

Line of Fire Study Guide

Line of Fire by W. E. B. Griffin

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Plot Summary

Line of Fire, by W.E.B. Griffin, is one of the series of books in his continuing story of the United States Marines Corps. In this book, he looks at the lives and activities of a variety of characters during the early years of the war in the Pacific. Line of Fire is the fifth book of the series.

In this exciting story, two Marines, Joe Howard and Steven Koffler, are trapped on Baku Island at a Coastwatchers station called Ferdinand Six. They volunteered for a mission to parachute in with a radio since the Coastwatchers are a vital part of the war effort in the Pacific. They will report on Japanese troops, naval and air activity which will be relayed to American troops stationed on other islands in the area. In this way, they have advance knowledge of attacks. Koffler and Howard are in a precarious position because there are no supply deliveries to the island. They live off the supplies they can steal from the Japanese. There is no medical care and their radio is wearing out.

Koffler and Howard have basically been written off by the Coastwatchers organization who feel that it is impossible to deliver supplies to them or to rescue them. However, Brigadier General Fleming Pickering, who is instrumental in the operation that puts the men on the island, is not in agreement. He feels that a Marine never abandons another Marine and refuses to accept the fact that there is no way to rescue Koffler and Howard and send in supplies and a rescue team.

Pickering has Lieutenant Ken "Killer" McCoy formulate a rescue plan. The plan is so dangerous that most people who learn about it consider it to be suicidal, but Pickering, McCoy and their team think they can pull it off. Their team of volunteers is well trained for this operation and flexible enough to adapt to the changes they have to make along the way.

Line of Fire is full of excitement, intrigue and adventure as it follows the actions of the various characters. There is Pick Pickering, the son of Fleming, who is a Naval pilot. He is a brash dare-devil until his friend and fellow pilot, Dick Stecker, is seriously injured while landing a plane at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Then he is afraid to fly, but he is part of the rescue operation. Charley Galloway, an experienced pilot, deals with him and the operation continues.

The book is written in the same style as the other books in the series and has all of the characteristics of other W.E.B. Griffin novels. The novel is rather quick reading and the reader will enjoy the book and find it worth the time.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Line of Fire, by W.E.B. Griffin, is one of the series of books in his continuing story of the United States Marines Corps. In this book, he looks at the lives and activities of a variety of characters during the early years of the war in the Pacific. Line of Fire is the fifth book of the series.

In early 1942, the freighter John T. Rogers Jr. docks at Melbourne. The crates that are unloaded are not looked at for two weeks. They contain twenty thousand calvary sabers. An Australian firm is hired to convert the sabers into machetes.

One hundred of the machetes are requisitioned by First Lieutenant Joseph L. Howard for use in a parachute drop on Buka Island. Sub Lieutenant Jakob Reeves is on Buka, reporting on the Japanese. He is a Coastwatcher and his radio goes off before the invasion. Sergeant Steven M. Koffler and Howard are parachuted in with a replacement radio.

Howard and Reeves build a tree house for an observation post. The men are discussing the supplies that they need which they usually obtain by stealing from the Japanese. They decide who will go to obtain supplies.

Captain Charley Galloway is aboard a R4D heading for Guadalcanal, where they land at Henderson Field. Galloway is warmly greeted by the crew at the airfield. He talks to the people and learns the latest news. He stops to visit with the injured First Lieutenant David Schneider.

As he is talking a siren sounds indicating an attack and many of the planes take to the air.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This first chapter introduces some of the main characters, many of whom are familiar to readers of W.E.B. Griffin novels. Buka Island is the northernmost island in the Solomon Islands. It is occupied by the Japanese but there is a hidden Coastwatchers Station there that monitors and reports on the movements of the Japanese. The Coastwatchers are an Australian organization but there are two Americans who parachute in with a replacement radio. This shows how important the Coastwatchers are to the war effort.

There is an American airfield on Guadalcanal, another island in the Solomon group.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

George Hart is a police officer before he enters the Marine Corps. In boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, he hates his assistant drill instructor, Corporal Clayton C. Warren, who causes bodily injury to many of the recruits.

Lieutenant Commander Eric Feldt is the commanding officer of the Coastwatchers in Queensland, Australia. He is talking to Colonel Lewis R. Mitchell and Major Ed Banning. A message arrives informing them that Mitchell does not take orders from Feldt or Banning. Banning does not like Mitchell because he is always butting in and Banning considers him to be dangerous.

In Washington D.C., Senator Richmond Fowler is in his suite in the Foster Lafayette Hotel when Fleming Pickering arrives with his arm in a cast. He tells Fowler that he wants to get out of the Navy. He thinks he can make a better contribution to the war effort by running his company. While Fowler calls room service, Pickering falls asleep in the chair. Fowler covers him with a blanket and calls Knox. Knox tells him that the decision to release Pickering from his naval duty is up to President Roosevelt.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter introduces other major characters. Eric Feldt is head of the Coastwatchers in Queensland, Australia. The Coastwatchers are an important organization in the war effort and Fleming Pickering realizes this and sees that they have whatever they need. Pickering is a wealthy shipping magnate working for the Secretary of the Navy. He is familiar with the Pacific but suddenly decides that he wants out of the Navy and wants to return to his private company where he can make a better contribution to the war effort. He is trying to use his influential friends to achieve this purpose.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Gunnery Sergeant Ernest Zimmerman arrives to talk to Colonel Carlson. Zimmerman was a China marine with Lieutenant Ken "Killer" McCoy. He is curious about why Carlson wants to talk with him and suspects it has to do with Thomas McCoy, the brother of Ken, who is a big disciplinary problem. Zimmerman finds that he and Sergeant Thomas McCoy are assigned to Guadalcanal. Colonel Carlson, says he thinks Killer McCoy had something to do with the orders and Zimmerman says he thinks it is Big Steven Oblensky who requested the transfer. Zimmerman goes to the brig with McCoy's seabag and tells him to get dressed.

