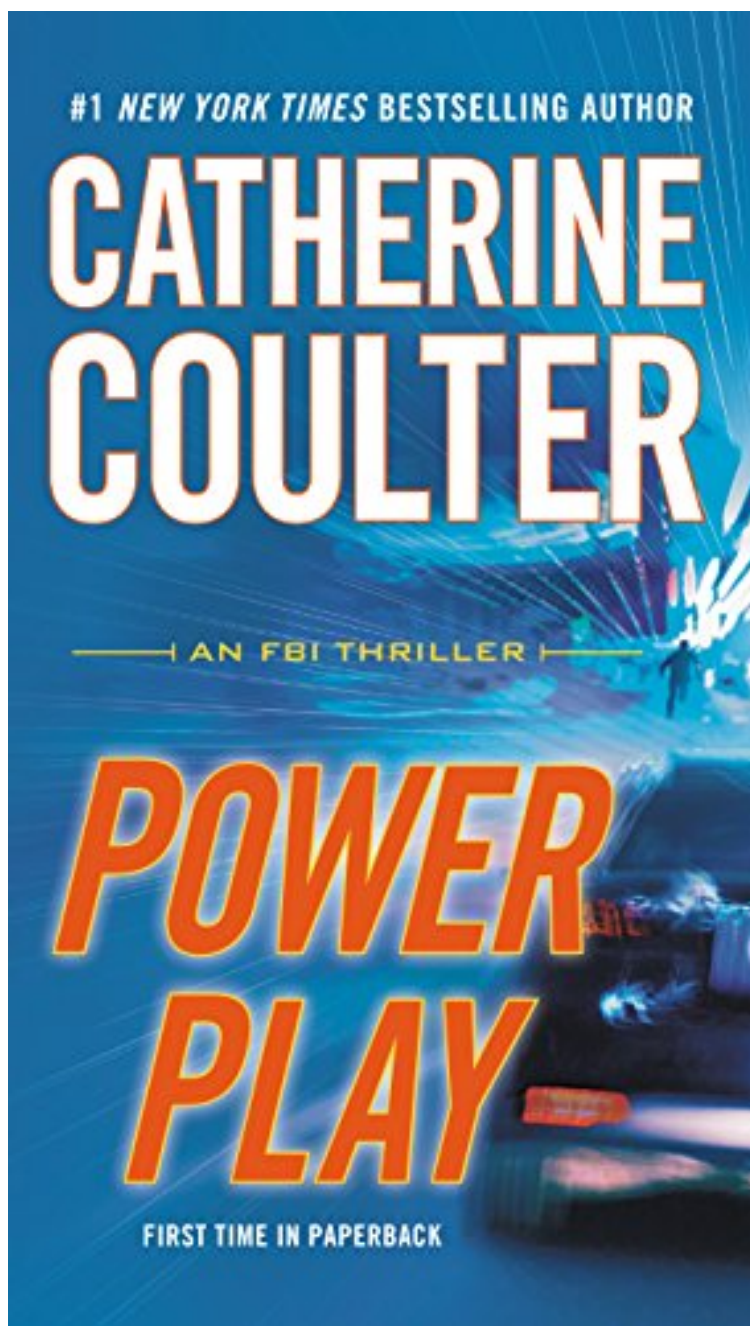


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## Power Play



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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur#1 New York Times bestselling author Catherine Coulter returns with the newest full-throttle adventure in the FBI series featuring Dillon Savich and Lacey Sherlock. Natalie Black, the U.S. ambassador to the Court of St. James, has returned to Washington, her job in jeopardy. Her fianc, George McCallum, Viscount Lockenby, has died in a car accident, and mysterious rumors begin that shes

responsible begin to surface: she broke off the engagement and, heartbroken, he killed himself. Then someone tries to force her off the M-2 outside London. Again, rumors claim it was a sympathy ploy. When she returns to the United States, she's nearly killed when a car tries to mow her down while she's out for a run. No one believes her except FBI Special Agent Davis Sullivan. Meanwhile someone is following Sherlock. A stalker? Then someone tries to shoot her from the back of a motorcycle, but the assailant gets away. Sherlock next gets a call from an Atlanta mental hospital warning her that Blessed Backman has escaped. This is not good news. Blessed is a talented psychopath out for revenge against the agents, primarily Sherlock, whom his dying mother begged him to kill since she and Savich brought down her cult. How to find out who's trying to kill the ambassador to the U.K.? How can they get their hands on Blessed Backman before he succeeds and kills Sherlock? The clock is ticking and the danger intensifies . . .

