's plan all along to dump Gamble and expose his blackmail of Lieberman to the FBI, once the CyberCom deal was finalized. Rowe instructs Scales to kill both Gamble and Sidney, but this is thwarted by the arrival of Sawyer. A gun battle ensues. When all is finished, Sidney, Sawyer and partner Jackson have survived, along with most of Sawyer's Hostage Rescue team. Rowe, Gamble, Lucas, Scales and most of their mercenaries are dead.



Chapter 58: Sawyer leaves the resort building to pursue one last individual, Frank Hardy, who now has the disk. As they speak on the cliffs overlooking the Atlantic, Hardy confirms the following: Jason Archer is dead, because there was no choice. When Jason discovered the blackmail activity, he had immediately reported it to Hardy, trusting no inside individual with the information. Hardy "arranges" for Jason to turn the information over to the FBI in Seattle, promising Jason that the FBI will have a large reward for him. In fact, Jason turned the information over to Hardy's own men, and Gamble was aware of the entire scenario. Hardy's motivation, of course, was to protect Gamble and Triton, for this was his largest client and the major source of his lifestyle. Cornered by Sawyer now, Hardy jumps off the cliff, and Sawyer now has the disk with the evidence against all of the culprits.

The denouement, during Chapter 59, includes a funeral for Jason and Sawyer's visit to Sidney two nights before Christmas. He has brought a gift for Amy and a more important item for Sidney. Sidney has been offered her old position but is hesitant to accept, considering that she is pregnant. Sawyer's presentation to her makes the decision easy. Over her protests, he presents her with a check for two million dollars from the government, for her participation in solving the airline sabotage.

Chapters 57-59 Analysis

The climax of this tale ties up all of the loose ends for the reader, though they are complex indeed. Most readers will find, in fact, that they may have to read the final chapters more than once, in order to connect all of the relationships and treacheries. Above all, this novel points out some important elements, both of human nature and of contemporary American society. Some individuals, such as Gamble, are so self-absorbed and so focused on accumulation of wealth and power, that they will commit atrocious acts in order to achieve their goals and to destroy those they see as enemies. Gamble's manipulation of the federal interest rates, for example, had a dual purpose - to create wealth and power for him and to financially destroy those who had been responsible for his own earlier financial downfall. Others, like Hardy, begin life as ethical, law-abiding individuals but become so pulled into the opportunity for opulence, that they are willing to corrupt themselves in pursuit of money. Rowe himself is an individual who, while not driven by money, willingly double crosses the man who promoted him financially, in order to pursue technological goals that will put him at the top of his field.

The revelations about the Federal Reserve Board for the average American are astounding. As Burns explains to Sawyer during a lengthy conversation, the Board controls not only the interest rates that consumers pay for anything bought on credit, but the actual amount of money that is put into circulation. When a small group of men have this type of power, there should be true concern, and Sawyer voices that concern loudly. The additional concern that Sawyer continues to have as the tale ends is the growing control of information by technology. While he clearly uses current technology in the area of forensics, he sees a future in which everyone's most intimate information will be available to individuals who can use that information for criminal activity, including theft,



blackmail, and identity theft. Indeed, the plane saboteur, Riker, was able to create a completely fictitious individual, with synthetic fingerprints and a false social security number.

The final meeting between Sidney and Sawyer occurs in order to satisfy the reader that Sidney will be financially stable and able to provide quite well for her daughter and coming baby. Sawyer, on the other hand, has realized that perhaps it is not too late to re-establish his relationships with his children, lost to divorce and to his obsession with every case he is given.



Characters

Sidney Archer

A determined and aggressive protagonist, Sidney Archer is a typical young professional, in fact, a lawyer for a large firm with primarily corporate clients. She is married to Jason, another professional, employed by Triton Global, a technology company Sidney's firm represents. She becomes embroiled in an out-of-control corporate competition for the acquisition of a third company, and the disappearance of her husband, who is suspected of industrial espionage and embezzlement. Convinced that her husband is innocent, Sidney vows to conduct her own investigation, providing the FBI with only limited information and vowing to protect her daughter at all costs. In the course of her digging, Sidney becomes a suspect herself, accused of collusion with her husband in the sabotage of her client's efforts to acquire a coveted information systems company, CyberCom. She then becomes the pawn of the "bad guys," who set her up for a triple murder and, in the end, a target for murder herself. Packing her own guns and filled with tenacity, Sidney places herself and her father at great risk, managing to thwart the efforts of the criminals to gain access to both a disk and password which will exonerate her husband and bring Triton and its chief, Nathan Gamble, to their knees. Though her husband is killed, Sidney emerges safe and victorious, with the help of FBI Agent Lee Sawyer, who, convinced of her innocence, comes to her rescue in a major shoot-out with multiple criminals. Christmas becomes a more somber event for Sidney, but she has received a two million dollar payment from the government for her part in the solution of a major crime, an airline sabotage, and therefore has options for the remainder of her life with daughter Amy and her unborn child.