Second Lieutenant Malcolm Pickering and Richard Stecker are in an R4D, flying to the Naval Air Station at Lakehurst, New Jersey. They are coming from Pensacola and on their way to the Grumman plant at Bethpage, Long Island. They miss the bus to New York and have to wait for the next bus or find another way to reach the city.

On Buka Island, Steve Koffler and Ian Bruce spot a squadron of Japanese Betty Bombers. There are thirty-five of them and flying above there are forty Japanese Zeros. Steve writes out his message and then uses his code book to encode it then sends it to Hawaii via the radio. It takes less than a minute to transmit the message, not long enough for the Japanese to locate the transmitter. Miss Patience Witherspoon brings them some food.

Chapter 3 Analysis

More of the main characters are introduced in this chapter. Sergeant Thomas McCoy, the brother of Killer McCoy, is a disciplinary problem for the Marines. He drinks too much and becomes violent, beating up people. Gunnery Sergeant Ernest Zimmerman is a friend of his brother, whom he knows from serving in China. He does what he can to try to control McCoy's behavior. They are both on their way to the MAG-21 on Guadalcanal.

Pick Pickering and Dick Stecker are both Marine Wildcat pilots. Both of their fathers served under General McInerney and both received their flight instruction from the best pilots. Instead of being in the Pacific, they are assigned to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola and deliver Wildcats to different bases. Stecker thinks that General McInerney is behind their assignment.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Fleming Pickering awakens in Senator Fowler's hotel suite in Washington D.C. Fowler tells Pickering that he will see Knox the next day when they will dine with the President. The hotel doctor arrives to tend to Pickering's bandages. He walked out of the hospital where he was supposed to stay for another two weeks. After the doctor leaves, Fowler helps Fleming dress so they can go to dinner. He tells Pickering that he does not think that Frank Knox will release him from the Navy.

Stecker and Pick find a ride from Lakehurst to Manhattan. They are not really going to Long Island that night but to the Foster Park Hotel, one of the hotels in the family chain. The next day they reach Long Island by limousine and taxi. They are waited for at the Grumman plant since they are expected to arrive the previous day. There are orders for them to be in Washington D.C. that day to meet with the Secretary of the Navy.

In Washington, Senator Fowler is informed that their dinner with the President will take place aboard the Presidential yacht, Potomac. A White House car is waiting for them and drives them to the Washington Naval Yard to board the yacht. Admiral Leahy is sitting with the President when they arrive.

Pickering and the President discuss the fact that Pickering wants to leave the Navy and the president tells him that it is impossible. He awards Pickering with the Legion of Merit medal. Pickering is being recommended for promotion to Brigadier General in the Marine Reserves. Just then, Pick is escorted into the room.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Fleming and Fowler discuss Fleming's situation. He wants to leave the Navy and Fowler tells him that Knox will probably not allow him to. They are dining with the President the next evening. Pickering is worried that his son, Pick, will be sent to the Pacific and wants to see him. They discuss the status of Admiral Leahy with Pickering trying to figure out where he fits in.

Pick and Stecker frequently do things their way which often has them explaining their actions to their superiors. Pick is used to the life of the wealthy and doing what he wants, such as spending the night at the New York Hotel instead of going directly to Long Island.

The President tells Fleming that it is impossible for him to leave the Navy. They need his services. Not only that, he receives a Legion of Merit medal and has been recommended for promotion to Brigadier General. He will be in the service for a while.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

On Buka, Steven Koffler is worried about the men who want to steal supplies from the Japanese. They have not returned. He sends another radio transmission about Japanese planes headed for Guadalcanal.

In Washington, the newspaper has a story about Pickering's promotion to Brigadier General and appointment to head the Marine Corps Office of Management Analysis. His new uniforms arrive from Brooks Brothers and he tries them on, as Colonel Rickabee arrives at the suite. He gives Pickering the gun that he left behind when he left the hospital and also his orders, signed by Admiral Leahy. Pickering is to go wherever he needs to with full support.

Ernestine Sage, Bob Kriedler and Ken McCoy meet at the 21 Club in New York. Ken is meeting Ernie's father, Ernest, and says he will not marry Ernie until after the war. Ken has to report to Philadelphia and Ernie plans to go with him. They make plans to have dinner with Ernie's mother.

In Chapter Six, on September 5, 1942, Zimmerman and Thomas McCoy land at Henderson field on Guadalcanal. As soon as they report for duty, the air raid siren sounds.

Major Jake Dillon arrives at Coastwatchers headquarters from Guadalcanal. He talks with Major Ed Banning, an old friend, when Eric Feldt joins them. Dillon tells them of the conditions on Guadalcanal. He is a press agent and is on his way back to the United States.

Ken McCoy arrives at the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia to see Sergeant John M. Moore. Ernie is with him.

After leaving Coastwatchers Headquarters, Jake Dillon stops at the Naval Hospital in Melbourne. He goes to see Barbara Cotter, a nurse, to ring her word about her fiancé, Joe Howard. They have drinks with a group of people.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

When the Marines pull out of the Solomon Islands, they leave the remaining Marines to fend for themselves. There are no supply ships and many of the men on the islands are ill and near starvation. They survive by stealing from the Japanese. Koffler is worried because the group of men sent for supplies has not returned.

Fleming Pickering's promotion is approved and announced. He says that he does not feel like a Brigadier General and he takes exception to come of the statements in the



newspaper story. Colonel Rickabee tells him that some times it is best not to have all of the facts known. He also tells him to be more careful with MAGIC documents and personnel.