.Extrait\*\*\*This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected proof\*\*\*Copyright 2014 Catherine

Coulter  
1 Buckner Park Chevy Chase, Maryland  
Middle of March Saturday, late afternoon  
She always ran at sunset. She rarely ran all-out, rather she maintained a smooth, steady pace because this was her thinking time. Thankfully, it wasn't freezing cold on this early evening. The two-lane trail wound in and out of oak and maple trees, the terrain not too extreme. She loved how the light played through the still-naked tree branches, and how quiet it was with so few other people out in the park this time of day. Quite different from running along the Embankment in London a challenge, since there were always people to watch out for. Here or in London, it was still her precious thinking time. Diplomatic protocols with endless snafus, relations with

Her Majesty's government, and now too often about people who wanted to blow up their neighbors, or London, still fighting out thousands of years of hatreds seemingly bred into their bones. Sometimes there were victories, but few they were, and far between. She was good at her job, but there was always something to work through, something to make her brain ache. But not today. Today she was trying to figure out what suddenly happened in her life that had brought her here. As she ran, a constant prayer looped through her brain that she'd left the danger back in England. Her breathing was even, her muscles warm, and she relaxed into the repetitive movement. She focused on the quiet, even heard a blue jay, the sounds of small animals moving about in the underbrush near her, the slap of her running shoes on the trail, smooth and steady. After another quarter-mile, the trail turned back toward Nickerson Road, with its two lanes and light traffic. She ran parallel to it for a hundred yards or so. George's face flashed in her mind. He was eating spaghetti, of all things, and smiling at something she'd said, and she felt the familiar punch of grief, raw and deep. And that was the question she always came back to. What had she done that would make someone want her to pay with her life? With George's life? No matter how she turned it over in her mind, she simply couldn't think of anyone who possibly hated her that much. She heard a car approaching on Nickerson Road. In that stark moment she heard the engine revving, the car accelerating toward her. She twisted to look, stumbling on a clump of rocks at the edge of the trail and falling sideways, flailing her arms to keep her balance, but still she fell hard. The car was close now, nearly on her, and it was coming fast. She didn't think, simply rolled into the bushes near several trees. She smelled the exhaust, felt the heat of that beast as it flew past her. She heard the car brake hard, pictured the driver turning around to come after her again. She jumped to her feet and ran

into the woods off the trail, the only sound in her ears the frantic beat of her heart. She plastered herself against the back of an oak tree and waited.  
2 Two Corners Mall Washington, D.C. Monday morning  
He turned stone cold and his focus narrowed laser-thin on the man who held the woman in a choke hold. A carjacking in the parking lot of a strip mall not a half-mile from his town house on Euclid the first one he'd ever seen, and here he was in the middle of it. He'd been walking to his Jeep, a large Starbucks coffee in his left hand, when he saw this man grab the woman and jerk her out of the driver's side of a shiny black Beemer. She screamed once. Davis yelled at the man to let her go and back away, but the man dragged the woman in front of him, whirled around to face him, and pointed a .22 at her temple. A crap gun, but it could do the job. *Piss off or the bitch is dead!* the man yelled. *I don't like bitches. I don't even like my mom. I mean it, dude, walk away!* The guy was maybe thirty, and higher than Carly from Homeland Security when she'd nabbed a terrorist in Pittsburgh. He was probably on ice, given the way he was jonesing around, his body jerking on puppet strings. Even from fifteen feet away, Davis could see his eyes were jitterbugging, the hand that held the .22 to the woman's head shaking. Not good. New tactics. Davis called out, *Dude, I get it. Look, I love my Starbucks fix, too, he waved his cup but you've got to let her go. Go away, ass-wipe, or it's brains-down-the-drain time!* Jitterbug tightened his hold around her neck, pressing the .22 hard against her cheek. The woman's hands clutched at his forearm, trying to pull it away from her neck to catch a breath. Even from this distance, it looked to Davis like she was more pissed off than afraid. Seriously, dude, Davis called out. Its