Lee Sawyer

A veteran FBI agent, Lee Sawyer is interested in only one thing - justice. As tenacious as Sidney Archer, Sawyer is unwilling to accept evidence and theories at face value and pursues every potential lead and detail until fully satisfied that he has the complete truth. His dedication to the job has resulted in a divorce and the estrangement from his children, but, still, he remains unable to relax his obsession with cases he is given. Sawyer has an eye for detail that many others do not, along with strong "gut" feelings and creative thought, and is therefore unwilling to accept Jason and Sidney's guilt, even when glaring evidence points in that direction. He is a master of deduction and spends long hours attempting to discover the connections among a plane crash, the disappearance of Jason, a murdered gay investment banker, and the competition of two corporations for acquisition of a third. His investigations take him into the world of the Federal Reserve, the opulent lifestyle of a former partner turned private security expert, and industrial power brokers who will stop at nothing to achieve their goals. Fortunately, Sawyer figures it all out and, in a blinding snowstorm, flies to the site of the final showdown among bad guys who are even warring among themselves, saving Sidney Archer and exposing the complex crimes and treachery of everyone involved. Lee



Sawyer is, ultimately, a simple man, with simple traditional values. He is astounded and, indeed, appalled, at the power which a few individuals can wield over the lives of so many, through technology that marches toward greater and greater sophistication and through manipulation of the nation's economy.

Nathan Gamble

The quintessential amoral corporate titan, Gamble is CEO of Triton Global, a technology company which will be launched to supremacy by the acquisition of information systems giant, CyberCom. In the past, Gamble had suffered huge losses at the hands of investment enemies and has found a way to obtain revenge. He has discovered that Arthur Lieberman, Federal Reserve Board Chairman, is gay. He pays a young Wall Street investment analyst, Jeff Page, to seduce Lieberman and then blackmails Lieberman by forcing him to alter interest rates to destroy his enemies. Gamble is ruthless in other ways as well. He is willing to condone any type of criminal activity, including murder, in order to obtain CyberCom but does not realize the he himself is the victim of a double-cross by his partner, Quentin Rowe.

Quentin Rowe

Rowe is president of Triton Global, and is the tech guru who sees the future of technology and information systems at a global level. His focus is on research and development and the ultimate benefits to all mankind of continued technological advances. He has been forced to partner with Gamble because his small firm did not have the financial backing to continue its work, and only Gamble has the money to engage in research and to acquire companies like CyberCom. Quentin is also gay and, as is ultimately disclosed, was a one-time lover of Jeff Page. He allowed Page to be used by Gamble in his scheme to blackmail Lieberman and ultimately kills Page, when he threatens to expose the scheme. Rowe schemes to double-cross Gamble and to have him murdered, but dies himself in the final violent conclusion.

Paul Brophy

An associate attorney with Tyler Stone, Paul Brophy is an opportunist above all else, who will change allegiances based upon his own potential for gain. He has aligned himself with Phillip Goldman, primary counsel for RTG, and is conspiring with Goldman to sabotage the Triton/CyberCom deal. Paul's assignment is to follow Sidney in order to obtain the crucial disk, which will expose Gamble's criminal activity and sour the CyberCom acquisition.

Phillip Goldman

A partner at Tyler Stone, Goldman represents RTG, the firm's second most lucrative client. If Goldman is able to sabotage the Triton/CyberCom deal, his client will acquire



CyberCom. Goldman is an opportunist, as well, for he knows that if the Triton acquisition goes sour, Gamble will dump Tyler Stone as its legal representation. Henry Wharton, managing partner of Tyler Stone, will then have lost his most important client and perhaps his top position. This top position will then go to Goldman who will represent the most important client.