Ken McCoy meets Ernestine's parents. Her father and Ken are upset because she wants to have Ken's baby. If anything happens to Ken in the war, she will have the child. Ernest Sage decides that Ken is the sensible one, since he does not agree with Ernie in the matter.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Koffler wakes alarmed because it is strangely quiet. He grabs his gun and runs into the jungle and watches the camp. Then he climbs to the tree house platform where he finds Ian and Patience. They tell him that the remaining people have gone into hiding since they think Lieutenant Reeves and the group who went for food have been captured.

Ken McCoy arrives at Parris Island. Moore is with him. They secure rooms at the Bachelor Officer's Quarters. A friend of McCoy, Sergeant Major Teddy Osgood is there. McCoy is there to recruit men and Osgood tells him about some of the men he should consider, one of whom was Private George Hart.

Hart is summoned at midnight to meet McCoy. He is not told what it is about. McCoy interviews him, asking about his police work and decides he is right for the job. McCoy tells Osgood that they will take Hart with them when they leave.

Intelligence reports that there are thousands of Japanese troops on Guadalcanal about twenty miles from Henderson Field. A battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel "Red Mike" Edson, is sent to check on the situation. The 1st Raider Battalion lands on the island.

Gunnery Sergeant Joseph Johnston decides that he could use Thomas McCoy on Guadalcanal. He has McCoy handle the BAR rifle. They work with the 1st Raider Battalion. They find the reports of the Coastwatchers to be accurate regarding enemy aircraft. When Edson reports to General Vandergrift, he says he wants to recommend McCoy for promotion to staff sergeant.

McCoy, Moore and Hart arrive in Washington D.C. and Hart is introduced to Captain Ed Sessions. Sessions wants Moore to go back to the hospital until his wounds are properly needed. After coffee, they go to the Foster Lafayette Hotel. When there is no answer at the Fowler suite, Hart picks the lock. They find Pickering sick in bed with what they think is malaria. They clean him and call for the hotel doctor. They call for an ambulance to take him to Walter Reed. Before the ambulance arrives, Pickering asks Hart if he wants to work for him and he says yes.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Koffler is surprised and frightened when he wakes and finds the camp quiet and empty. Then he learns from Patience and Ian that the people have gone into hiding. Since the supply raiders have not returned, they are fearful that they have been captured and that the Japanese will come for them.



McCoy is at Parris Island on a recruiting mission. He does not say what he needs the men for, but he selects Private George Hart.

Sergeant Thomas McCoy is able to make an important contribution when the 1st Raider Battalion lands in Guadalcanal. Gunnery Sergeant Joseph Johnston recognizes McCoy's potential and hands him the BAR rifle. He is instrumental in taking out vital Japanese positions and weapons.

Pickering is ill. When McCoy, Moore, Hart and Sessions arrive at Fowler's suite, Pickering does not answer and Hart has to pick the lock. Session immediately recognizes that Pickering is suffering from malaria. He refuses to go to the hospital until the hotel doctor says he will die if he does not. Pickering is stubborn and refuses to admit to how ill he is. He lies there in his own filth rather than call someone for help.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Pick is in San Francisco dining with his grandfather, Andrew Foster. He tells his grandfather that he will be leaving for the VMF-229 fighter squadron on Guadalcanal. Foster tells Pick that he recently had dinner with a squadron commander named Galloway. They receive a call from McCoy saying that Fleming is in Walter Reed Hospital with malaria. Pick says he will tell his mother.

Ken McCoy reports to Temporary Building T-2032 where Colonel Richabee's office is located. Rickabee has orders for Hart to travel San Francisco to tell Pick of his father's condition.

Hart arrives in San Francisco. While looking for Pick, he calls Andrew Foster, who wants to hear the story of what happened to Fleming. Foster tells Hart, who is at the airport, to go to the hangar where the Foster plane is. Pick should be there and that is where Hart finds him. He tells Pick the story and Pick makes hotel arrangements for him.

Hart helps Pick work on Foster's plane. They then take the plane for a test flight, even though Pick has never flown it before. Once he is airborne, the tower tells Pick that they do not have his departure clearance and to land immediately. He does not. They fly and land at his parents' home.

A few hours later, they meet Andrew Foster at the hotel bar. He shows them a newspaper with a picture of his plane flying under the Golden Gate bridge. Lieutenant Stecker walks up and Pick greets him. He tells them to stay in Hart's room. Not only can Pick be in trouble for the Golden Gate bridge escapade, but he and Hart are wearing civilian clothing, an offense for which they can be court-martialed.

Four days after the Lieutenant Colonel's reconnaissance invasion to Guadalcanal, the Japanese begin to move toward Henderson Field. They are led by Major General Kiotake Kawaguchi. Their orders are to take Henderson Field. The Japanese attack begins.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Pick is in San Francisco visiting his grandfather when he learns of his father's illness. He will soon be leaving for Guadalcanal. Hart is sent to tell Pick what happened to his father. It seems that Rickabee wants Hart to learn what kind of man Fleming Pickering is. Pick is up to his usual escapades. He services his grandfather's plane and takes it for a test flight, even though he has never flown it. Even though he is a Naval aviator, he still breaks the rules and law by flying under the Golden Gate bridge on a whim. He seems totally unconcerned about the trouble he causes and the trouble he can get into. He involves George Hart in his escapade.

The Japanese begin their offensive to take Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Edson remembers General Vandergrift saying that the Japanese have not used their forces against him and the 1st Raider Battalion because they correctly surmise that he is just on a reconnaissance mission. They want their troops to be fresh for the attack on Henderson Field.



Chapter 9-10

Chapter 9-10 Summary

Major Jack Stecker, father of Pick, is on Guadalcanal. He meets with Lieutenant Colonel Edson. Edson explains the details of the Japanese attack to Stecker. They both feel that the Japanese stop the attack early because they meet more resistance than they expect.

On September 13, six F4F Wildcats are delivered to Henderson Field making Captain Galloway very happy. They are down to their last three aircraft. They now face the question of how to get the pilots of Guadalcanal, given the situation with the Japanese. They will join the fighting units until they can leave Guadalcanal later that day when an R4D comes for them.

