

# **The Ice Limit Study Guide**

## **The Ice Limit by Lincoln Child**

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# Plot Summary

The Ice Limit is the sixth collaboration between writers Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. In this novel, a meteorite of unknown proportions is discovered on an isolated island in Cape Horn off the coast of Chile. This meteorite is reported to be the largest meteorite ever discovered. Palmer Lloyd, a billionaire who has just begun building a new museum to rival the likes of the New York Museum of Natural History, wants to make the meteorite the centerpiece of his museum. Lloyd hires an engineering firm known for its extreme success rate to recover this meteorite for him. However, no one has ever attempted to move an object this heavy before, and the more the recovery team learn about the meteorite, the more they discover they do not know. The Ice Limit is a novel of scientific discovery and suspense that will leave the reader glued to the page until the final, shocking word.

Nestor Masangkay has found the ultimate meteorite. Unable to believe his own scientific readings, Masangkay begins digging so that he might take a look at the object himself. When he touches it, however, Masangkay suddenly and mysteriously is thrown from the object and killed. A local Indian happens upon Masangkay's body and takes his belongings to sell at Port William. At the same time, multi-billionaire Palmer Lloyd has just bought a set of rare skeletons for the new museum he is building on the Hudson River Valley in New York.

Lloyd's employee buys Masangkay's journal and immediately brings it to his boss, who becomes excited at the idea of owning the meteorite Masangkay describes in the journal. Lloyd hires Masangkay's ex-partner to work with a team that will be sent to recover the meteorite. Lloyd also employs EES, Effective Engineering Solutions, Inc, to recover the object. Eli Glinn, head of EES, has never taken on a project he did not confidentially believe he could successfully conclude; therefore he takes on this recovery with every detail accounted for and every possible obstacle solved.

The recovery mission members board the Rolvaag and quickly makes their way to the Isla Desolacion, where the meteorite is located. Unfortunately, their appearances arouses the attention of a rogue Chilean Naval officer who follows them to the island, convinced they are mining gold and stealing it from his beloved Chile. As the team begins to uncover the meteorite, the rogue officer, Vallenaar, begins an investigation of his own.

The recovery team uncovers the top of the meteorite and is shocked to discover it is red. No alloy on earth is red. The shocks continue when the team discovers the meteorite is half the size they expected it to be, but far heavier. In fact, the object is so dense that when they attempt to lift it with jacks, there is a failure in one section of the jack placements. Rochefort, the chief engineer, goes into the tunnels to release the hydraulic fluid in order to lower the jacks, but this act causes a shift in the meteorite, and Rochefort is killed along with his assistant.



Despite the setback of Rochefort's death, the recovery mission continues and the meteorite is removed from the tunnels. At the same time, Vallenar sends his son Timmer, an officer on his ship, to investigate the actions of the American miners. Timmer finds the meteorite and touches it, causing the meteorite to emit a huge amount of energy that causes Timmer to be blown apart and all the electrical equipment on the island to malfunction. When Glinn realizes who Timmer was, he goes to Vallenar's ship and pretends that he is alive and well, locked up in the brig of the Rolvaag, a lie that is designed to keep Vallenar from attacking the Rolvaag until they are prepared to leave.

The meteorite is carefully placed in the cargo hold of the Rolvaag and the ship begins its journey back to New Jersey. Vallenar takes their move as confirmation that his son is dead. Vallenar gives chase. However, Glinn foresaw this action and had his men set explosive charges on Vallenar's boat's propellers. The propellers explode and leave the Almirante Ramirez dead in the water. Glinn did not foresee, however, that Vallenar had a spare propeller on board and is able to repair the ship, although at great cost to several of his men.

The Rolvaag makes it across the line marking international waters and believes itself to be free of interference from Vallenar. However, in a rage over his son's death, Vallenar follows the Rolvaag even though it will mean the end of his career. When one of his officers protests, Vallenar kills him. When Glinn realizes that Vallenar is following them, he makes the connection and realizes Timmer was Vallenar's son, but this information does little to help him.

As Glinn and Captain Britton try to figure out how to deal with Vallenar, Garza takes a group of men into the cargo hold to weld the meteorite in place. As they are finishing up, the ship takes a large wave and suddenly the meteorite discharges an electrical pulse. All the men except Garza are killed. McFarlane and Amira try to figure out what it is that keeps setting the meteorite off. Eventually they realize that the meteorite discharges electricity whenever it is in contact with salt. They take precautions against water reaching the meteorite before they can reach dry ground. However, there is little that can do about the damage caused to the cradle holding the meteorite.

Glinn instructs Captain Britton to take the Rolvaag to the Ice Limit, the area where the Pacific Ocean meets the Antarctic Ocean, known to have large masses of ice. Once they arrive, Vallenar catches up with them. Vallenar hits the Rolvaag with several missiles, causing catastrophic damage to the engine. The Rolvaag manages to hide behind an ice island. The Almirante Ramirez follows and prepares to fire on the Rolvaag. However, Glinn's men set off an explosion that causes a large piece of ice to fall near the Almirante Ramirez, sinking it.

The Rolvaag is now dead in the water and at the mercy of a terrible storm in the Ice Limit. A call for help offers little support because the rescue vehicles cannot fly or sail until the storm abates. Captain Britton becomes aware that the motion of the meteorite, which has become loose in its cradle, is causing the ship to pull apart each time it is hit by a wave. Britton demands that Glinn trigger the dead man switch and is supported by both Lloyd and McFarlane. However, Glinn refuses. While the other people on the ship

flee to the lifeboats, Glinn goes to the hold and tries to steady the meteorite. Britton follows in hopes of talking him into abandoning ship. Unfortunately, before Britton can break through to Glinn, the meteorite breaks through the side of the ship and it sinks.

McFarlane, Amira, and the other survivors take refuge on an ice island and begin to suffer hypothermia. McFarlane tries to keep Amira awake, but she passes away from the extreme cold. Rescue arrives and takes the few survivors from the island, including Lloyd, McFarlane, and the chief officer, Howell. A few days later, McFarlane visits Lloyd and tells him the meteorite was not a meteorite after all, but a seed of some kind that is beginning to sprout in its ocean grave.



# Chapters 1-8

## Chapters 1-8 Summary

Isla Desolacion, January 16, 1:15p.m. Nester Masangkay is on Isla Desolacion searching for evidence of a meteorite he has heard about through local legends. When Masangkay finds rocks that indicate the presence of a meteorite, he takes a reading with his electromagnetic tomographic sounder. Masangkay cannot believe what the device shows and takes a second reading. When the second is similar to the first, Masangkay begins to dig. Masangkay unearths something that brings him a great deal of excitement. However, when he touches the object with rain pouring down around him, an electrical charge throws him yards away.

Isla Desolacion, February 22, 11:00a.m. A local man takes his canoe to Isla Desolacion and begins to explore the area. The man is frightened when he finds a dead body, but this does not stop him from stealing the man's belongings to sell on the mainland.

New York City, May 20, 2:00 p.m. An auction is taking place at Christie's, with only one item on the block. The item is a skeleton of two dinosaurs, a Triceratops and a Tyrannosaurus Rex tangled in the death grip that led to their deaths. The bids rise higher and higher, surpassing the highest amount ever paid for a natural artifact. When the bid hits thirty-six million, a man enters the back of the room and bids one hundred million. That man wins the auction.

Kalahari Desert, June 1, 6:45 p.m. Sam McFarlane is instructing a group of San Bushmen how to use metal detectors to help him search for a meteorite. Just as the men lose their fear of the machines, a helicopter descends on them. McFarlane attacks the man who gets off the helicopter, accusing him of forcing him to lose months of work. The man turns out to be Palmer Lloyd, a billionaire who wants to hire McFarlane to help him retrieve a meteorite from the Cape Horn region of Chile. At first McFarlane declines, even when he learns his ex-partner was the man who discovered the meteorite and that his body is thought to be on the island still. However, the thought of a large amount of money and possible redemption for his professional reputation changes his mind.

The Hudson River Valley, June 3, 10:45 a.m. Eli Glinn arrives at the Lloyd Museum, a museum owned by Palmer Lloyd that is under construction in the Hudson River Valley. Glinn is given a quick tour of the museum and then taken to a conference room where he is introduced to Sam McFarlane. Glinn is the head of Effective Engineering Solutions, Inc., a company that specializes in unique engineering problems and analyzing major failures. Lloyd wants to hire Glinn and his company to recover the meteorite. McFarlane tells Glinn that he has been studying Masangkay's data on the meteorite and he believes that it is the largest meteorite in the world, weighing more than four thousand tons.



New York City, June 4, 11:45 a.m. McFarlane goes to the offices of EES to meet with Glinn and his team. McFarlane is greeted at the door by Glinn's second-in-command, Manuel Garza. McFarlane and Garza find Glinn working on a reenactment of JFK's assassination in a huge warehouse-like room.