really not a good idea to mess with me. Im FBI, a walking, talking death machine. You cant hit me from fifteen feet with that popgun, but I can shoot the gold hoop out of your ear and call my mother at the same time while singing Happy Birthday. He pulled his Glock from his holster for Jitterbug to see, then held it down at his side. You hurt this very nice lady and Ill personally stuff you in a meat grinder and make a cheap burger out of you. You got me? You need rehab, not this Beemer youd just wreck, which really would be a shame, about the car, I mean. So put the peashooter down and let the lady go. Jitterbug stared at him, as if trying to make sense out of his words. He was shaking his head back and forth, maybe listening to other voices, who knew? His eyes whirled, his mouth worked, his hand shook, and through all his gyrations the woman looked straight at Davis, calm as could be, and gave him a slight nod. Without a pause, she bent her head and took a deep bite out of Jitterbugs forearm, right through the tatty sweatshirt he was wearing. He yelled, loosened his grip. She pulled back inside the open car door to give herself leverage and sent her fist into his nose, then her elbow into his gut. He jerked up his .22 and fired wildly, not at the woman but at Davis, once, twice, three times. Nowhere close. Davis leaned down, carefully put his coffee cup on the ground and raised his Glock. The woman was pinned between Jitterbug and the car door, and he made another grab for her, jerking the gun up again toward her head. I wish you hadnt done that, Davis said, and very calmly shot the man in the shoulder. One bullet did the trick. The man lurched back and fell away from the open car door and onto his knees, howling, holding his shoulder, rocking back and forth, the gun skittering away from him. The woman shouted to Davis, Good shot! And she gave the guy a kick in the ribs, sending him screaming onto his side. Then she knelt down, agile as a teenager, and picked up the .22. A good half-dozen shoppers dribbled out of the shops toward the parking lot now that it looked safe and they wouldnt get caught in anyones crosshairs. They were brimming with excitement, chattering nervously. A woman screamed, as if for effect. Davis opened his mouth at the same moment the woman held up her hand, cleared her throat, and said in a booming voice that carried all the way to LaFleurs Dry Cleaners across the road, Everythings okay now, people! You, sir, call nine-one-one. The rest of you, youll want to stay and talk to the police when they get here. I mean it, this is important. Id do it for any one of you, so do it for me, okay? She gave them all the big stink eye, a nod, and an approving smile. To his surprise, only two of the bystanders melted away. The others grouped together, comparing notes, still flying high on adrenaline. Davis holstered his Glock and picked up his Starbucks coffee. He sipped it. Still hot. Good. The woman started toward him. She was tall, fit, and strong, by the look of the blows shed dealt Jitterbug. Not a coward, this woman, more a force. In that instant, he realized she reminded him of Sherlock, or Sherlocks mom, all the way to the red hair bouncing around on her head. It was kind of scary. She was smiling big, showing lovely white teeth, and her red hair seemed to turn redder as the sun suddenly broke through the clouds overhead. She handed him Jitterbugs .22, butt first, barrel to the ground, smooth and easy. She knew gun safety. Even more scary. A meat grinder? Really? She quirked a dark red eyebrow at him, leaned forward, and kissed him soundly on the cheek. She smelled like honey. Well, he said, the thing is, my granny always used a meat grinder when I visited her as a kid. I remember she threatened my granddad with it when he smoked his cigar in the kitchen. Why werent you scared? Believe me, I was scared to my toes, until I realized he was only a pathetic guy high on drugs, and she looked back at Jitterbug, lying there holding his shoulder, moaning. Criminal Apprehension Unit Hoover Building An hour later in the CAU, Davis said to the gathered agents, Metro showed up two minutes later, along with an ambulance that hauled Jitterbug to the hospital. Some of the cops questioned the bystanders, others questioned the woman, and another two questioned me until I wanted to hurl. I even mentioned Savich a couple of times, but all I got for dropping the Big Dogs name was one guy who rolled his eyes and one big-deal grunt. They kept asking me the same questions over and over as they usually do. The woman finally broke in and said enough was enough and we were in need of a nice strong morning shot of bourbon and I was to follow her back home in case she fainted not likely where wed toast our mutual good luck and competence. She shoved her card into one of their hands and smiled at him. The two cops were so taken aback, they let us both leave, and I followed her home. Davis grinned around the room. So thats the story of why Im late, and Im sticking to it. Savich said, Really? Nah, that cant be true. Youre actually saying one of the cops rolled his eyes and the other one only grunted when you said my name? Yeah, couldnt believe it myself. Youd think maybe theyd have some respect. Savich grinned, shook his head. I can confirm that Jitterbug names Paul Jones in surgery at Washington Memorial to remove the bullet from his shoulder. Metros in charge. Special Agent Lucy Carlyle, soon to be Lucy McKnight, was shaking her head. Davis, listen to me. You could be in the bed next to Mr. Bug at Washington Memorial instead of sitting here trying to make us laugh. I can see it all: youre moseying to