General Vandergrift holds a meeting at Marine Headquarters on Guadalcanal to bring his staff up-to-date on the situation. They discuss where they think the next Japanese attack will take place and how they will handle it.

George Hart stops in St. Louis to see his family on the way back to Washington D.C. While waiting for his father at a local bar, he reads a newspaper about events in the war and learns that the Japanese attack at Bloody Ridge in Guadalcanal has been turned back. It dawns on him that Pick and Dick Stecker will soon be there.

The group on Buka continues their plans to move into hiding. They hide what goods they can near a cave. As they are making their final preparations, Lieutenant Reeves appears. They have found a Japanese ration truck.

When Hart returns to the Fowler suite in Washington, Patricia Pickering answers the door. She apologizes for Pick's antics in San Francisco. She introduces him to Senator Fowler. They tell him that they think that he and Lieutenant Moore should move into the hotel to be closer to Pickering.

In Chapter 10, when Jake Dillon arrives at the Anacostia Naval Air Station, he decides he is not going to stay at the Bachelor Officer Quarters like he is told to. He goes to the Metro-Magnum Studio suite at the Willard Hotel. Technically, he is AWOL, or Absent Without Leave, but he has had a rough two weeks. He has been trying to do a public relations piece called Dillon's heroes on injured military personnel, but cannot get them released from the hospital.

Dillon appears for his appointment with Brigadier General J.J. Steward, who is very concerned over his appearance and health. Steward wants to see the footage of Jake's project as soon as possible. He shows Dillon a story about Thomas McCoy's heroics at "Bloody Ridge" and also orders McCoy temporarily assigned to the public affairs unit for the war bonds tour. They are having him brought to the United States for that purpose and think it will look good if his brother Ken is there to welcome him home.



Dillon goes to the Office of Management Analysis to talk to McCoy and is told that there is no one there by that name. John Moore recognizes him and takes him to see Colonel Rickabee. Dillon finds out that he is at the Office of Naval Intelligence. As they are talking, a Colonel DePress, liaison officer for General MacArthur arrives to see Pickering, who is not in. He has a briefcase chained to his wrist that can only be delivered to Pickering.

Rickabee arrives at Pickering's suite at Walter Reed hospital with Dillon and DePress. Pickering reads the letter from MacArthur and says he will respond by a letter that will be ready before DePress leaves.

Hart is assigned to accompany DePress wherever he wants to go. When they leave, Pickering, Rickabee and Dillon talk. Since the film they are waiting for is at the Willard, Dillon goes to pick it up.

Rickabee tells Pickering that Dillon appeared at the office looking for Ken McCoy for a public relations event. They call General Forrest, a superior of General Stewart's, to keep Ken McCoy out of the public affairs limelight.

When Hart returns, they watch Dillon's film.

Chapter 9-10 Analysis

The Japanese attack on Guadalcanal catches Edson and others by surprise. What surprises them even more is that the Japanese end the attack earlier than they thought they would. Both Jack Stecker and Edson feel that the Japanese do this because they encounter more resistance than they expected.

The VMF-220 at Henderson Field is down to their last three airplanes when six Navy pilots fly in six new planes for them. The troops in Guadalcanal are not well supplied and the six new planes are a big relief for them since they are in the middle of a Japanese attack. The Americans are successful in repelling the Japanese attack.

Things are running out for the group of Baku Island. As they are making their final preparations to go into hiding, Reeves appears. They have taken a Japanese ration truck and are transporting the goods; they were not captured by the Japanese.

Jake Dillon works for Metro-Mangnum Studios and is on leave to the Marines public affairs office. He finds from General Stewart, his superior, that there is a widely circulated story about Thomas McCoy and his heroics on Guadalcanal. Stewart is having McCoy brought to the United States for the war bonds tour. They think it will be a good public relations move for his brother Ken to welcome him home.

Dillon goes to the Office of Management Analysis to see McCoy, not knowing that it is really the Office of Naval Intelligence. He wants Ken McCoy for the publicity event, but Rickabee and Pickering are not in favor of it. They do not want one of their intelligence staff involved in a publicity campaign.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Moore and Hart are sharing a suite at the Foster Lafayette Hotel. Moore returns at midnight with a can of film since he asked for two copies of Dillon's film. He has given one to Dillon and keeps the second for Pickering.

At Henderson Field, Galloway is waiting for the half dozen dive bombers to arrive. These are the Dauntlesses. He goes to talk to Lieutenant Colonel Dawkins and learns that he is on patrol. He introduces himself to the pilots who flew the new Wildcats to Henderson. They are Dick Stecker and Pick Pickering and they are assigned to VMF-229.

Galloway explains how they try to keep the Japanese away from Henderson Field and tells them what the Coastwatchers are. They tell them to get settled and they have the rest of the afternoon off. Dick Stecker asks permission to visit his father and Galloway provides him with a jeep.

Elizabeth Lathrop, the call girl Hart met in San Francisco, is in Washington D.C. She calls him and he goes to her hotel. While they are talking, the house detective knocks on the door. He tells Hart to leave and Elizabeth to check out. Hart shows him his credentials and tells him to leave.

Rickabee is called to a meeting at Pickering's Walter Reed suite. He finds Pickering in uniform when he arrives. Rickabee shows him an order exempting any Office of Management Analysis staff from public relations activity. Pickering has been drinking all morning and is upset about Koffler and Howard on Baku Island. Banning will not do anything to get them off the island. Pickering says he intends to try and he wants to see Ken McCoy.