EES Headquarters, 1:00 p.m. Glinn, McFarlane, and Garza go into a conference room where two more engineers, Eugene Rochefort and Rachel Amira, are waiting. Glinn begins to discuss the project with the engineers, discussing the unfriendly seas and weather they can expect around the target island and the evidence on the island that supports the presence of a meteorite. Rochefort asks how the sedimentary layers of the islands were reversed. McFarlane uses a peanut butter sandwich to demonstrate what happens when a heavy object slams into the earth, splattering Rochefort with peanut butter and jelly. Glinn continues the briefing by discussing the trouble the team could get into with the government of Chile, even though Lloyd is in the process of getting mining rights to the island. They also discuss the death of Massangkay and its possible impact on the expedition. Finally, Glinn quotes McFarlane a price of one million dollars simply to investigate the possibility of success of the project. McFarlane leaves to discuss this with Lloyd. Glinn instructs Amira to become McFarlane's assistant during the project and report all his actions back to Glinn.

Lloyd Museum, June 7, 3:15 p.m. McFarlane continues to review Massangkay's notes on the meteorite, focusing on a passage in which Massangkay says that this meteorite might prove McFarlane's outrageous theory that one day a meteorite from outside the known solar system will be found on earth. McFarlane finds it odd that Massangkay would say this because it was this theory that caused their falling out. Glinn arrives at the museum and takes McFarlane out with him to talk to Lloyd. Glinn states that it is near impossible to move an object as heavy as the meteorite is expected to be. However, Glinn and his company have decided to do it for the fee of one hundred and fifty million dollars, with the understanding that the fee might be doubled if they run into unexpected expenses. Glinn also tells Lloyd that he will be installing a dead man switch on the oil tanker they plan to use in the event the meteorite comes loose while the ship is at sea, putting the lives of all aboard in danger. Lloyd is unhappy with this idea, but agrees to it when Glinn promises the probability of this is next to zero.

## Chapters 1-8 Analysis

The first chapter introduces the catalyst that will propel the plot. A meteorite is discovered that appears to have some kind of power that causes the death of the man who discovered it. This power appears to either be some sort of stored up electricity that was perhaps caused by lightning strikes, or some sort of protective mechanism in an unusually large meteorite. At this point the reader is unclear what caused this man's death, but it is clear that this is an unusual meteorite and any contact with it could cause death, adding some danger to the plot.

These early chapters also introduce Palmer Lloyd, a billionaire who has a fascination with natural artifacts, a fascination that is highlighted by his purchase of a set of unique



dinosaur skeletons. This helps the reader understand Lloyd's motives for wanting the meteorite, which the reader quickly learns he does. At the same time, Lloyd clearly understands this is something that requires expert help, so he hires Sam McFarlane, a scientist who was once partners with the man who discovered the meteorite. That relationship had ended badly, though the reader does not know why at this point. However, whatever happened had a large impact on McFarlane and appears to be his motive for agreeing to help Lloyd, leaving the reader wondering what else this mysterious event might influence McFarlane to do.

In the following chapters, the reader and McFarlane get to know more about Eli Glinn. Glinn owns a company who specializes in figuring out engineering puzzles. In the past, they have been hired to reroute lava from a volcanic eruption and are currently working on figuring out the truth behind the death of JFK. This shows the reader that this company is highly technical and often find themselves doing the impossible. Glinn proudly tells McFarlane that his company has never failed. This is important to the novel because this shows that Glinn is not only a man who plans ahead and plans for every possibility, but he is a man who cannot accept failure in himself or those around him.

The expedition to retrieve the meteorite is a dangerous one, not only because the meteorite is a large object, but because it is an unknown. No matter how carefully Glinn plans for every possibility, he cannot possibly know everything about an object that has never been seen or examined by humans. The only human to ever set eyes on this object was killed under mysterious circumstances, warning the reader, if not Lloyd and the others, that this object has unknown characteristics that can prove troublesome despite Glinn's careful planning. However, the idea that Glinn will be placing a dead man switch in the ship gives the reader some sense of comfort, or perhaps it increases the suspense as the reader wonders how necessary this switch really is.





# Chapters 9-17

## Chapters 9-17 Summary

Millburn, New Jersey, June 9, 2:45 p.m. Glinn parks outside a residential neighborhood in New Jersey and watches as Sally Britton leaves from her appointed visit with her daughter. Glinn invites Britton into his car and informs her that he would like to hire her to captain an oil tanker for him. Glinn tells Britton that he knows about her past, how she cannot be hired because of a stint in rehab for alcoholism, but that this past does not matter to him. Glinn explains that she can hire her own crew, that she will be paid a large bonus, and that piloting his ship will help her regain her reputation and perhaps standing in the custody fight over her child. Britton agrees.

Port of Elizabeth, June 17, 10:00 a.m. Glinn gives Lloyd a tour of the warehouse where the oil tanker purchased for the meteorite recovery is being modified for the expedition. Glinn has brought in a Hollywood special effects team to make the brand new ship appear to be old and ready for its grave, despite the first-rate technical equipment it actually carries, in order to stave off curious government officials. Glinn has also engineered the dead man switch, created a new entry point for their oversize equipment, and placed cargo containers on deck that contain specialized equipment and labs. Glinn also shows Lloyd where the meteorite will go and the cradle his people have designed both from metal and wood. Glinn explains that a secondary section of the cradle will be built when the meteorite is recovered, so that it can be built to its exact dimensions in order to prevent the meteorite from breaking loose during transport.

Aboard the Rolvaag, June 26, 12:35 a.m. McFarlane walks along the fly deck, surprised by how large everything is on the Rolvaag. McFarlane is enthusiastic about this trip, hoping it will redeem him for a past mistake. The only downside is Glinn's insistence that Amira be his assistant. When Amira joins him on the fly deck he suggests that they be colleagues, not boss and assistant, to which she agrees. They discuss Glinn briefly. Amira tells McFarlane that Glinn was once in the Rangers in Vietnam but that a mistake with some intelligence caused the deaths of his entire team, except Garza, leading to Glinn's insistence on success.

Rolvaag, June 26, 12:55 a.m. McFarlane and Amira join the rest of the crew in the large dining room for the traditional dinner. McFarlane sits at the captain's table where he meets the captain and the ship's doctor. The meal is exceedingly good, but Amira is disappointed that no hard liquor has been allowed on board. McFarlane questions the captain about piloting such large ships, a discussion that leads to a story about the seas around the Cape Horn region. Britton tells them how a captain took his ship up to the Ice Limit where their boat was sunk by an ice island more than forty miles long. Some survived on one of the islands, but began fighting among themselves. Finally the captain, the quartermaster, and a common seaman sailed a piece of the stern. Only the seaman survived, a man who turned out to be Britton's ancestor.



Rolvaag, June 27, 3:45 p.m. McFarlane watches as Glinn meets with the crew of the Rolvaag and outlines what it is they plan on doing in Chile. Glinn politely answers questions and handles the nervousness of the crew with charm and honesty.

Rolvaag, 4:20 p.m. After the meeting, McFarlane runs into the captain in the officers' dayroom and offers to give him a tour of the ship. When they enter the cargo control room, Britton asks McFarlane if he knows what a computer marked secure datametrics might be. Britton tells him there is also one on the bridge, but that no one has explained what it is. McFarlane has no clue. They continue their walk and McFarlane tells Britton how he decided to be a planetary geologist after witnessing a meteor shower and the meteorites he has found in the past. Britton then asks McFarlane if he believes the meteorite will create a danger for the ship or its crew. McFarlane assures her that it is unlikely to harm the ship.

Rolvaag, July 3, 2:15 p.m. As the Rolvaag crosses the equator, the doctor locks himself in the sick bay to unpack his precious books. Glinn comes to visit him and asks that Dr. Brambell review the psych profiles of the men on board and offer an opinion. Glinn is particularly interested in McFarlane's psychological health, based on the fact that a few years previously McFarlane broke under stress and sold a meteorite he and his partner had found to a Japanese businessman, afraid the rare find would be broken up and lost to science. This caused a rift between McFarlane and his partner, as well as tarnishing McFarlane's professional reputation. Brambell promises to keep an eye on McFarlane for any sign he might do such a thing again.

Rolvaag, July 11, 7:55 a.m. McFarlane goes on the bridge and meets with both Glinn and Britton. Glinn informs them that they will be off the coast of Chile in a few hours. He wants both McFarlane and Britton to go with him to customs. Glinn has created fake passports for both himself and McFarlane to prevent any misunderstandings or trouble later. Glinn also announces that he plans to hire a local man who is said to know the waters around Cape Horn exceptionally well. All of this is announced on a conference call with Lloyd, who is concerned about the plan, but gives his consent.

Chile, July 12, 9:30 a.m. McFarlane, Britton, and Glinn take a boat to Port Williams. Britton is out of her impeccable uniform and Glinn is wearing a disguise that makes him look like a sickly sailor. They arrive at the customs office, where Glinn immediately begins negotiations with the corrupt officials. The first bribe Glinn offers is taken, but then the officials refuse to approve their paperwork, suggesting they can afford a higher bribe. Glinn gives them several bars of gold. This is all witnessed by a naval officer, Comandante Vallenar, who refuses to participate in the bribe and accuses the Americans of stealing gold that rightfully belongs to Chile. However, the custom officials chase Vallenar away, instructing Glinn to ignore him.

