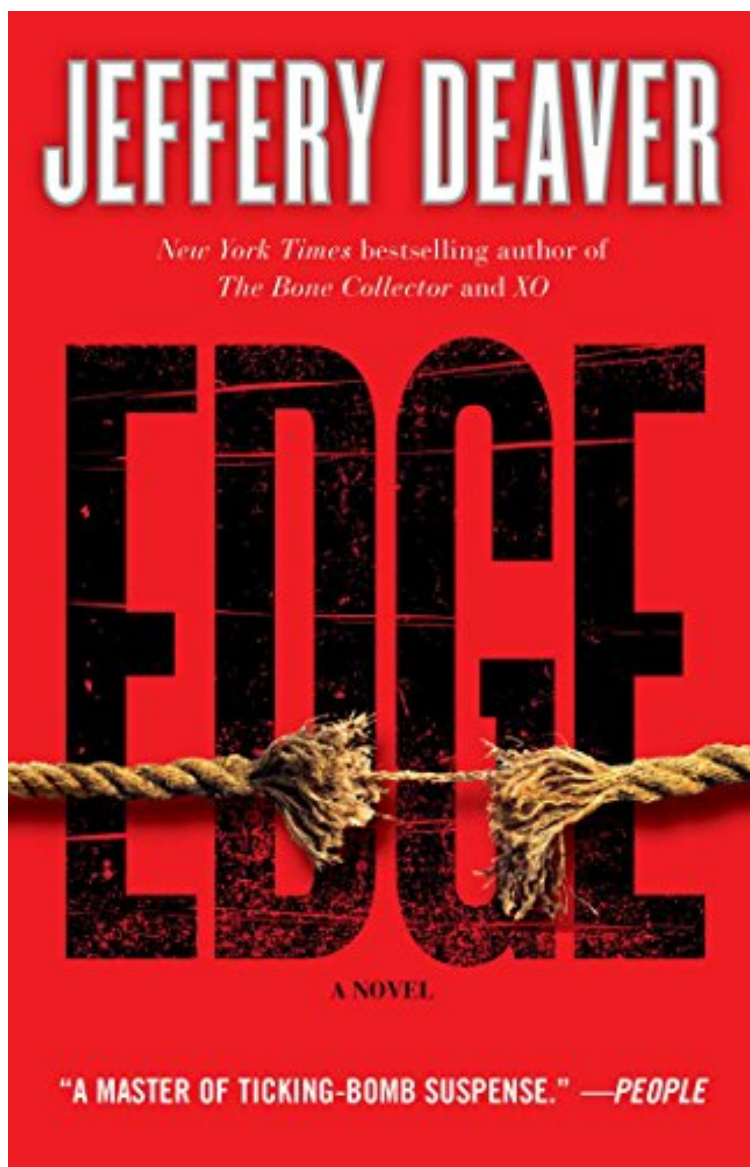


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Edge (English Edition)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe New York Times bestselling author of The Burial Hour delivers a thriller featuring his signature ticking-clock suspense, sharp plot twists, and whip-smart dialogue. Behind the well-known U.S. security organizationsthe FBI and CIA among themlies a heavily guarded, anonymous government agency dedicated to intelligence surveillance and to a highly specialized brand of citizen protection. Shock waves of alarm ripple through the clandestine agency when Washington, D.C., police detective Ryan Kessler inexplicably becomes the target of Henry Loving, a seasoned, ruthless lifter hired to obtain information using whatever means necessary. While Loving is deft at torture, his expertise lies in getting an edge on his victimleverageusually by kidnapping or threatening family until the primary caves

under pressure. The job of keeping the Kessler family alive falls to a man named Corte, a senior federal protection officer known as a shepherd. Uncompromising, relentlessly devoted to protecting those in his care and a passionate board game aficionado, he applies brilliant gaming strategy to his work. For Corte, the reappearance of Loving the man who, six years earlier, had tortured and killed someone close to him is also an opportunity to avenge his friend's death. The assignment soon escalates into a fast-paced duel between Corte and Loving, a dangerous volley of wits and calculated risks. As he shepherds the Kesslers to a concealed safe house, Corte must anticipate Lovings every step as the lifter moves in on his prey, and with the help of razor-sharp investigator Claire DuBois and his longtime ally, FBI agent Paul Fredericks, pinpoint which of Kesslers seemingly insignificant cases has triggered Lovings return. As the team digs deeper, each of the Kesslers comes under close scrutiny, and in captivity their family bonds are stretched to the breaking point as the lifter draws near, Corte must ultimately choose between protecting his charges and exposing them to a killer in the name of long-awaited revenge.