Ernie Sage arrives at the Foster Lafayette. She and Ken McCoy check into the suite reserved for American Personal Pharmaceuticals. As soon as they are settled in, Ed Sessions arrives and delivers a briefcase full of folders to McCoy. Pickering wants to see them the next morning. When Sessions leaves, Ernie and Ken go out for a walk and meet Beth and Hart. They all return to the suite for a drink.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Pick and Dick Stecker arrive at Henderson Field in the new Wildcats. Galloway is mad at the Navy for putting them in a position of barely having enough fuel to reach Henderson. It seems they were more concerned with getting the aircraft carrier out of the area than they were with making sure the Wildcats were safely within fuel range of Henderson.

Pickering is upset with Banning not doing anything to get Howard and Koffler off Buka Island. He says that Marines always rescue other marines. They do not ever leave anyone behind. Fleming tells Rickabee that he intends to try to somehow rescue Howard and Koffler. He does not like the way Banning has just written them off.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

After Ernie leaves the suite at Walter Reed, the men have their meeting. Everything they discuss is considered Top Secret. Pickering says he plans to rescue Howard and Koffler and at the same time keep the Coastwatchers station, Ferdinand Six, operational. McCoy discusses the possibility of using a submarine to extract the men and to put in a replacement team.

McCoy says that they should consider the fact that the Japanese have broken the code and they know the radio is there. They also know that the radio will not last forever, so they are just waiting. McCoy feels that if they tell Howard and Koffler about a rescue, the Japanese will know and take them before they can reach the beach.

McCoy says they should just land with the replacement team, radios and natives that know the island, and then find Howard and Koffler. They discuss the idea of landing on R4D on the beach. McCoy says they would just leave it there, a concept they are considering for the Mongolian operation that he is working on.

McCoy asks that Hart and Moore go with him and Pickering says he can have whatever he needs. They will go to Australia after doing some research in Florida. McCoy says they can take Ernie and Beth with to Florida. Jake Dillon will go to Australia with them.

In Florida, a local Civil Defense woman tells them about German submarines. From the comment, Ernie decides that they are planning some kind of mission involving submarines and beaches. As they are talking, Captain Al Stein and Lieutenant Mainwaring arrive with crates that the men will be flying back with them. The women will return to Washington via train.

Rickabee tells Pickering that he thinks he is making a mistake with the rescue operation. It will be a waste of men and assets and may cost Pickering his position as head of the Office of Management Analysis. Pickering does not change his mind. Rickabee has the orders for the mission.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Pickering follows through on trying to plan a rescue mission for Koffler and Howard. Rickabee agrees with Banning that any kind of rescue mission is impossible and is very negative during the meeting, despite the plan being offered by McCoy. He also says that Pickering will not be allowed to go to Australia and protests sending Moore there because he is still walking with the use of a cane. It is obvious that Rickabee does not want Pickering to get involved in this operation and he tells Pickering this, and that it might cost him his position as head of the Office of Management Analysis. Pickering



appreciates Rickabee's honesty but does not change his mind. Rickabee hopes that he succeeds.

McCoy's group takes Ernie and Beth with them to Florida. From the comments about German submarines being in the waters off the Florida coast, Ernie begins to surmise that the men are going on a mission involving submarines and landing on beaches. Security is supposed to be a big issue, yet the women are beginning to figure out the nature of the mission.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The MAGIC program involves the intercepting of Japanese encoded messages and making the information available to a select number of people available with the proper clearance. First Lieutenant Hon Son Do and Mrs. Ellen Feller are MAGIC analysts. Ellen Feller is basically a weak analyst and passes on much of Hons work as her own. Banning is aware of this and does not like her. Banning does not like Pickering's lax security procedures. Moore is involved in the MAGIC program and sent to Guadalcanal, which is a big security breach.

The MAGIC radio room is on the roof of the Commerce Hotel in Brisbane. Any MAGIC message is to the cryptographic room in the basement known as the Dungeon. They receive a message from Banning that three officers will be arriving, along with eight hundred pounds of Special Equipment. They decide the men will stay at Water Lily Cottage, the house that Fleming rents in Brisbane.

Hon, known as Pluto, is happy and surprised when John Moore calls and says they need transportation. When Ellen Feller returns to the cottage after shopping, she meets Jake Dillon, who tells her that the men will be staying at the cottage. When she protests, he says that Pickering said they could stay in his rented house. She says they will be crowded but they will manage.

Ellen is curious about what is going on but cannot obtain any information from Moore. Ellen is upset that Dillon will not tell Banning about their purpose for being there when Ellen is there.

McCoy and Banning are sitting in a Brisbane bar. McCoy tells Banning that he agrees with Pickering that Banning is not doing anything to get Howard and Koffler off Buka Island. Banning is not happy when he is told that if he interferes, he will be sent back to the States. Moore joins them along with nurses Barbara Cotter and Joanne Miller. They immediately tell Moore that he has malaria and requires hospitalization. They have Joanne assigned to temporary duty to care for Moore. The men question Barbara about her relationship with Howard.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The MAGIC program is one of the big secrets of the War. It consists of intercepting enacted Japanese messages, decoding them and analyzing the content. The people involved in the program are part of Fleming Pickering's staff.

Pickering is going ahead with the program to rescue Howard and Koffler. His team arrives in Brisbane, where John Moore has worked with the MAGIC staff.



McCoy lets Banning know that he and Pickering think that Banning has not done enough to rescue Howard and Koffler. They seem to feel that Banning will try to interfere with their rescue mission. McCoy says that Pickering is prepared to relieve Banning of his position if he interferes.

The character of Ellen Feller is introduced. She works in the MAGIC program, is not a good analyst and is very snoopy. She wants information on what they are doing and is upset when no one will tell her.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

A doctor arrives at the cottage to examine Moore, who has a relapse of malaria from stopping his Atabrine treatment. He also examines Moore's legs and recommends an exercise regime.

Ellen Feller has to find quarter since she is forced to move out of the cottage. There is no Female Bachelor's Quarters that they can move her into so she is sent to a hotel and told to return to the headquarters office in the morning. Ellen blames Banning for the situation. She decides to talk to General Willoughby.