## Chapters 9-17 Analysis

Glinn hires the crew for the oil tanker he plans to use, picking a captain who has a mysterious past that includes alcohol abuse. This is a curious decision, but the reader



begins to understand when it is revealed that Glinn once made a fatal decision while in charge of a group of men and it turned out to be an utter failure. This might also explain Glinn's obsession with success. However, the reader must worry what will happen on board the newly remodeled Rolvaag should the captain run into a stressful situation.

The changes to the Rolvaag show the reader that Glinn has thought of every obstacle between his team and the meteorite and has made adjustments to avoid them. The additions to the ship also show that he is prepared for nearly anything. The one obstacle that appears to remain is the safe transportation of the meteorite. Glinn and his team have created a cradle for it that is near brilliance, but the reader continues to wonder what will happen to a ship, even such a large ship as the Rolvaag, should that meteorite get loose. Finally, the captain mentions the Ice Limit, an area of sea where ocean meets the Antarctic coast. This story she tells is frightening and adds tension to the novel, but the reader is assured the Rolvaag will not be going anywhere near the Ice Limit. However, the reader wonders if the writers will stick to their promise.

The crew is aboard the Rolvaag and enjoying a few days of quiet before the work is to begin. Britton shows McFarlane a computer in the cargo area that she does not know and asks why EES would place it there. This hints to the reader that Glinn is up to something and he does not completely trust the woman he chose as a captain. At the same time, Glinn speaks with the ship's doctor about McFarlane, using his background as an excuse to have the doctor, a trained psychiatrist, keep an eye on him. It appears that Glinn trusts no one.

The Rolvaag arrives in Chile, where they are forced to pay a bribe to the custom officials. This bribe is expected and does not worry anyone. The biggest fear is that the officials will want to board the ship and discover it is not as old as Glinn would like everyone to think it is. Glinn prevents this with acting and a higher bribe. What is truly important about this episode is the introduction of Comandante Vallenar. Vallenar does not approve of what the Americans are doing, even though they have the legal right to mine ore on Isla Desolacion. This leaves the reader wondering if Vallenar will make his presence known again as the novel continues to develop.



# Chapters 18-26

## Chapters 18-26 Summary

Puerto Williams, 11:45 a.m. McFarlane, Britton, and Glinn go to a local bar to find a man named John Puppup, a local man who is the last of the Yaghan Indians who once populated the area. Puppup is very drunk, so Glinn and his men simply pick him up and take him to the ship.

Rolvaag, 2:50 p.m. The group returns to the Rolvaag and crisis arises immediately as a fog surrounds the ship. A ship is approaching and it apparently has targeted the Rolvaag for attack with its weapon radar. All on the bridge watch as a battleship carrying Comandante Vallenar passes by. It is clearly a threat on Vallenar's part.

Rolvaag, July 13, 6:30 a.m. McFarlane rises early and finds Amira getting sick near the rail. Britton jogs past, warning them a storm is coming. Later in the morning, Glinn meets up with McFarlane and asks if he knows what Lloyd is planning to do as they approach Isla Desolacion. As they discuss it, they learn that the ship has identified an aircraft approaching. McFarlane watches as a helicopter lands on the deck and Lloyd disembarks with dozens of employees.

Rolvaag, 11:15 a.m. McFarlane is called to Lloyd's suite of rooms on the ship where he discovers a full office day is unfolding around Lloyd's multiple employees. In Lloyd's office, McFarlane is told Lloyd plans to go to the island alone as soon as they land. McFarlane insists that he go along. Lloyd hesitates at first, but then agrees. When they tell Glinn, Glinn announces that he already assumed that would be the plan.

Isla Desolacion, 12:45 p.m. McFarlane, Lloyd, and Puppup are taken to Isla Desolacion by Garza, who gives them two hours to find the meteorite before he returns to take them back to the Rolvaag. Puppup is excited to be on the island and rushes them toward the snowfield. McFarlane asks about the history of the island and is told a Yaghan tale about a god's son who was banished inside the island when he murdered his own brother. A short time later, they arrive at the site and find what remains of Massangkay's equipment. Puppup shows them the hole that Massangkay dug, but finds only a small depression in the ground. Lloyd comments on the meteorite's name, Desolacion, but McFarlane suggests they call the Massangkay meteorite since Massangkay died discovering it. Lloyd refuses, but they put the discussion aside for the moment. They find Massangkay's body and McFarlane insists they bury it. Lloyd helps McFarlane build a cairn around the collection of bones and clothing before they return to the landing site.

Isla Desolacion, July 16, 8:42 a.m. McFarlane arrives on the island and finds that a road has been built and a fake mining camp established. At the site of the meteorite, McFarlane discovers they are close to uncovering the final inches of dirt. They carefully remove the dirt, saving most of it for testing later, until finally they uncover the meteorite itself.



Isla Desolacion, 9:55 a.m. The meteorite is red, something that surprises everyone. Lloyd, however, is too excited to be surprised. Lloyd jumps down in the hole and presses his cheek against the rock, despite Glinn's warnings to the contrary.

Isla Desolacion, 1:55 p.m. McFarlane and Amira discuss the meteorite and its surprising color. Amira tells McFarlane that she believes this meteorite cannot be from our solar system, believing that it is interstellar, proving the theory that nearly ruined McFarlane's career. Together they approach Glinn and Lloyd about getting a sample of the meteorite. Glinn agrees and helps talk Lloyd into it before Lloyd rushes off to a shareholders meeting.

Isla Desolacion, 2:15 p.m. Amira prepares a special drill to take their sample from the meteorite, following Glinn's instructions that no one touch the meteorite with their bare hands. At first it seems the drill is not functioning properly, but then the drill bit is destroyed, proving that the meteorite is so hard that even diamond cannot cut through it.

## Chapters 18-26 Analysis

As the ship draws close to the site of the meteorite, Lloyd insists on joining them. This action shows the readers how controlling Lloyd tends to be and how important this meteorite is to him. However, his appearance on the island can be a disruption and cause a crisis of leadership that can make the recovery difficult. McFarlane stands up to him and insists on going to the island with him the first time. Glinn surprises everyone by having foreseen this request. This shows the reader once again how Glinn appears to have thought of every possibility and made plans for them.

The actions of Vallenar leave the people on the Rolvaag concerned about their safety. This act is a threat that clearly shows the Americans that Vallenar is not happy with their intended mission. However, the fact that nothing else takes place shows that Vallenar has little power over the American ship. The reader believes Glinn when he suggests it is just a power play, but suspects that the crew have not yet seen the last of Vallenar.

The recovery of the meteorite begins. Lloyd is so excited that he jumps into the hole and touches the meteorite. After what happened to Massangkay, the reader expects Lloyd to explode. However, nothing happens, leaving the reader wondering if Massangkay's death had more to do with the weather on the day he uncovered the meteorite than the meteorite itself.

The color of the meteorite is unusual, leaving Amira suggesting that it is not from the known solar system, reinforcing the theory that nearly ruined McFarlane's career. At the same time, the scientists discover that the meteorite is incredibly hard. This leaves the reader wondering what else they do not know about the meteorite and how those unknowns might affect the recovery team.



# Chapters 27-35

## Chapters 27-35 Summary

Isla Desolacion, 3:05 p.m. Glinn insists that along with the broken drill bit, they also take Massangkay's body back to the Rolvaag. McFarlane is upset about this idea, but Glinn stresses that is an unknown that needs to be dealt with. As they box up the remains, Glinn notices that there are burn marks on some of the clothing and bones.

Punta Arenas, July 17, 8:00 a.m. Vallenar is shaving when a civilian is brought to his quarters. Vallenar knows this civilian bought some items that originated from Isla Desolacion from a local man, and he wants to know what they might have to do with the American interest in the same island. The man does not want to tell Vallenar at first, but when Vallenar cuts off his fingernail with a razor, the man quickly admits that Puppup sold him some items, including a machine of unknown origin and some useless rocks. Vallenar talks the man into locating and giving him one of the rocks.

Rolvaag, 9:35 a.m. McFarlane uses every test he can think of on the drill bit, but he cannot find any trace of the meteorite. When he makes his report to Glinn, McFarlane suggests they use an electron microprobe directly on the meteorite.

Isla Desolacion, 1:45 p.m. The electron microprobe works and McFarlane has several samples of the meteorite he can test.

Isla Desolacion, July 18, 9:00 a.m. McFarlane and Amira meet with Glinn underground on the island where there have been massive tunnels dug to help unearth the meteorite. Glinn shows McFarlane and Amira the large number of jacks that will be used to lift the meteorite out of its hole. McFarlane makes a report on the tests he has run on the meteorite samples, including the fact that it has an extremely high melting point and that it appears to be chemically inactive. Glinn has news for McFarlane as well, telling him that the meteorite is heavy than expected, but also much smaller than expected. This places it high on the periodic table of elements, in an area scientists refer to as an island of stability.

Rovaag, 9:30 a.m. Dr. Brambell interrupts his pleasure reading in order to take a look at Massangkay's body. At first it appears to be a fascinating mystery, but quickly Brambell comes to the conclusion that Massangkay's body shows signs of an ordinary death.