Frank Hardy

Former FBI agent, Hardy now owns his own security firm, and Triton is his biggest client. Loving his new opulent lifestyle, Hardy will do anything to maintain his huge contract with the corporate giant, including the planning of the airplane sabotage, the commission of murder, and any other acts that will protect Gamble and Triton from the damage of the information Jason has taken relative to Gamble's blackmail of Arthur Lieberman. Hardy uses amoral, criminal elements to carry out the actions necessary to preserve Triton's stature.

Richard Lucas

Director of internal security for Triton, Lucas appears to operate primarily as Gamble's personal bodyguard. In fact, he is a pawn of Quentin Rose, whose intention is to get rid of Gamble as soon as the CyberCom deal is finalized. In the end, Lucas is poised to kill Gamble at Rowe's direction, but, in the end, is killed by Sawyer's team.

Ray Jackson

Partnered with Lee Sawyer, Jackson is the concrete, realistic member of the team, anxious to take evidence at face value and to solve cases quickly. He is an excellent investigator but does not tent to think "outside the box," as partner Sawyer does. Jackson is a good balance for Sawyer, as well as a thorough, diligent collector of fact and detail.

Edward Page

Brother of Jeff Page, Edward operates his own private investigation firm. When Jeff's brother dies, Edward is convinced that, despite the medical examiner's findings, he was murdered. He is following Arthur Lieberman because his brother and Lieberman had had an affair, and he believes Lieberman was somehow involved in his brother's death. Page was at the airport the morning of the plane crash and observed the identity switch between Jason and the stranger. Acting as an investigator, he noted Jason's name and address on a luggage tag and begins to follow Sidney after the crash, believing that there is a connection between his brother's death, the crash, and the identity switch. After revealing himself to Sidney, he is murdered by Kenneth Scales.



Kenneth Scales

Scales is a sociopathic killer-for-hire, connected to Richard Lucas and Quentin Rowe. He kills Jason, and frames Sidney for the murders of Goldman, Lucas, and their driver.

Charles Tiedman

Close friend of Arthur Lieberman, Tiedman is president of the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank and the man to whom Lieberman was obviously traveling, in order to disclose the blackmail scheme.

Alan Porcher

Porcher is the president of RTG, working with Goldman to beat Triton's offer for CyberCom. He is happy to receive insider information relative to Triton's bids for the company from Goldman.

Henry Wharton

Wharton is the managing partner of Tyler Stone and lead counsel for Triton Global. He is unaware of the the criminal activity and treachery going on all around him.



Objects/Places

Mariner L500

The fictitious commercial aircraft that was sabotaged by an airline employee.

Triton Global

Name of perhaps the most profitable computer technology firm in the country.

RTG

A competitor of Triton Global in the effort to acquire CyberCom.

CyberCom

An informational systems company at the forefront of research and development and the "jewel" wanted by both Triton and RTG.

NTSB

Acronym for the National Transportation Safety Board, a government agency that investigates major transportation disasters.

SIOC

Acronym for Strategic Information Operations Center, a restricted area of FBI headquarters, used as a command post for major operations.

Federal Reserve Board

A group of economically savvy individuals who have the authority both to determine interest rates banks charge to consumers and the amount of money banks actually have to lend.

Securtech

Name of the security firm owned by Frank Hardy, former FBI agent.



La Fitte Guest House

Name of the small hotel in New Orleans to which Sidney was instructed to go by her husband, Jason.

Tyler Stone

Name of the law firm at which Sidney Archer works and which represents both Triton Global and RTG.

Private Solutions

Name of the private investigation firm operated by Ed Page.

Bell Harbor, Maine

Name of the town at which Sidney's parents have a beach home and location of a resort which is the site of the violent climax of the plot.