The nurses, Cotter and Miller, are playing gin rummy with Moore when he receives a phone call summoning him to the dungeon. Barbara drives him to the hotel and they return two hours later. Barbara tells Joanne about seeing General MacArthur.

On Baku, a long encrypted message is received at Ferdinand Six. Only Howard understands the message and writes the answer. They send messages back and forth with headquarters and conclude that they will soon be relieved and assume that it will be with planes and parachutes.

Banning and the group hold a meeting to discuss the mission, called Operation Pickle. They decide to make repeated attempts to land the replacement team and equipment until they succeed either with the submarine or the R4D.

On Espirtu Santo, Dillon is talking to Major Jack Finch and Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Holliman about outfitting an R4D with skis so it can land on sand . He tells them about the Coastwatcher station on Baku and how they plan to extract the people there and send in a replacement team and equipment. Finch volunteers to fly in the R4D. They also talk about using Charley Galloway and decide to talk to him.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The nurses are assigned to care for Moore at Water Lily Cottage. They say he cannot be hospitalized for security reasons. He is also needed to decrypt the MAGIC messages in Hon's absence.

The nurses do not ask many questions about what is going on. When Barbara drives Moore to the dungeon, she tell Joanne about the conversation she overheard between Moore and General MacArthur.

The men obtain enough information to send a message to Baku for the group there to conclude that they are to be relieved.



Operation Pickle is moving forward as they begin to work on the details of the operation. They make arrangements for a R4D specially outfitted with skis and pilots. Major Finch volunteers for the mission but they also decide to talk to Charley Galloway. These men feel that the mission can be accomplished successfully.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Joanne helps Moore do his painful leg exercises, Daphne Farnsworth comes to visit John Moore. She is with Constable Rogers who has orders to place Daphne in the custody of Ed Banning. She signs Daphne into the custody of John after seeing his credentials. After the constable leaves, Barbara finds out that Daphne is pregnant with Steve Koffler's baby.

Moore tells Daphne that they are looking for words they can use to send a message to Steve Koffler. Moore says that he will help her and the baby with money. Joanne finds out that Moore is wealthy and wants to marry her.

Hart is aboard an Australian plane over the Solomon Sea. They are looking for a submarine. The crew begins to toss packages out of the Catalina. These are rafts that inflate. The men jump into a raft. They manage to load the equipment into the rafts. The submarine, Pelican, appears and they board. They shoot holes in the rafts and the submarines dive.

Galloway is talking to Dawkins in the mess at Henderson Field. Dawkins does not quite believe the story Dillon is telling about rescuing the men on Baku. Galloway has agreed to the mission with Finch. They talk about whether or not the skis will work.

Dawkins goes to Vandergrift to complain about the mission Galloway is about to go on. He considers it to be suicidal. Vandergrift tells Dawkins that Pick is Pickering's son so he would not order pilots on suicidal missions. He tells Dawkins that he will forget that they had this conversation.

The MAGIC analysts have a meeting with General MacArthur. They are surprised that he cannot tell who has written which analysis. They seem to feel that the Japanese Army and Navy have improved communications with one another. When they finish talking about the Japanese, MacArthur wants to know about Pickering's clandestine intelligence operation. He heard about it from General Willoughby, who felt that he should have been informed about it. Hon tries to be as vague as possible in his answers.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Moore is in love with Joanne and wants to marry her. When he tells Daphne that he will financially help her and the baby, Joanne gets mad at Moore for lying to Daphne; then she finds out that he is wealthy and was not lying. She says she may be pregnant and Moore is pleased.



Operation Pickle begins as the group drops into rafts and boards the submarine called the Pelican. Finch and Galloway agree to be pilots for the R4D. There are some objections from others about it being a suicide mission.

MacArthur is not aware of Operation Pickle until he learns about it from General Willoughby who hears about it from Ellen Feller. Pickering's MAGIC staff cannot lie to MacArthur, but they try to be as vague as they can in their answers. Many people who hear about the mission feel that it cannot be successful. However those who are risking their lives in the operation do not doubt its success.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

The group is looking to McCoy's leadership on the mission. He does not want any firing or noise. Their purpose is to sneak onto Baku, not invade it. On board the submarine, they discuss the various weapons and how and when to use them. The group respects McCoy's opinion because of his experience on Makin Island. Each member of the group testifies to what exactly he will do in the operation. Hart will be testing the sand as soon as he reaches it. Hart and Godfrey will remain on the beach to hide the radio and supplies while the others go to find Ferdinand Six. If the Pelican is not spotted by the Japanese, it will surface each morning. If the group from the Coastwatchers station does not appear in seventy hours, Godfrey and Hart can leave.

The men begin their mission by moving the supplies and equipment from the submarine to the rafts. As a result of the rough surf, they switch to Plan B, where only one raft goes with McCoy, Hart and Wallace. Hart will remain on the beach while McCoy and Wallace go to Ferdinand six. They make it to the beach.

The sand tests are favorable and they radio the results to the Pelican. Wallace tells McCoy to stay on the beach with Hart. He can move faster alone.

The Pelican relays the information to Feldt and Banning. They then send a message to Ferdinand Six. Wagga Wagga, the term used in the message, means something to Koffler because that is where Daphne is from. The men try to figure out the message. They figure that men and supplies have arrived on the island and acknowledge.

On Guadalcanal, Jack Stecker is told that his son Dick crashed on landing and is alive but injured. He is expected to live. Galloway tells him the details of what has happened. Stecker goes to Henderson with Galloway to see his son off to Espiritu Santo.

Finch is lost in the battle and Galloway decides to take Pick with him as his co-pilot on the R4D.

Lieutenant Colonel arrives to see Pluto, who is surprised that he knows about the mission and other things. He is sent to find out about Daphne and other things. At the cottage, Godfrey continues to ask questions of Hon and Moore and tells them that there will be a diversionary air attack because MacArthur ordered it.