Isla Desolacion, 10:00 a.m. McFarlane watches from the safety of the communications center as Rochefort operates the jacks in the tunnel with the computer. The jacks begin to exert pressure against the meteorite but fail to move it. Then a group of jacks in one sector fail. Rochefort tries to adjust them remotely, but they are frozen. Rochefort volunteers to go into the tunnels with a helper to release the hydraulic fluid and unfreeze the jacks.





Isla Desolacion, 10:24 a.m. It is clear more jacks will need to be placed. However, Rochefort has seriously underestimated the weight of the meteorite. It shifts as he releases the hydraulic fluid from the jacks, crushing him and his helper.

Rolvaag, Noon. Glinn talks with the recovery group in the library on board the Rolvaag. Glinn assures them that the expedition will continue despite the tragedy. In fact, Glinn informs them that casualties were expected by this point in the project. McFarlane and Captain Britton raise concerns about continuing, but Glinn insists there is no reason to stop. The news that Massangkay most likely died from a lightning strike only bolsters Glinn's optimism. As the meeting ends, Puppup points out the window to show everyone that Vallenar's destroyer has arrived in their location.

## Chapters 27-35 Analysis

McFarlane has trouble getting a sample from the meteorite and then has trouble finding a melting point or any other factor about the object. It seems the more the scientists know about the meteorite, the more they do not know. At the same time, they discover through a terrible accident that the meteorite is much heavier than anyone imagined. This calls to mind concerns about the impact of the meteorite on the ship when it is time to transport it to New Jersey as well as the idea that no one clearly knows enough about it to be sure it is safe to transport. The only thing that is clear about this meteorite is that it cannot possibly be from our solar system.

Brambell investigates Massangkay's remains for an answer to his death. When Brambell decides the scientist died from a lightning strike, it seems logical. The reader knows it was raining when Massangkay dug up the meteorite and that there is evidence of prior lightning strikes in the soil. However, there is a lingering doubt in the mind of the reader that increases the suspense as it draws closer to time to move the meteorite onto the Rolvaag.

Glinn downplays the deaths of his men and tells everyone their deaths were planned for. This makes Glinn sound heartless, but in reality it simply continues to show the reader how carefully Glinn has planned out every detail of this expedition and how cautious he really is. This should remain on the reader's mind as the plot continues to develop because his caution will make his later actions makes sense.

Finally, Vallenar appears again. This causes the reader almost as much concern as the people on board the Rovaag because his intentions are not very clear.



# Chapters 36-43

## Chapters 36-43 Summary

Rolvaag, 12:25 p.m. Glinn goes to the bridge and reassures Britton that Vallenar has no intention of shooting at them while they are stationary in the bay. Glinn then goes outside to speak with Puppup, to whom he tells a lie in an attempt to win his trust. It turns out Puppup has lied to Glinn as well. Puppup does give Glinn the information that Vallenar once killed his wife and her lover in cold blood, waiting until they were in bed together so he would not be charged with the crime by Chilean law.

Rolvaag, 11:20 p.m. McFarlane goes to Amira's cabin and finds a written report to Glinn about McFarlane. When Amira returns and finds him reading the first page, she forces him to read the entire report, which states that she agrees with McFarlane's conclusions and refuses to spy on him any longer. Amira attempts to apologize, but McFarlane takes her in his arms and they make love.

Isla Desolacion, July 19, 11:30 a.m. McFarlane and Amira climb one of the island's volcanoes in order to get samples to test against the soil found around the meteorite. Glinn wants to know how the volcanoes were affected by the meteorite. As they climb back down, McFarlane tells Amira he does not want to begin a love affair during the expedition. Amira admits to an affair with Glinn that ended in a similar fashion.

Almirante Ramirez, 2:45 p.m. Vallenar has a letter from a rock expert that tells him the rocks found on Isla Desolacion are worthless. Vallenar no longer believes the Americans are digging for gold, but he has no clue what their true objective is. Vallenar talks with Timmer, his communications officer, about an assignment he will have for him soon.

Rolvaag, 2:50 p.m. McFarlane goes to the sick bay to get Massangkay's effects and finds Britton talking to the doctor. Britton pulls McFarlane aside and asks him if it is safe to bring the meteorite on board, given the latest events. Once again, McFarlane tells her he sees no reason the meteorite could pose a danger for the Rolvaag.

Isla Desolacion, July 20, 2:05 p.m. Glinn describes how they plan to move the meteorite, now lifted from its hole, to the ship by cutting a tunnel through the snowfield as they go. McFarlane tells Glinn that they finally found the meteorite's melting point, which is extremely high, and discovered its structural shape. They also discovered that the volcanoes were created by the crashing of the meteorite millions of years before. Then the team lifts the meteorite onto the cart that will transport it to the ship.

Isla Desolacion, 10:40 p.m. Timmer comes onto the island and approaches the area where the center of activity appears to be. Timmer kills a guard by slicing his throat and then enters the shed the guard appeared to be protecting. At first Timmer sees nothing, but then he sees light coming from the floor. Timmer discovers a hidden door. When





Timmer enters the tunnels, he quickly discovers the meteorite. Curious, Timmer takes off his glove and touches it.

Isla Desolacion, 11:15 p.m. McFarlane is awakened by an explosion of some kind. Glinn tells him all electrical equipment has been knocked out and the radios appear to be malfunctioning. It is discovered that something caused an electrical charge throughout the camp that is more powerful than lightning. In the tunnel, the team finds an exploded body whom they assume is the man who was on guard duty.

## Chapters 36-43 Analysis

The return of Vallenar frightens the crew of the Rolvaag, but Glinn appears unaffected. Instead of panicking, Glinn gathers information, which is his way of dealing with anything. This information reveals that Vallenar is a methodical, intelligent man who is patient enough to wait for the right circumstances to kill. Now Vallenar has his sights set on the Rolvaag, leaving the readers wondering what he might do to stop them from stealing what he believes belongs to his beloved country.

McFarlane learns that Amira has been spying on him, testing his trust in her, but this also leads to a sexual relationship. Complications could arise from this, but it seems McFarlane already sees this and has taken steps to prevent it. McFarlane's reaction to this relationship not only gives the reader insight into his personality, but also foreshadows tension in their relationship as the plot continues to develop.

The meteorite continues to be a mystery that is making everyone nervous, most especially the captain of the Rolvaag. No one knows what the meteorite is or what it might do when they load it on the ship. This also appears to suggest that trouble will arise when the meteorite is loaded, but the reader is unclear what that trouble might be at this point.



# Chapters 44-52

## Chapters 44-52 Summary

Isla Desolacion, July 21, 12:05 a.m. The team on the island speaks with Lloyd, explaining what has happened and the impact it has had on the recovery effort. McFarlane expresses the opinion that whatever happened was set off by someone touching the meteorite. Lloyd points out he touched it and nothing happened to him. Glinn tells Lloyd that the meteorite has become an unknown and that they should abort the project. Lloyd hangs up on him. Then one of Glinn's men tells him the dead body has blue eyes; therefore, it cannot be the guard they assumed it was.

Isla Desolacion, 12:40 a.m. Glinn sends a team to find the missing guard and learns that Britton is bringing a generator for their use.

Isla Desolacion, July 23, 12:05 p.m. The meteorite is making good progress across the snowfield, the expedition continuing despite setbacks. McFarlane and Amira study the meteorite some more. Britton comes to the site and expresses her concerns about the meteorite, but Glinn assures her the meteorite is safe. Britton also voices concerns about the Almirante Ramirez, which has returned to its mooring few hundred yards from the Rolvaag. Again, Glinn assures her he has everything under control.

Rolvaag, July 24, 3:45 p.m. McFarlane stands on the fly deck, looking at the meteorite which is now perched on a bluff. Below the bluff, Glinn's team is building a tower out of the cargo hold that will be used to lower the meteorite into the hold. Glinn asks McFarlane about the explosion that killed Vallenar's man on the island. McFarlane tells him it was an electrical discharge that appeared to be set off by the man's touch and caused the meteorite to send off radio frequencies for hours afterward. Glinn asks McFarlane if the meteorite is safe to place on the Rolvaag. McFarlane tells him he does not see it posing a danger as long as no one touches it again. McFarlane then asks what Glinn plans to do about the Almirante Ramirez. Glinn tells him he plans to make it appear that the mining is continuing even as they load the meteorite under cover of fog. By the time Vallenar realizes they have left, they will be near international waters.

Franklin Channel, 8:40 p.m. Glinn visits the Almirante Ramirez and learns that Vallenar has already figured out they are after a meteorite. Glinn lies and tells Vallenar they are struggling to unearth the meteorite. When Vallenar boldly asks about the man he sent to the island, Glinn lies and tells him the man is in the brig on the Rolvaag, assuring Vallenar will not fire on the ship while they are loading the meteorite. As they talk, Glinn has a few of his men dive under the Almirante Ramirez for an unknown reason.