Themes

Dangers of Computer Technology

Writing in 1997, when internet technology was still in its early childhood stage, author Baldacci ponders those issues which we continue to ponder today. Indeed, he becomes a bit of a prophet through the character of Lee Sawyer, promoting the fear that, as technology becomes increasingly prevalent in the workings of government and industry and in the lives of individuals, the dangers of information passing to the "bad guys" increases proportionately. He envisions scenarios in which "hackers" will have the ability to access public and private records to the extent of gaining control through theft and blackmail, not to mention the additional loss of individual privacy. On a global scale, moreover, he wonders about the eventual ability of one country to engage in cyber attacks upon another. Faced with current technology, Baldacci was indeed a prophet, as modern societies cope with identity theft, access to private bank accounts and records, and, in fact, the hacking into entire public records systems, containing confidential and classified information. While others, like Quentin Rowe, focus solely on the benefits of technological advances to society, Sawyer sees the much darker potential. In this manner, the theme becomes universal, for today we know that, with every advance in information gathering and compilation of information into massive databases, there are those who devise methods of accessing such information illegally and using that information for personal gain. Indeed, as quickly as new security measures are devised, other creative individuals and groups find new methods of entry.

Power and Greed

Nathan Gamble can be seen as the personification of the individual so consumed by profit and the power that money brings, that he is willing to use any means to achieve those ends. He is perfectly comfortable using blackmail, condoning theft and murder, and wielding his power and influence to attain any goal he has set. One can find many examples of Nathan Gambles among current notoriety, including such individuals as Bernie Madoff, or corporations, such as Enron, who have abided by the Machiavellian premise that "the end justifies the means." The current economic crisis in America can be seen as the result of greedy banking and Wall Street executives, who used their power and influence to bring America's financial situation to the brink of crisis, only to use their continued power and influence to save themselves at taxpayer's expense. Greedy corporate executives are willing to jeopardize an entire nation's economic structure, huge pension funds, and individual retirement assets in the name of non-regulated free enterprise. This theme is truly universal, as greed and power have motivated men since the early establishment of empires throughout the world. From the enslavement of entire societies during the colonial period, to the modern day drug cartel, to the Wall Street "players," man's selfish desires to accumulate wealth in order to control others, appears among individuals within all societies, within all times.



Power of the Federal Reserve Board and its Chairman

Few people truly understand the function of the Federal Reserve Board in America. At one point in the book, Baldacci attempts a simple explanation of its functions and, in so doing, points to its undeniable control over the country's economy. Because the Board Chairman has the authority to unilaterally alter interest rates, moreover, one man, in fact, can impact the entire nation's financial health. In the fictitious world of the novel, Arthur Lieberman, as Fed Chairman, succumbs to blackmail and alters rates as instructed by his blackmailers. These rate changes allow individuals to profit, when the changes are in the opposite direction of what major Wall Street brokers and bankers expect. While many lose fortunes, Nathan Gamble thrives. Though this novel was written in 1997, it is eerily prophetic of recent events involving our current economic situation and Federal Reserve Board actions. By maintaining a low rediscount rate, which is the rate at which the Federal Reserve Bank lends money to member banks, those banks were then able to lend money to consumers at very attractive rates, maintaining, as well, a healthy profit margin. Consumers, drawn in by attractive lending rates, increased their use of credit, most significantly in the purchase of homes they could not legitimately afford. The resulting bubble and burst of the housing market has devastated millions of homeowners, who have since lost their homes to foreclosure, impacting the entire financial market in horribly negative ways. When one rather small body controls interest rates throughout the country, and thus significantly influences economic activity from the top down, the power is obvious.



Style

Point of View

Author Baldacci uses a third person narrative to weave his complex tale of corruption, murder, greed, and blackmail, but the reader notices a definite division among the characters that is revealing from the very beginning, relative to omniscience. The narrator has total omniscience with most major characters who are, in fact, innocent or involved in crime investigation. For example, the reader knows quite early that Sidney Archer is innocent of any collusion with her husband, through complete knowledge of her thoughts, including her complete lack of knowledge of the true purpose of Jason's "business" trip and her thinking processes as she attempts to investigate her husband's activities, in order to prove his innocence. As well the thoughts and deliberations of Lee Sawyer, chief FBI investigator, are revealed so that the reader can follow the steps that will eventually combine three crimes into one of such complex nature, that only his thoughts can steer the reader down the correct path. Relative to the culprits, however, character, values, goals and thoughts are incomplete, as these are only partially revealed through an objective accounting of their activities and through their conversations with others. This partial-to-no omniscience is necessary, because the true "bad guys" cannot be revealed to the reader until the end. While we understand their motivations and their values, and certainly suspect their guilt, the full extent of everyone's involvement cannot be known, in order to protect the suspense of the tale.