Chapter 16 Analysis

The rescue mission begins. As a result of the roughness of the surf, only Godfrey, Hart and McCoy go to the island. Hart is scared about being left on the beach alone, but prepared to do it if he has to. The whole team is flexible and able to adapt to changes easily, which is good, because that is what they have to do. Godfrey exhibits both



bravery and honesty in telling McCoy to stay on the beach with Hart because he can travel faster alone.

Finch, who is supposed to be Galloway's co-pilot, is killed in battle. Dick Stecker is seriously injured and Galloway plans to use Pick as his co-pilot in the R4D mission.

There is a snag that is not anticipated when Colonel Gregory arrives and accompanies Hon to the Water Lilly Cottage. He seems to know a lot of things that they feel he should not. He tells them that there will be a diversionary air strike; MacArthur wants one.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

At Ferdinand Six, Koffler and the others are hoping that there will be other messages, but there are none. The message of the previous day has him thinking of Daphne. He did not think he would ever see her again. Patience comes in and tells him to come outside. She introduces him to Wallace.

At Henderson, Galloway, Pick and Dillon take off in a R4D. They are headed to Port Moresby, New Guinea, where they are to pick up five people. Pick tells them that this is the first time he has been scared. He does not want to fly because of what happened to Dick Stecker. Galloway says he has no choice.

Eric Feldt is waiting when they land at Port Moresby. He greets them. Feldt briefs the group based on their communications with Ferdinand Six. They figure the departure group should be reaching the beach as they arrive. They review the details of the mission.

Fleming Pickering arrives in Philadelphia. He is on his way to see Ellie Stecker, Dick's mother. He tells her about Dick's injuries and hands her a message from Jack.

As the R4D approaches Baku, they receive a radio message saying they are two miles out. They easily land on the beach and pick up the passengers. On the way back, they are found by a B-17 who flies with them to Moresby.

Back in Brisbane, Daphne visits Steve Koffler and tells him that she is going to have a baby. He realizes that it is his baby and begins to cry.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Wallace arrives at Ferdinand Six and the group makes its way to the beach for extraction.

Pick is affected by Dick Stecker's crash. He tells Galloway that when they reach Port Moresby, he is done flying. This seems to be the first time that he has shown fear or realized that he is not immortal. The crash of his friend seems to have made him realize that he too can crash. Galloway tells him that he does not have any choice and makes him fly the plane. This is probably the best thing that Galloway could have done. They go on to successfully complete the mission.

Steve Koffler has a surprise when Daphne comes to see him. He finds out about the baby and then realizes that it is his.



Characters

Malcolm S. Pickering

Malcolm S. Pickering is a Second Lieutenant and Marine pilot. He is the son of Fleming Pickering and known as Pick. He is twenty-two years old and heir to a shipping and hotel fortune. Pick is assigned to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola where he delivers Wildcats to different bases. Pick learned the hotel business by working in different positions in the family hotel business. The Marines want to use him as a mess officer but General McInerney, a friend of his father, intervenes and he becomes a Marine aviator. During flight training he and Dick Stecker live in a suite at a hotel. Pick receives orders to go to Guadalcanal in September, 1942. In many ways, Pick does not seem to take things seriously and is somewhat irresponsible, such as flying his grandfather's plane, which he has never flown before, under the Golden Gate Bridge, on a whim. He sometimes seems to have little respect for authority with his dare-devil stunts. Things change when he is on Guadalcanal. His friend, Dick Stecker, is involved in a serious air crash when landing at Henderson field. Pick leaves on the mission to rescue Koffler, Howard and the other from Baku Island. While flying to Port Moresby, Pick tells Galloway that he does not want to fly anymore after seeing Stecker. Galloway gives him the controls of the R4D and tells him he has no choice. Pick goes on to complete the mission without any further problems.

Fleming Pickering

Fleming Pickering is Chairman of the Board of the Pacific and Far East Shipping Corporation. He is also a Navy Captain and works for Frank Knox who is Secretary of the Navy. Fleming Pickering meets Frank Knox when he refuses to sell his cargo fleet to the Navy. Knox offers Pickering a position working for him filing reports on various aspects of Navy and Marine activities. He travels wherever he has to go. When he learns about the Coastwatchers, he realizes their importance and becomes involved with Eric Feldt and the organization. Fleming is married to Patricia who is heir to a hotel fortune. Their son, Malcolm, is a Marine aviator. Fleming is injured in a crash and decides he wants out of the Navy. He receives a Silver Star citation for his actions along with the Legion of Merit Medal. He is promoted to Brigadier General and appointed to head the Marine Corps Office of Management Analysis. He is in Walter Reed Hospital for several weeks with malaria and conducts business from his suite there. He is upset about Howard and Koffler being abandoned on Baku Island and wants to try to rescue them. Pickering has his team formulate a rescue plan known as Operation Pickle for the rescue of Koffler and Howard. Many of the people who learn about the mission feel that it is suicidal and impossible to carry off, but Pickering puts together the team that can do it. He does not know that his son, Pick, is involved in the mission.



Thomas Michael McCoy

Thomas Michael McCoy is a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. He is twenty-one years old and usually in trouble. He assaults one or more commissioned officers and is court martialed, sentenced to dishonorable discharge and to ten years of hard labor. The sentence is set aside because of irregularities in the trial and he is sent to Camp Elliott where he answers to Gunnery Sergeant Ernest Zimmerman, who is a friend of his brother Ken, who is three years older. After a fight with Zimmerman which puts him in the hospital for several days, his attitude changes and Zimmerman recommends him for a promotion. He performs well at the Makin raid but then beats up a sergeant afterwards. While in prison in Honolulu, he and Zimmerman are transferred to the MAG-21 on Guadalcanal.