your Jeep, sipping your latte, thinking about who you've got a date with tonight, when that idiot grabs the lady. It was not a latte. Yeah, yeah, macho black. One part of your brain is trying out jokes to tell your girlfriend tonight and all of a sudden, your manic brain snaps to figuring out angles and distances, the drugged psychology of Mr. Bug, and calculating probabilities for survival, right? Davis said, Hey, I already know what jokes work. He paused for a moment. And my brain isn't manic. It's a finely tuned instrument. Do you know, though, I think she'd have taken Jitterbug down herself once she got over her surprise at his popping out of the box like that. I gotta say it's possible she really didn't need me. Tough, that one. Lots of red hair, like yours, Sherlock. I bet she'd impress you. I did follow her home to this swank gated mansion on a huge lot in Chevy Chase, halfway down Ridgewood Road, through this big secure gate with a guardhouse, cameras, and an intercom. It's all woods out there, with very few houses. The ones that are there are big and set back and very private. The guardhouse was empty, but she didn't have to speak to anyone on the intercom. Nope, the gate opened up fast, which means there were cameras inside monitoring. I was right behind her in my plebian Jeep on her big circular driveway. Before we'd even stopped, this big guy comes running out of the house, makes a beeline right at me like he's going to rip my tonsils out. She climbs out of her BMW and calls out something like Hooley, it's okay. Since I had to come to work and couldn't toast her with the bourbon, she patted my face and gave me another kiss. Hooley's standing only six feet away, his arms crossed over his chest, measuring me for a coffin. He was a bodyguard, I'm sure of it. I'm thinking maybe she's someone important. Well, what's her name? Coop McKnight said. Does anyone recognize the name Natalie Black? Sherlock stared at him. You've got to be kidding me. *Revue de presse* Praise for Power Play These novels remain fascinating page-turners that keep Coulter's fans coming back for more. Packed with nonstop action, scandal, and sexual tension, this latest installment gives readers an insiders look at the Washington, D.C., political scene and the inner workings of the FBI, while the unforgettable characters interact with each other and life in a way that makes you forget they're fictional. *Bookreporter.com* Coulter's eighteenth FBI suspense thriller features her trademark brisk style and short chapters, plus a measure of compassion and an eminently satisfying epilogue. Coulter is at the top of her game here. *Booklist* Smooth The attraction between Sullivan and Perry adds spice. *Publishers Weekly*