Rolvaag, 11:50 p.m. McFarlane talks to Lloyd on the phone, hoping to keep him reassured. Afterward, however, McFarlane realizes Lloyd was on a plane during the conversation.



Almirante Ramirez, July 25, Midnight. Vallenar watches the Rolvaag, ignoring orders from his superiors to return to base.

Rolvaag, Midnight. McFarlane goes to the bridge and discovers that Vallenar has locked his weapons on the ship. Britton has decided to abandon the mission and leave immediately. Glinn arrives and tells Britton that she cannot leave. Glinn then has one of his men sit at the unknown computer and type in some commands that take the bridge's control of the engines away. Britton cannot leave even if she wants to. When Britton agrees to stay, Glinn returns power to the bridge. At that moment, Lloyd arrives by helicopter.

Rolvaag, 12:30 a.m. McFarlane escorts Lloyd to the bridge, where Lloyd immediately attempts to take control of the situation. Glinn shuts him down, banishing him to his office where he has turned off the power and the phones. Both Britton and McFarlane back Glinn.

## Chapters 44-52 Analysis

The electrical discharge from the meteorite that killed Timmer is unexplainable. The scientists have no clue what caused it or if it will happen again. This situation increases the tension at the idea of moving the meteorite on board the Rolvaag. To increase the tension, Vallenar has returned and has turned his guns on the Rolvaag. Britton wants to cut their losses and leave, but Glinn keeps pushing her to stay, finally taking control away. This shows the reader that Glinn has thought of everything and has made provisions to keep control over everything, even in the event that the crew should turn on him. This goes to Glinn's inability to accept failure.

Glinn asks McFarlane if the meteorite will hurt anyone on board the ship, giving the impression that he is open to ending the mission. However, the reader will recall that Glinn's company has never had a failure and the reader is pretty sure Glinn is not willing to make this his first failure. This predicts a moment in the plot when it will become necessary to face failure, leaving the reader wondering how Glinn will react.

Vallenar is ignoring orders to return to base. This implies to the reader that he is willing to place his career at stake to do what he believes is right. Vallenar is also not afraid to let Glinn know he sent a spy to the island, showing both Glinn and the reader how much that one man means to him. This could be motive for Vallenar to do something unexpected and dangerous against the Rolvaag.



# Chapters 53-59

## Chapters 53-59 Summary

Rolvaag, 1:45 a.m. Britton argues with herself over her decision to bow to Glinn's will, hoping he does whatever necessary to get them out of this mess. Howell, the chief mate, promises to stand by Britton no matter what she does.

Rolvaag, 2:50 a.m. Lloyd is angry and humiliated about the way Glinn treated him even as he understands that Glinn is doing what is necessary to make sure Lloyd gets his meteorite.

Rolvaag, 3:40 a.m. The meteorite is nearly inside the cargo hold. However, the wind has increased and is knocking the ship up against the bluffs. Not only this, but the fog is lifting, leaving them visible to Vallenar. Finally the meteorite is in the hold and Britton is given the green light to leave.

Almirante Ramirez, 3:55 a.m. Vallenar becomes suspicious when the Rolvaag turns off her lights and then begins to leave. This, to Vallenar, is confirmation that Timmer is dead. Vallenar gives orders to his men to follow and open fire on the Rolvaag.

Rolvaag, 3:55 a.m. Puppup gives the Rolvaag crew directions through a reef filled channel as Glinn and his men use electronic countermeasures to defend the Rolvaag against the Almirante Ramirez's guns. The Rolvaag takes one serious hit on an upper deck, but as they clear the channel, Glinn activates explosives placed on the Almirante Ramirez's propellers, leaving it dead in the water.

Rolvaag, 4:00 a.m. Power is restored to Lloyd's offices, softening Lloyd's anger as he realizes the worst is over and he has his meteorite.

Almirante Ramirez, 4:10 a.m. Vallenar orders his men to dive under the ship, check the damage, and repair it with spare parts from a propeller Vallenar smuggled aboard. The men protest because of the danger of the mission, but Vallenar insists.

## Chapters 53-59 Analysis

Glinn has humiliated both of the most powerful people aboard ship, Britton and Lloyd, establishing himself as the supreme commander, the one who makes all the final decisions. This sets a dangerous precedent, suggesting to the reader that Glinn has the final say and his decisions might not be what is best for all on board the Rolvaag. However, Glinn does successfully rid them of the Almirante Ramirez and get them safely out of the bay around Isla Desolacion.

Vallenar proves himself to be a stubborn and angry man. However, his motives in following and firing upon the Rolvaag are not clear at this point. It seems he is not



willing to quit, however, when he orders his men to place themselves at risk to repair his destroyed propellers. The only question remaining is whether he is fixing the ship to save them from being stranded, or if he intends to continue following the Rolvaag. Vallenar's concern for Timmer seems excessive, especially when he places the lives of his other men at risk, leaving the reader curious about their relationship.



# Chapters 60-68

## Chapters 60-68 Summary

Rolvaag, 7:55 a.m. Manuel Garza leads a group of men into the cargo hold to finish welds on the cradle that holds the meteorite. Just as the welds are completed, the ship takes a hard wave and tilts. Instantaneously, the meteorite emits an electrical charge.

Rolvaag, 8:00 a.m. Lloyd is on the bridge to apologize to Glinn and finds the crew tensely awaiting the moment they will cross into international waters and safety from Vallenar. At that moment, Glinn breaks out a bottle of champagne. However, the radar picks up a ship following them whose heading seems proof that it is Vallenar. A few minute later, a vibration shakes the ship that brings with it a momentary disruption of the electronics on the bridge.

Almirante Ramirez, 8:30 a.m. Vallenar rushes to catch up with the Rolvaag with a frightened crew.

Rolvaag, 9:20 a.m. McFarlane and Amira interview Garza to find out what happened. McFarlane insists someone had to have touched the meteorite, but Garza insists no one did.

Rolvaag, 10:00 a.m. Glinn tries to puzzle out Vallenar's motives as the radar indicates he has passed the international water border and has continued toward them. Glinn insists he must be confused about his location and has the crew lower the jamming systems. However, Vallenar continues on his course.

Rolvaag, 10:20 a.m. Glinn tells Britton that the position of the Almirante Ramirez has cut off all their avenues of escape. Glinn instructs Britton to head to the Ice Limit, where they might find cover behind an ice island.

Almirante Ramirez, 11:00 a.m. One of Vallenar's officers questions his decision to continue following the Rolvaag against orders from their superiors. Vallenar shoots and kills him on the bridge and orders a new man to take his place. These other men choose to follow orders.

Rolvaag, 11:30 a.m. Britton asks Glinn what they will do when the Almirante Ramirez moves in close enough to fire on them. Glinn abruptly leaves the bridge after asking Britton to trust him.

Rolvaag, 12:30 p.m. Glinn returns to the bridge with the information that Timmer was Vallenar's son. They debate going to the Ice Limit, but Britton finally gives in and gives the order.



## Chapters 60-68 Analysis

The meteorite goes off again, but this time Garza swears no one touched it. This leaves both McFarlane, Amira, and the reader wondering what caused it to go off. It appears that as long as no one knows what causes this electrical charge to be released, the entire ship remains in danger.

At the same time the unknown is going on with the meteorite, the bridge must concern themselves with a rogue battleship that is following them. Britton is frightened of what will happen when the destroyer approaches them with its array of weapons because the Rolvaag has no weapons outside of the few defensive weapons Glinn had installed. Tension rises and both the reader and Britton are left wondering if they will survive this trip.



# Chapters 69-77

## Chapters 69-77 Summary

Rolvaag, 2:00 p.m. McFarlane and Amira view the security tape of the cargo room at the moment of the electrical discharge over and over. The answer to what caused it seems to allude them. However, McFarlane suddenly realizes that the meteorite was touched by water at the moment of discharge. This inspires him to realize it is not touch, but the salt in a person's sweat that causes the discharge.

Almirante Ramirez, 2:45 p.m. The storm increases its power on the sea as the Almirante Ramirez comes within sight of the Rolvaag. The ship seems in danger of falling apart, but Vallenar insists they stay on course. Vallenar orders that they open fire on the Rolvaag.

Rolvaag, 3:30 p.m. McFarlane and Amira cover the meteorite with waterproof tarps. McFarlane and Amira share a romantic moment that is interrupted by the sounds of the meteorite's cradle beginning to break apart.

Rolvaag, 3:30 p.m. The bridge responds to the attack by the Almirante Ramirez. There is minor damage on the deck. Glinn tells Britton to cut the engines and pretend the ship is crippled. As she does, McFarlane bursts into the room and tells them the meteorite is breaking free.

Rolvaag, 3:55 p.m. Glinn listens to McFarlane's story and then sends Garza to the cargo hold with a team to reinforce the welds.

Rolvaag, 5:00 p.m. They approach the Ice Limit. Glinn instructs Britton to move between two ice islands and hide behind the larger of the two. As Britton agrees, the Rolvaag is hit by two explosions.

Rolvaag, 5:10 p.m. Britton checks the status of the ship and learns the engine room has been hit. Garza calls Glinn to tell him he is having trouble repairing the meteorite's cradle.