Chapter 1 WEVE GOT A bad one, Corte. Go ahead, I said into the stalk microphone. I was at my desk, on a hands-free. I set down the old handwritten note I'd been reading. The principal and his family're in Fairfax. There's a go-ahead order for a lifter and seems like he's under some time pressure. How much? A couple of days. You know who hired him? That's a negative, son. It was Saturday, early. In this business, we drew odd hours and workweeks of varying lengths. Mine had just begun a couple of days ago and I'd finished a small job late yesterday afternoon. I was to have spent the day tidying up paperwork, something I enjoy, but in my organization we're on call constantly. Keep going, Freddy. There'd been something about his tone. Ten years of working with somebody, even sporadically, in this line of work gives you clues. The FBI agent, never known for hesitating, now hesitated. Finally: Okay, Corte, the thing is ?? ?What? The lifter's Henry Loving?? . I know, I know. But it's confirmed. After a moment, in which the only sounds I could hear were my heart and a whisper of blood through my ears, I responded automatically, though pointlessly, He's dead. Rhode Island. Was dead. Was reported dead. I glanced at trees outside my window, stirring in the faint September breeze, then looked over my desk. It was neat but small and cheaply made. On it were several pieces of paper, each demanding more or less of my attention, as well as a small carton that FedEx had delivered to the town house, only a few blocks from my office, that morning. It was an eBay purchase I'd been looking forward to receiving. I'd planned to examine the contents of the box on my lunch hour today. I now slid it aside. Go on. In Providence? Somebody else was in the building. Freddy filled in this missing puzzle piece, though I'd almost instantly deduced correctly, from the agent's account exactly what had happened. Two years ago the warehouse Henry Loving had been hiding in, after fleeing a trap I'd set for him, had burned to the ground. The forensic people had a clear DNA match on the body inside. Even badly burned, a corpse will leave about ten million samples of that pesky deoxyribonucleic acid. Which you can't hide or destroy so it doesn't make sense to try. But what you can do is, afterward, get to the DNA lab technicians and force them to lie to certify that the body was yours. Loving was the sort who would have anticipated my trap. Before he went after my principals, he'd have a backup plan devised: kidnapping a homeless man or a runaway and stashing him in the warehouse, just in case he needed to escape. This was a clever idea, threatening a lab tech, and not so far-fetched when you considered that Henry Lovings unique art was manipulating people to do things they didn't want to do. So, suddenly, a man a lot of other people had been content I'd go so far as to use the word happy to see die in a fire was now very much alive. A shadow in my doorway. It was Aaron Ellis, the head of our organization, the man I reported to directly. Blond and fiercely broad of shoulder. His thin lips parted. He didn't know I was on the phone. You hear? Rhode Island it wasn't Loving after all. I'm on with Freddy now. Gesturing toward the hands-free. My office in ten? Sure. He vanished on deft feet encased in brown tasseled loafers, which clashed with his light blue slacks. I said to the FBI agent, in his office about ten miles from mine, That was Aaron. I know, Freddy replied. My boss briefed your boss. I'm briefing you. We'll be working it together, son. Call me when you can. Wait, I said. The principals, in Fairfax? You send any agents to babysit? Not yet. This just happened. Get somebody there now. Apparently Lovings nowhere near yet. Do it anyway. Well do it anyway. Your wish, et cetera, et cetera. Freddy disconnected before I could say anything more. Henry Loving I sat for a moment and again looked out the window of my organization's unmarked headquarters in Old Town Alexandria, the building aggressively ugly, 1970s ugly. I stared at a wedge of grass, an antique store, a Starbucks and a few bushes in a parking strip. The bushes lined up in a staggered fashion toward the Masonic Temple, like they'd been planted by a Dan Brown character sending a message via landscaping rather than an email. My eyes returned to the FedEx box and the documents on my desk. One stapled stack of papers was a lease for a safe house near Silver Spring, Maryland. I'd have to negotiate the rent down, assuming a cover identity to do

so. One document was a release order for the principal Id successfully delivered yesterday to two solemn men, in equally solemn suits, whose offices were in Langley, Virginia. I signed the order and put it into my OUT box. The last slip of paper, which Id been reading when Freddy called, Id brought with me without intending to. In the town house last night Id located a board game whose instructions Id wanted to reread and had opened the box to find this sheet an old to-do list for a holiday party, with names of guests to call, groceries and decorations to buy. Id absently tucked the yellowing document into my pocket and discovered it this morning. The party had been years ago. It was the last thing I wanted to be reminded of at the moment. I looked at the handwriting on the faded rectangle and fed it into my burn box, which turned it into confetti. I placed the FedEx box into the safe behind my desk nothing fancy, no eye scans, just a clicking combination lock and rose. I tugged on a dark suit jacket over my white shirt, which was what I usually wore in the office, even when working weekends. I stepped out of my office, turning left toward my boss, and walked along the lengthy corridors gray carpet, striped with sunlight, falling pale through the mirrored, bullet-resistant windows. My mind was no longer on real estate values in Maryland or delivery service packages or unwanted reminders from the past, but focused exclusively on the reappearance of Henry Loving the man who, six years earlier, had tortured and murdered my mentor and close friend, Abe Fallow, in a gulley beside a North Carolina cotton field, as Id listened to his cries through his still-connected phone. Seven minutes of screams until the merciful gunshot, delivered not mercifully at all, but as a simple matter of professional efficiency.

2010 Jeffery Deaver *Revue de presse* Confirms his status as one of the finest crime writers in the world . . . grabs the reader by the throat from the beginning. Superb. (Independent on Sunday on *THE BODIES LEFT BEHIND*) The pace is terrific, the suspense inexorable, and there is an excellent climax . . . If you want thrills, Deaver is your man. (Guardian on *THE BODIES LEFT BEHIND*) 'A thrill-a-minute wilderness adventure' (New York Times on *THE BODIES LEFT BEHIND*) 'My, can he make you turn those pages! His real genius lies in superb plotting, which is exactly what the thriller genre demands . . . Deaver is so expert at this kind of thing it must be routine for him by now, but there is never a hint of complacency in his writing.' (Herald on *THE BODIES LEFT BEHIND*) The best psychological thriller writer around (The Times)