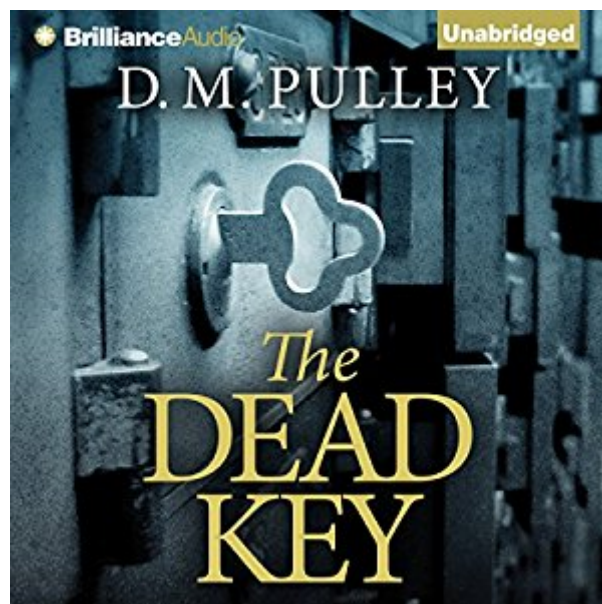


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# The Dead Key



## Synopsis

2014 Winner - Breakthrough Novel Award - Mystery & Thriller It's 1998, and for years the old First Bank of Cleveland has sat abandoned, perfectly preserved, its secrets only speculated on by the outside world. Twenty years before, amid strange staff disappearances and allegations of fraud, panicked investors sold Cleveland's largest bank in the middle of the night, locking out customers and employees and thwarting a looming federal investigation. In the confusion that followed, the keys to the vault's safe-deposit boxes were lost. In the years since, Cleveland's wealthy businessmen have kept the truth buried in the abandoned high-rise. The ransacked offices and forgotten safe-deposit boxes remain locked in time until young engineer Iris Latch stumbles upon them during a renovation survey. What begins as a welcome break from her cubicle becomes an obsession as Iris unravels the bank's sordid past. With each haunting revelation, Iris follows the looming shadow of the past deeper into the vault - and soon realizes that the key to the mystery comes at an astonishing price.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

So I spent my Sunday reading THE DEAD KEY. Long book... and I don't mean the number of pages. I happen to like long books. When I was a regular shopper at my local bookstores, my initial selection was based off thickness (how I discovered Robert Jordon and Terry Goodkind and others of that epic length writing). THE DEAD KEY, however, is largely one single, long wind-up, the pacing not really picking up till well past the last quarter. Mystery? Treasure Hunt? Gothic Horror?

Pretty much all of it, and shows masterful thought and planning to D.M. Pulley's credit. It certainly kept me guessing what the final intent of the book was until that last quarter when the last pieces finally began falling into place- not quite all pieces, though. To give a basic idea of narrative style, the story is comprised of two intertwined timelines. It rather reminded me of an old horror 16 bit game I still own, where the actions of one timeline directly impacted the actions of the other, and the swapping around of perspectives kept the revelations coming, the "Ah hah!" moments rolling, the suspense tight with wonderment and discovery, simply an exquisite plotline that has made the game a cult classic. THE DEAD KEY largely captures the same engrossing interest, and kept me going, page after page, chapter after chapter, perspective after perspective, within that same sense of driven fascination. But it is also well padded, well padded indeed, with repeating expositional elements. An incipient alcoholic anti-heroine, whom I didn't find much empathy for, and a naïve, innocent anti-heroine, whose repeated sense of helplessness, panic, and confusion even I began finding a tad tiresome - and I am one of those who relish minutia that others would sigh over. The modern gothic environs, however, are expertly crafted. The tone is psychologically tense with a handful of honest-to-goodness chapter ending cliffhangers. The interlocking aspects never ceased to delight me. And the ending... well, a completion within the same emotional level as Arturo Pérez-Reverte's 1993 novel, THE CLUB DUMAS had concluded with (the novel may be recognized by more as the later movie, THE NINTH GATE). All in all, enjoyable, yet I do have to wonder how even more fantastic these elements would be if the book was the same 477 pages but made tauter in pacing, richer in action, and, yes, even more deeply layered. Or at least just stronger pacing. I do love narrative minutia, which Frank Herbert and James Clavell being my models of mastery, yet THE DEAD KEY only approaches the cusp of such epic grandeur without quite turning that last key. The narrative is replete with profanity and contains a couple very minor and glossed past sexual encounters. Also, Prime Members can pick TWO Kindle Selections this month.

I really enjoyed this book. I think the author's experience as an engineer brought real atmosphere to the story. I wasn't completely satisfied with the ending, but it was still definitely worth reading. My only real complaint is there was more foul language than I would have liked. Overall, I was very happy with this book; I read it straight through in one evening!

Overall, I enjoyed this book. It kept me engrossed and I read it in one sitting. The pace of the story was good and the switching between time periods was handled well. I wasn't surprised by most of the revelations, but enjoyed how the story played out and how the characters were fleshed out. So

why 4 stars? It's petty, but folks generally wouldn't have called "Personnel" "Human Resources" in the 70's. And even though the 911 emergency system was around, many areas didn't have the system in place until well into the 80's (anyone remember dialing 0 on a rotary phone to get the operator in an emergency?) These little details bugged me, but many people probably wouldn't even notice. I guess that's what happens when you recall a time period that you lived in and it's portrayed differently from your own memories.

In 1978 the bank building closes down under suspicious circumstances beyond the failing economy. People's careers are ruined. Some people just disappear. In 1998 investors are interested in repurposing the building. Architects and engineers are brought in to evaluate it. Iris, an underachieving former valedictorian, finds that most of the building has been left untouched. Sensitive files are still in their folders. Personal pictures, notes, coffee cups remain on desktops or in drawers. No clean up was done as would be expected after a business is shut down. And there are keys - keys to offices, keys to vaults, keys that let her gain access to deadly secrets. I found the book intriguing. It became my personal responsibility to keep reading so that I could save everybody's lives--well, the lives of those who deserved saving, anyway. Rating: I'll use a version of the TV rating scale because it makes more sense than movie rating: TV MA This book is designed to be read by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. Language - Some coarse language (I wonder why that one word has to be used so much. It adds nothing whatsoever to the story.) Sexual Situations Adult-level Content Violence

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