Almirante Ramirez, 5:15 p.m. Vallenar gives orders to follow the Rolvaag into the Ice Limit despite the dangers.

Rolvaag, 5:20 p.m. Britton maneuvers her ship behind the ice island, aware that once the forward movement of the ship ends they will be dead in the water. The destroyer follows them behind the ice island and prepares to fire. However, a piece of ice falls from the island, creating a wave that capsizes and sinks the Almirante Ramirez. Glinn has sent men to the island to set off explosions that causes the ice to fall.





## Chapters 69-77 Analysis

As Vallenar draws closer to the Rolvaag, McFarlane and Amira discover what causes the meteorite to send off an electrical charge. Even though they now know how to stop this from occurring, they do not know why this happens, leaving one last unknown to dangle over the heads of all involved in its recovery. Then the meteorite begins shaking loose from its cradle due to damage that occurred during the last electrical discharge. This leaves the reader aware that all of Britton's fears might come true, that the meteorite might come loose and break through the ship's hold.

Vallenar draws close and fires on the ship multiple times, causing catastrophic damage to the engines, leaving the Rolvaag dead in the water. However, Glinn is finally able to sink the Almirante Ramirez, saving the Rolvaag from sinking due to missile attack. Unfortunately, now the reader is concerned about what will happen to the ship without engines in a stormy, ice filled sea.



# Chapters 78-85

## Chapters 78-85 Summary

Rolvaag, 5:40 p.m. Britton orders her communications officer to radio for help. Lloyd worries about his meteorite.

Rolvaag, 5:45 p.m. Britton talks to the officials in South Georgia, but learns they cannot offer help until the storm abates. This leaves the Rolvaag dead in the water and drifting in high seas.

Rolvaag, 6:40 p.m. Britton becomes aware that every time the Rolvaag hits a wave, the meteorite is causing it to have trouble recovering. Garza radios to say he does not believe he and his team can stabilize the meteorite. Britton orders that the dead man switch be activated. Lloyd argues and McFarlane backs him up.

Rolvaag, 7:10 p.m. Britton explains to everyone that the ship will break in two if the meteorite is left aboard. Britton says their only chance of survival is using the dead man switch. Finally both McFarlane and Lloyd agree. However, Glinn refuses and he is the only one with the codes. Britton orders everyone aboard to abandon ship.

Rolvaag, 7:35 p.m. Glinn rushes to the cargo hold, determined to succeed where Garza failed. Glinn believes the Rolvaag will survive, but everything he tries fails. Britton follows him and tries to talk him into leaving. Unfortunately, the meteorite falls from its cradle and breaks through the Rolvaag's hold.

Drake Passage, 7:55 p.m. McFarlane is in a lifeboat with Amira, Lloyd, Howell, and more than a dozen others. They are being tossed wildly on the waves and another of the four boats disappears. Amira gives McFarlane the cd with all the test results for the meteorite on it and makes him promise to continue studying it. Howell turns the lifeboats to an ice island and orders everyone to abandon the boats and get onto the island.

Drake Passage, July 26, 11:00 a.m. McFarlane awakes and finds Amira beside him. Aware that they are suffering from hypothermia, McFarlane attempts to get Amira up and moving. Unfortunately, Amira dies moments before rescue arrives.

South Georgia Island, July 29, 12:20 p.m. Lloyd is in an infirmary hut, regretting his actions in retrieving the meteorite when McFarlane comes to visit. McFarlane tells Lloyd that he believes the meteorite was some kind of giant seed that they have just planted in the ocean.

## Chapters 78-85 Analysis

The Rolvaag is dead in the water and rescue cannot reach them. At the same time, the meteorite is moving almost freely in the cargo hold, causing terrible pressure on the

ship's structure, a fact that will more than likely lead to the sinking of the ship. It is time to use the dead man switch, but when it comes down to it, Glinn cannot do something that will lead to failure of the assigned task. Glinn refuses and places his own life in danger in order to stop a failure. This inability to accept failure leads to Glinn and Britton's deaths on board the Rolvaag.

McFarlane escapes and promises Amira he will continue to study the meteorite. In doing this, McFarlane has discovered that the meteorite is some sort of seed that they have not only planted, but is sprouting miles under the sea. This is a shocking ending that plays with the theme of the unknown, leaving the survivors struggling with the aftermath of their actions.



# Characters

## Dr. Sam McFarlane

Dr. Sam McFarlane is a scientist who specializes in meteorites. McFarlane has found several meteorites in the past with his partner, Nestor Masangkay. However, during one such recovery, McFarlane panicked and made a deal with a Japanese businessman that caused an irreparable split in his relationship with his partner. This deal was based on McFarlane's theory that some meteorites could come from outside the known solar system. McFarlane believed that the meteorite in question was one of these and that the loss of funding would cause it to be left behind. McFarlane thought he was protecting the meteorite by selling it to the highest bidder, but all he did was ruin his own reputation and tarnish his partner's.

McFarlane is given a second chance when Palmer Lloyd approaches him, asking him to help recover an unexpectedly large meteorite discovered by his ex-partner Masangkay. McFarlane dives into this opportunity, in part for the opportunity to clear his name and pay off debts. However, as the project continues, McFarlane becomes convinced that this meteorite is an example of his theory and he wants nothing more than to prove to the scientific community that he knew what he was talking about all along. This time, however, McFarlane is cautious about his enthusiasm, trying not to jump to conclusions that could cause him to make another terrible mistake.

## Palmer Lloyd

Palmer Lloyd is a very rich man who grew up in a poor, lower middle class home. Lloyd has worked hard to make his money so that he can sit back and enjoy his hard work. Lloyd has become fascinated with all things scientific, especially things that are unusual and can be placed on exhibit. Lloyd has decided to create his own museum that will have items that are far superior to items on display at museums such as the New York Museum of Natural History. One of the displays that Lloyd has purchased for this museum is the intertwined skeletons of a Tyrannosaurus attacking a Triceratops.

Lloyd learns of the meteorite Masangkay found when one of his employees buys Masangkay's papers in Chile. Lloyd believes this large meteorite would be the perfect centerpiece for his new museum. Lloyd hires McFarlane and EES to help him recover the meteorite and return it to New York. Lloyd pays millions of dollars for this expedition, but he believes it is worth it to have the largest mass of metal known to man. Lloyd wants to be a part of the expedition and he comes to the ship as often as he can, often interfering with the operation. In the end, Lloyd is on the ship when the decision has to be made to release the meteorite into the water or face going down with the ship. Too late, Lloyd realizes he has made the wrong decisions all along.



## Eli Glinn

Eli Glinn is the head of EES. Glinn was once a commander in the military and faced the loss of his entire platoon short of one man after he was given inaccurate information. This fact has led Glinn to run a business in which all potential problems are foreseen and planned for. Glinn does not believe in failure and does all he can to avoid failure. In fact, Glinn refuses to take cases that are sure to end in failure.

Glinn takes on the recovery mission of the meteorite with the idea that he and his team have planned for every possible scenario and come up with solutions for each. Glinn believes there is no chance of failure in this mission. When they arrive at the site and unbury the meteorite, everyone is surprised to find that the meteorite is smaller than expected, but weighs more. Glinn continues with the mission anyway, placing the meteorite on the ship. However, Glinn has underestimated the power and impact of the meteorite on the ship and places everyone's lives at risk when he refuses to jettison the meteorite even when it is clearly placing the ship at risk.

## Comandante Emiliano Vallenar

Comandante Vallenar is a disgraced comandante with the Chilean navy. Vallenar is in the customs office on Puerto Williams when Glinn, McFarlane, and Captain Britton arrive to make arrangements to mine ore on Isla Desolacion. Vallenar suspects that the Rolvaag is after gold on Isla Desolacion that belongs to Chile. Vallenar follows the Rolvaag to Isla Desolacion and makes veiled threats against them as he sits and watches their mining operation.

As Vallenar watches the Rolvaag, he begins investigating possible reasons why they might be on that isolated island. Finally, Vallenar discovers that they are after a meteorite. Vallenar sends his son, who happens to be an officer on his ship, to the island to investigate further. When his son fails to return, Vallenar demands to Glinn that he be returned. When the Rolvaag leaves Isla Desolacion without returning his son, Vallenar assumes he is dead and he decides he must sink the ship in revenge. Vallenar follows the Rolvaag all the way to the Ice Limit, attempting to take it down. Vallenar manages to damage the Rolvaag's engines. However, when it comes time for the kill, Vallenar's ship is sunk by falling ice.

## Dr. Rachel Amira

Rachel Amira is a mathematician who works for EES. Rachel is a young, beautiful woman who happens to have an amazing intelligence. Amira once had an affair with Glinn, but Glinn ended the relationship when it got good because he was afraid it would eventually fail and he cannot deal with failure. When EES takes on the meteorite mission, Amira is assigned to be McFarlane's assistant, to watch him and report to Glinn. Amira quickly falls in love with McFarlane and refuses to continue with the reports.