Setting

The majority of this tale occurs in Virginia, headquarters of Triton Global and Tyler Stone, and Washington D.C., home to the FBI and the Federal Reserve Board. The peripheral sites are Seattle, Washington, New York City, New Orleans and, of course, the site of the final rising action and climax, Bell Harbor, Maine. While only a warehouse is described in Seattle, accurate mentions of known landmarks in New Orleans and New York City provide credibility. While the geographic setting is critical to the plot, given the involvement of the dead Federal Reserve Board Chairman and the FBI investigation of a sabotaged plane, the time frame is equally as important. The story is set in 1996, the early days of the technology related to the Internet, cell phones, and information systems development. While computer technology had been around before 1996, to be certain, much of the purpose was to store information fed into databases that remained stationary within businesses and government departments. The technology by this time included the development necessary for the plot, however - the Internet, email, car and cell phones, and information stored on floppy disks. The future of technology, as described by Quentin Rowe, has, in fact, become a reality but was certainly on the "drawing boards" during the time of the novel's creation.



Language and Meaning

Most of Baldacci's characters are educated, middle class individuals, whose language reflects that background. One exception is Nathan Gamble, whose language appears to be a bit more crude and rough, reflecting the lack of a high school education, which he proudly boasts. Each character with specialized education and/or training, moreover, uses additional language specific to that training. Sawyer and Jackson freely use acronyms related to law enforcement, such as SOP (standard operating procedure), GSR (testing for gun powder residue), and blood spatter patterns. Sidney Archer and fellow attorneys utilize legal language as necessary. Both Quentin Rowe and Jeff Fisher engage in in conversations and explanation typical of computer technology experts of the times. Terms that are understood by the average individual today, were not so in 1996. Thus, explanation of hacking, information systems, and data integration are provided, so that the reader may understand how confidential information could be copied and how hacking devices could be placed upon computers, phones, and fax machines. Perhaps Walter Burns, Vice-Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, is the character who must exhibit the most credible use of language. As an economist on the Fed Board, he must explain such terms as "re-discount rate" so that an average individual like Lee Sawyer can understand them. In all, Baldacci creates credible characters through their use of consistently appropriate language.

Structure

While the structure is clearly chronological, beginning with Jason Archer's ill-fated trip to Seattle and ending with the climactic battle at a resort on the Atlantic shore of Maine, Baldacci's style of storytelling involves primarily very short chapters, shifting from character to character and from place to place. With as many characters and sub-plots as he introduces and develops, moreover, the continual shifting among all of the originally separate and seemingly unrelated crimes may require re-reading portions or making written notes about specific characters and their positions, in order to keep track of the complexities of the plot. Initially, two apparently separate crimes are introduced - the sabotage of an airplane carrying the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and the apparent corporate espionage of Jason Archer. Midway through the investigation of these two crimes, a third mystery is introduced, the murder of private investigator Edward Page and the former death of his younger brother, Jeff. Not until the final chapters are the connections between these three events made clear, as the climax occurs at the Maine resort and the involvement of each individual revealed. What was complex and disjointed is finally woven together by an artful and creative author.



Quotes

"Sidney has never wanted to be financially dependent on anyone else. She looked at Jason. If she was going to tie her economic survival to one person, who better than a man she had moved almost from the moment she had laid eyes on him?" (Chapter 3, p. 39)

"...CyberCom's technology will completely reinvent and dominate how information is processed over the Internet. And as far as the high-tech business is concerned, that's like Moses coming down the mountain with the Commandments; there's no substitute." (Chapter 7, p. 79, Quentin Rowe speaking of CyberCom)

"The elaborate disguise came off piece by piece. In another moment, next to Jason sat a blond-haired man in his early thirties with a long aquiline nose and fair skin. The eyes, though, remained the same, blue and chilling." (Chapter 8, p. 94)

"Where the plane had penetrated the ground, nose first, there now existed a crater that later excavation would determine to be approximately thirty feet deep, or about one-fifth as long as the aircraft itself. That fact alone was a terrifying testament to the force that had catapulted everyone on board into the hereafter with frightening ease." (Chapter 9, p. 97)

"He had killed before, but certainly not on such a vast and impersonal scale. He had always had a reason to kill - if not a personal one, then one supplied by whoever had hired him. This time the sheer number and complete anonymity of the murdered people managed to prick even his hardened conscience." (Chapter 11, p. 111)