Amira and McFarlane have a brief affair that grows intense as they work together to figure out what causes the meteorite to emit powerful bouts of electricity. McFarlane and Amira stay together through the sinking of the ship. However, Amira does not survive exposure to the freezing temperatures and dies of hypothermia as the book comes to its startling conclusion.

## **Captain Sally Britton**

Captain Sally Britton is an experienced oil tanker captain. However, one of Britton's ships grounded itself when her chief mate did not follow her instructions. Britton was intoxicated at the time and this led to a stint in rehab, ending in her inability to find another job. At the same time, Britton has been fighting for custody of her young daughter. When Glinn comes to Britton and offers her the helm of the Rolvaag, Britton jumps at the chance to clear her name. Britton is a strong, confident captain who gets the Rolvaag to Isla Desolacion without a problem. However, when the ship is under attack by a rogue Chilean destroyer, Glinn takes control. Britton finds herself trusting Glinn, placing her life and all of those aboard ship in his hands. However, this proves to be a mistake when Glinn cannot bring himself to jettison the meteorite at a critical moment.

## **Manuel Garza**

Manuel Garza is Eli Glinn's right-hand man. Garza is the only survivor of the disaster that took Glinn's entire platoon while he was in the military. Now Garza works for EES, helping Glinn with whatever he needs, including working to brace the meteorite in the hold of the Rolvaag even after the meteorite emitted a powerful electric pulse that killed all his men and left him mortally wounded. Garza is a strong, determined man who does all he can for Glinn, but in the end he chooses to save himself and his men despite the fact that this goes in direct opposition to Glinn's desires.

## **Chief Mate Victor Howell**

Chief Mate Victor Howell is Britton's chief mate on the Rolvaag. Howell is a fiercely loyal officer who backs Britton up every time Glinn attempts to take control of the Rolvaag. When the ship is disabled and they are forced to abandon ship, Howell takes control of the lifeboats. Howell manages to get the survivors to an ice island where they wait for rescue. Few of the survivors make it, but Howell is one of those survivors.

## **Eugene Rochefort**

Eugene Rochefort is EES's chief engineer, the man who designed the cradle in which the meteorite would rest while on board the Rolvaag. Rochefort also made the decision as to how to lift the meteorite out of its hole on the island and to move it to the ship. However, Rochefort underestimates how many jacks it will take to lift the meteorite.



When one section of jacks fail, Rochefort volunteers to release the hydraulic fluid from those jacks to help them relax so they can add more jacks and start again. However, when the jacks begin to fall, the meteorite is knocked off balance and Rochefort is crushed by the meteorite, as is a man who had gone to help him. Glinn announces that these deaths were expected and do not change their mission.

## **Nestor Massangkay**

Nestor Masangkay is McFarlane's ex-partner. Masangkay found reference to the meteorite on Isla Desolacion in books and decided to go to the island himself to investigate. Masangkay is alone when he finds the meteorite. It is raining and there is some lightening when Masangkay uncovers a section of the meteorite. Masangkay touches the meteorite and is immediately blown out of his newly dug hole and disintegrated as though he were hit by lightening. Masangkay's body is found by Puppup, a local Indian who often explores the area. Masangkay's diary and equipment is taken by Puppup and sold on the main island, eventually reaching Lloyd. It is this discovery that brings the Lloyd party to Isla Desolacion to recover the meteorite.



# Objects/Places

## Meteorite

Masangkay finds an exceptionally large meteorite on an isolated island off the coast of Chile. This meteorite is red, has an extremely high density, and is of a material man has never seen before. McFarlane believes it is from somewhere outside our own solar system.

## Jacks

EES uses more than three hundred jacks to lift the meteorite out of the hole it has been in since it landed on earth. At first the team used too few and a section of them failed, causing the deaths of Rochefort and Evans.

## Storage Containers

Eli has placed a number of old appearing containers on the deck of the Rolvaag that are meant to appear to be carrying materials for mining. However, these containers really contain equipment and labs for recovering the meteorite.

## Electron Microprobe

McFarlane uses an electron microprobe to get examples of the meteorite to do tests on. This is used as a last resort when it turns out the meteorite cannot be drilled or otherwise manipulated to provide a sample.

## CD

Amira gives McFarlane a CD that contains all the test results from tests run on the meteorite. McFarlane uses this to continue puzzling out the nature of the meteorite.

## Override Computers

Glinn has placed computers in the cargo hold and on the Rolvaag's bridge so that he might override Britton's control of the ship in moments of crisis. These computers also control the dead man switch that will jettison the meteorite from the ship if necessary.





## **Exocets**

Exocets are missiles the Almirante Ramirez carries that have a range of twenty-five miles with the use of radar. Vallenar uses these missiles to attack the Rolvaag.

## **ECM**

EES has placed ECM, Electronic Countermeasures, on the Rolvaag to protect it from possible attack from hostiles. This system jams other ships radars and has a set of guns that fire missiles out of the air to protect the ship.

## **EES**

EES, Effective Engineering Solutions, Inc, is the company owned by Eli Glinn. EES specializes in solving unique engineering problems and analyzing major failures. Lloyd hires Glinn's company to recover the meteorite.

## **Rolvaag**

The Rolvaag is an oil tanker that EES modifies to carry the meteorite from Chile to New York. The Rolvaag is brand new, but is modified to appear old in order to reduce suspicion from foreign governments.

## **Almirante Ramirez**

The Almirante Ramirez is the destroyer piloted by Comandante Vallenar. The Ramirez is old and smelly, a disgrace to Vallenar's years of service. However, the Ramirez is up to the challenge Vallenar puts her to in chasing the Rolvaag.

## **Lloyd Museum**

The Lloyd Museum is a museum that Palmer Lloyd is building to display his personal collection of natural and historic artifacts.

## **Jaws of Hanuxa**

The Jaws of Hanuxa are twin volcanoes on Isla Desolacion that are said by the Yaghan Indians to be the jaws of the son of the god Yekaijiz, who was imprisoned in the island for killing his brother.

## **Isla Desolacion**

Isla Desolacion is a remote island in Cape Horn where the red meteorite is discovered and later recovered.



# Themes

## Science and the Unknown

The conflict that drives this novel is the discovery and recovery of a unique meteorite. This meteorite is larger than most known meteorites. Most large meteorites fall apart as they enter the earth's atmosphere. Once they land, most meteorites begin to deteriorate as they sit underground for thousands or millions of years. Therefore, most meteorites are relatively small when they are discovered. The meteorite on Isla Desolacion is more than twenty feet in length and weighs thousands of tons. This makes the meteorite the largest meteorite ever discovered and possibly the heaviest object ever moved.

Several of the characters in this novel are scientists. McFarlane is a specialist in meteorites. McFarlane has had the theory for many years that it is possible a meteorite from outside the known solar system might someday be discovered. The meteorite on Isla Desolacion seems to fulfill this theory. The meteorite is red, an unusual color because no metal known to man is red. The meteorite is also extremely dense, placing it so high on the table of elements that it exists in a section known as an island of stability.

McFarlane is so excited about the idea of having a meteorite from outside the known solar system that he nearly allows that excitement to overrule his common sense. McFarlane has several chances to stop the expedition and keep the meteorite on dry ground, but he passes them up. Eventually the meteorite is placed on the ship. The weight of it puts the ship in danger as they find themselves tossed by huge waves without the benefit of engines. Finally McFarlane agrees that they should use the dead man's switch to rid them of the meteorite, but by then it is too late.

## Greed

Palmer Lloyd is a man who has fought hard to get what he once. As a child he was poor, but was taught the value of hard work. Lloyd worked hard and soon became a multi-billionaire, able to buy and sell anything he could possibly want. Lloyd has a fascination with museum quality artifacts, such as dinosaur bones and Egyptian artifacts. It is this fascination that leads to the creation of the Lloyd Museum, a museum that is destined to be far superior to national museums such as the New York Museum of Natural History.

Lloyd has decided he wants a significantly large meteorite that has been discovered in the Cape Horn region of Chile. Lloyd pledges a sure one hundred and fifty million dollars to pay for the expedition, with the understanding that he might have to pay twice that amount. Lloyd is willing to do this because it will provide him with the world's largest meteorite for his new museum. Lloyd is willing to place multiple lives at risk for this item, including his own. In fact, Lloyd is openly against a dead man switch from the beginning



of the expedition even when it is explained to him that the switch would only be used in cases of extreme emergency.

Lloyd is a man who is used to having everything he wants. Lloyd pushes everyone around him to do what he wants, including Glinn, despite the fact he is paying Glinn to move the meteorite at great risk to Glinn and his employee's safety. Lloyd is a greedy man who is willing to do anything for this meteorite, and it is this greed that pushes the conflict within this novel's plot.

## Fear of Failure

Eli Glinn is a military man who once lost a large number of soldiers under his command because of a mistake in intelligence. From that day on, Glinn swore he would never face failure again. Glinn began a company that specializes in figuring out what causes failure and preventing it from ever happening again. Glinn's company has never experienced a failure because Glinn carefully reviews each case before agreeing to take it on.