"He silently prayed that when he did find those responsible for this horrendous act of violence, they would try something, anything that would provide him with the tiniest fraction of an opening, allowing him to spare the country the cost and media circus any such trial would entail." (Chapter 14, p. 1620)

"Okay, explain what he was doing on a plane to L.A. instead of painting the kitchen, because I'm about to make the one acquisition that will allow Triton to lead the world into the twenty-first century and I cannot allow anything or anyone to destroy that opportunity. It will never be repeated." (Chapter 15, p. 167, Quentin Rowe to Sidney Archer)

"If I were a betting man, I would be inclined to lay money on the fact that fully half the population of this country have no idea of the existence of the Federal Reserve System, and that nine out of ten have no clue as to what our actual purpose is. I must confess I find that anonymity enormously comforting." (Chapter 17, p. 175, Vice-Chairman Walter Burns to Lee Sawyer)

"As I said, the overwhelming amount of information contained on the Internet is its greatest drawback. Human beings are ill-equipped to deal with something on that scale.



"But you get around that obstacle and suddenly it's as though the surface of Pluto becomes alive with sunshine." (Chapter 24, p. 269, Rowe speaking to Sidney Archer)

"Just envision computers that are not merely dumb machines reacting to precise instructions keyed in by humans. Picture computers using their vast intellectual muscle to think on their own, to problem-solve for us in ways unthinkable today..." (Chapter 24, p. 271, Rowe speaking to Sidney Archer)

"...Triton Global is Henry Wharton's client. That is the chief reason Henry is managing partner. If Triton ceases using the firm as counsel, would you like to guess who becomes the largest rainmaker at the firm and, therefore, the probably successor to Wharton as managing partner?" (Chapter 31, p. 332, Phillip Goldman speaking to Alan Porcher)

"Whether Jason Archer had done anything wrong or not, he had a woman who loved him, believed in him. Sawyer felt himself starting to hope that Jason would turn out to be innocent, despite all the evidence to the contrary." (Chapter 39, p. 430)

"...My job is to hunt down criminals, rich, poor, in-between. It doesn't make any difference to me." (Chapter 43, p. 487, Sawyer speaking to Gamble)

"...You're right, I have more than I'll ever need. But I like the respect being on top brings. Everybody waits to see what you'll do." (Chapter 43, Gamble speaking to Sawyer)

"...An ill-advised half-percent increase in the Fed Funds Rate can cost hundreds of thousands of jobs and absolutely devastate whole sectors of the economy. It is an enormous power that must not be exercised lightly. Arthur's zigzagging with the Fed Funds Rate placed every American citizen's economic future in serious jeopardy..." (Chapter 48, p. 562, Charles Tiedman speaking to Lee Sawyer)



Topics for Discussion

Given the current financial problems within the United States, apparently related to the activities of the Federal Reserve Board during the first eight years of the twenty-first century, how prophetic was David Baldacci, writing in 1996? Support your response with specific details from the novel.

The threats of the continued explosive growth in information technology has perhaps left average citizens and large corporations at risk for threats and ruin. Again, how prophetic was Baldacci in this respect? Do you believe that there is an answer for the protection of confidential and secure information? Why or why not?

Lee Sawyer uses a combination of current forensic science, technology, and traditional investigative techniques to solve the crimes. Which was the most important technique? What role does "gut" feeling, traditional deduction and footwork play in crime solving today?

Is Sidney Archer a believable character? Consider all of the "hats" she wears and the variety of activities in which she engages in order to prove her husband's innocence, as you respond, giving details from the story.

Nathan Gamble seems to represent the corporate giant who is willing to compromise all principles and ethics in order to achieve his goals. Are there contemporary examples of such an individual? Compare them with Nathan Gamble.

Tyler Stone is a prominent law firm, engaged in primarily corporate law. The partners and associates, however, often appear to be pursuing their own agendas, even if it means the downfall of fellow firm members. Citing examples from the novel, demonstrate how these professionals compromise the principles of the legal profession and betray colleagues.

This novel is a bit difficult to read because of the intricacies of the plot, conflicts, and myriad of characters and events. What suggestions might you have regarding the structure of the work that might make it an easier read?