Glinn takes on the recovery of the Isla Desolacion meteorite because he has reviewed it and believes he has predicted and planned for every possible scenario. Glinn seems to know what caused each setback before it happens and has a solution for the problem. Glinn even factors in several deaths in his plan, assuming a number of people will have to die because of the nature of the expedition. Glinn is carefully prepared and believes there will be no surprises in this expedition.

The first mistake Glinn makes is misunderstanding the motives of a Chilean naval officer's attachment to an officer he sent to Isla Desolacion to investigate the Rolvaag's mission. Glinn assumes the man is a good officer and will not break the rules by following the Rolvaag into international waters, but he is wrong. Glinn's mistake causes the Rolvaag to suffer catastrophic engine failure, leaving it dead in the water. Glinn's second mistake is to refuse to use the dead man switch that will send the meteorite to the bottom of the ocean. Glinn sees jettisoning the meteorite as failure and he refuses to fail, even though the captain assures him the shifting weight of the meteorite will cause the Rolvaag to sink. Glinn goes to a watery grave because of his fear of failure.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The narrating character shifts from scene to scene and chapter to chapter, but the authors tend to stick with the same five or six main characters as their narrators. The point of view utilized in this novel allows the reader to know the thoughts and emotions of the characters that have the ability to influence the actions of the plot. This includes McFarlane, the meteorite scientist, Glinn, the head of EES, the captain of the *Rolvaag*, and the rogue captain of the *Almirante Ramirez*.

The point of view of this novel is common in modern bestselling novels. In some cases, this type of multiple viewpoint can be confusing to the reader, but here the authors are careful to make sure the reader knows who is speaking, what their viewpoint of the plot is, and how their viewpoint impacts the development of the novel's plot. The authors use point of view carefully and in ways that benefit the plot, not distract from it.

## Setting

The novel begins in New York where Palmer Lloyd is building a new museum overlooking the Hudson. This setting is familiar to the reader, a place of comfort and security. The setting then moves to the open ocean and then to the isolated island of *Isla Desolacion*. This setting is at the edge of Cape Horn, an area of dangerous seas and unpredictable, cold weather. This setting is dangerous, leaving the reader with the impression of an opposite feeling to the New York setting. This place is cold, unwelcoming, and dangerous.

The settings of this novel fit the story line very well. The setting of New York is familiar to the reader, making them feel a sense of security that is similar to the sense of security that Lloyd feels even as he plans this dangerous expedition. Later, on the open sea and then on *Isla Desolacion*, the reader begins to feel uncomfortable even as the characters continue to feel secure. It is the feeling of being uncomfortable that adds to the danger and suspense that is being built in the plot of the novel. Therefore the setting of the novel supports and encourages the themes of the novel.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. The novel contains very little slang, but it does include language that is common in engineering and scientific professions. These words are often explained within the text, reducing the chance that they might confuse the reader. There are also foreign words and phrases in the text that are introduced as the plot moves to Chile. These phrases are also often explained within the text and support the nationality of many of the characters in the novel.



The language of the novel supports the characters that populate its pages. Due to the fact that many of the characters are highly educated and work in these scientific professions, the language authenticates their roles and adds to the scientific themes of the novel. The foreign phrases also support the authenticity of the characters and give a sense of reality to the novel. It is possible some of these phrases might confuse the inexperienced reader, but they do not appear in the text often enough to keep a reader from understanding the overall themes of the novel; therefore, the language of this novel works well with its plot.

## Structure

The novel is divided into multiple chapters that are titled by the location the in which the following scene takes place, as well as the time and date. The titles of the chapters are similar to titles that might be found on entries in a ship captain's log. The chapters vary in length, some more than ten pages in length while others are as short as a single page. The novel is written in both exposition and dialogue, including some passages of internal dialogue as a number of the characters attempt to work out scientific puzzles or interpersonal relationships.

The novel has one main plot and multiple subplots. The main plot of the novel follows the discovery of the Isla Desolacion meteorite and its attempted recovery. One main plot follows the relationship that begins to build between McFarlane and Amira while another explores a possible romantic relationship between Glinn and Britton. Another subplot follows the bitter investigation headed by Vallenar as he attempts to stop the Americans from stealing gold from his beloved country of Chile. These subplots and multiple others come to a satisfying conclusion slightly before or as the main plot is resolved.



## Quotes

"Palmer Lloyd loved many rare and valuable things, but one of the things he loved most was Thomas Cole's painting Sunny Morning on the Hudson River."

The Hudson River Valley, June 3, 10:45 a.m., p. 22

"I want that meteorite. Your job, Mr. Glinn, is to make sure I get it."

The Hudson River Valley, June 3, 10:45 a.m., p. 30

"That's right. EES has never failed. Never. It is our trademark."

New York City, June 4, 11:45 a.m., p. 37

"She smiled. And, if Glinn paid attention to such things, he would have insisted that the smile was distinctly beautiful."

Millburn, New Jersey, June 9, 2:45 p.m., p. 61

"Vallenar paid them no mind. He was leaning against a .50-caliber machine gun mounted to the rail, but it was a posture of false ease."

Rolvaag, 2:50 p.m., p. 135

"It seems impossible for any known alloy to be deep red. Yellow, white, orange, purple, gray—but not red."

Isla Desolacion, 9:55 a.m., p. 172

"But there's a theory that way, way up on the periodic table might be a group of elements that are stable—that don't decay. An island of stability."

Isla Desolacion, July 18, 9:00 a.m., p. 203

"With an oddly delicate motion, Rocco drew the cuff of his shirt across the dangling eyeball, wiping it clean."

Isla Desolacion, July 21, 12:05 a.m., p. 274

"Vallenar ignored them. He did not care what they thought: he cared only that they obeyed. And for now, they were obeying."

Almirante Ramirez, 4:10 a.m., p. 338

"The meteorite went off when that roll brought the water in contact with it."

Rolvaag, 2:00 p.m., p. 377

"You heard her,' McFarlane said. 'It's going to the bottom regardless. The fight's over.'"

Rolvaag, 7:10 p.m., p. 425

"" That thing we just planted at the bottom of the sea. Guess what?... 'It's sprouting.'"  
South Georgia Island, July 29, 12:20 p.m., p. 449



## Topics for Discussion

What is a meteorite? What is significant about finding a meteorite? How much are meteorites worth in monetary value? In scientific value? Which value is more important? Where do meteorites come from? What is McFarlane's theory on meteorites? Why do most scientists think this theory is impossible? Is it? What do scientists know about meteorites? What is dangerous about the unknown? How does the unknown impact the main characters of this novel?

Who is McFarlane? Why did McFarlane sell a meteorite out from under his partner during a funding crisis? What was McFarlane attempting to do? Was he successful? How did this episode impact McFarlane's professional reputation? How did it impact his personal relationships? How did this situation impact McFarlane's decision to take on Lloyd's Desolacion meteorite?

Who is Eli Glinn? Why is Glinn afraid of failure? Is this a professional or personal fear? Why does Glinn take on the expedition to recover the Desolacion meteorite? How did Glinn prepare his team for this recovery? How does Glinn plan to move the meteorite to the ship? Why has Glinn made the ship look old? Why does Glinn want to reduce curiosity in their expedition? What is Glinn afraid the Chilean government would do if they knew their true mission? Why is Glinn drawn to Britton? How are they alike? How are they different? Where might their relationship have gone if things had ended differently?

Who is Palmer Lloyd? Where did Lloyd get all his money? What does he use his money for? For what reason? Why would Lloyd want to build a museum? Is this a business venture or something more? Why does Lloyd continuously question Glinn? What does Lloyd want from Glinn? Why does Lloyd become angry when Glinn refuses to listen to his opinions? Should Glinn have humored Lloyd? What might have happened if Glinn had allowed Lloyd to have his own way? Could they have avoided the tragic ending?

Who is Sally Britton? Why was Britton black listed as a tanker captain? Was this deserved? Why does Britton decide to take the helm of the Rolvaag? How does Glinn talk her into this assignment? Why does Britton allow Glinn to take over the bridge when the Almirante Ramirez attacks? Does Britton trust Glinn? Why? Why does Britton follow Glinn to the meteorite holding tank at the end? Why does Britton not leave? Did Britton do the right thing? Could Britton have prevented the sinking of her ship?

Who is Emiliano Vallenar? Why does he become interested in the Rolvaag and her mission? Why does Vallenar send Timmer to Isla Desolacion? What does Vallenar think happened to Timmer on the island? What really happened to Timmer? Why does Vallenar chase the Rolvaag into international waters? What would happen to Vallenar if his superiors learn of his actions? Why does Vallenar kill one of his officers on the deck?



of the Ramirez? Why does the rest of the crew follow Vallenar's orders? Is what eventually happens to the Ramirez Vallenar's fault?

Discuss the unknown. What is unknown about the Desolacion meteorite? Why does this make the meteorite dangerous? Why does Glinn place the meteorite on the Rolvaag without fully understanding how the meteorite killed Timmer? Was this a good decision? Why does the meteorite kill the welders in the hold of the Rolvaag? What does McFarlane finally decide caused this situation? What does this say about the meteorite? What does McFarlane finally decide the meteorite is when all is said and done? What does this say about the actions of the recovery team?