Richard J. Stecker

Richard J. Stecker is a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He is twenty-two years old and a friend of Pick Pickering. His father was also a Marine and Dick grew up on Marine installations around the world. He is currently assigned to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola where he delivers Grumman Wildcats to different bases. He is a West Point graduate. He and Pick are assigned to the VMF-229 on Guadalcanal which allows Dick to see his father, Jack, who is also stationed on the island. Dick is seriously injured in a plane crash when landing on Henderson Island.

George F. Hart

George F. Hart is a United States Marine. He was a police officer in St. Louis, Missouri where he worked on the Vice Squad. His father was a police captain. Before joining the force, he worked as a truck driver's helper at a brewery for three years. He is twenty-one when he becomes a police officer. He is injured while attempting an arrest and learns street fighting after returning to duty. When he enters the Marine Corps, he goes through boot camp at Parris Island. He is assigned to work for Fleming Pickering and is involved in the rescue mission at Baku Island.

Ken McCoy

Ken McCoy is a Lieutenant in the Marine Corps and the older brother of Sergeant Thomas McCoy. He served in China and is known as "Killer" McCoy. He is romantically involved with Ernestine Sage, a friend of Pick and heir to a pharmaceutical fortune. He is from Pennsylvania and works as a Special Agent for the Office of Naval Intelligence. Ken heads the team involved in Operation Pickle.



Major Ed Banning

Major Ed Banning is a career Marine who is assigned with the Coastwatchers in Australia. He served in China in Intelligence and married a White Russian woman who never made it out of China.

Joseph L. Howard

Joseph L. Howard is a First Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He is the Commanding Officer of Detachment A, Special Detachment 14. He is on Buka Island with the Coastwatchers and is rescued at the end of the book.

Charles Galloway

Charles Galloway is a Marine captain and a R4D pilot. He was a flight instructor before the war. Charley flies the R4D in the rescue mission at Buka Island.

Jake Dillon

Jake Dillon is a Marine Major who is with the Office of Public Affairs. He is on leave from Metro-Magnum Studios in Hollywood.



Objects/Places

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands are a group of islands in the Coral Sea located east of New Guinea. Buka is the northernmost island in the group. Guadalcanal is another member of the group.

Parris Island

Parris Island is in South Carolina and the site of a United States Marine Depot.

Queensland

Queensland is a province in Australia where the Coastwatcher Headquarters is located.

Washington D.C.

Washington D.C. is located on the East Coast of the United States and is the nation's capital.

Hawaii

Hawaii is a group of islands in the Pacific and (at the time) a United States Territory with many United States military installations.

Lakehurst, New Jersey

Lakehurst, New Jersey is the site of a United States Naval Air Station.

San Francisco

San Francisco is the Northern California city that is home to Andrew Foster.

Florida

Florida is the southeastern state where there are numerous military bases and air stations.

Brisbane

Brisbane is the Australian city where General Douglas Mac Arthur's Supreme Headquarters is located.

Espiritu Santo

Espiritu Santo is the South Pacific island that is the headquarters of MAG-25.



Themes

Determination

Determination is a dominant theme of the book. The characters are determined to succeed in whatever they do, no matter how dangerous the task is. This is especially true in the actions of the Operation Pickle team. They are all volunteers for the extremely dangerous mission of extracting two Marines from Baku Island and putting in a replacement team and supplies. The island where the Coastwatchers station, Ferdinand Six, is located, is small and occupied by the Japanese. Ken McCoy is the Marine chosen by Fleming Pickering to formulate a plan to rescue the men. Like Pickering, McCoy believes that Marines never abandon other Marines. The plan McCoy formulates has to be changed at the last minute due to the roughness of the sea around the island. The men quickly adapt to the alternate plan. They have to fight the surf and rocks to reach the beach with their equipment. Hart is afraid to stay on the beach alone while Wallace and McCoy travel to the Coastwatchers station but he is determined to do whatever he has to do to make the mission a success. Wallace decides he can make the journey to the Coastwatchers station more quickly and easily if he travels alone, even though it is more dangerous. McCoy allows him to go alone for the sake of the success of the mission. Each person is determined to do whatever he has to do to contribute to the success of the mission. Their determination makes the mission successful.

Courage

Courage is another dominant theme of the book. This novel takes place in the early days of the war in the Pacific and most of the main characters are in the military. They have the courage to perform many heroic activities as is usual during wartime. The men on Baku Island survive by stealing from the Japanese. Members of the group volunteer for the raiding assignments, in spite of the danger. Each person is willing to do his own fair share, regardless of the danger. The same is true of the men involved in Operation Pickle, led by Lieutenant Ken McCoy. He has a distinguished record in China and has taken part in many dangerous missions. While preparing for a dangerous mission in Mongolia, he takes time out to develop the plan for Operation Pickle and to lead the mission. All of the men involved are volunteers. They have the courage to volunteer for dangerous missions and the determination to make them successful. Wallace, Hart and McCoy could have been killed trying to reach the beach, but McCoy is able to make the right decisions at the right time to guarantee the success of the mission. He also chooses people who he knows will perform well. The only two people who ever express fear are Hart and Pick. Pick has just seen his friend and fellow pilot seriously injured in a landing crash and does not want to fly anymore. In spite of their fears, both have the courage to perform well and make the mission a success.



Relationships

Relationships are another theme of the book. Since the main characters are in the military, their relationships are often long distance. The men and their women see each other when they can, like Ken McCoy and Ernie Sage. Ernie wants to marry Ken and have his child, despite what Ken and her parents say. She loves Ken and is afraid that he will be killed on one of his dangerous assignments. She wants his child so she has a piece of him if he is killed. He says he will not marry her until after the war.

Steve Koffler and Joe Howard, the men on Baku Island, also have girlfriends. Steve Koffler is involved with Daphne whom he meets right before his mission. She is pregnant with his child. Nurse Barbara Cotter is romantically involved with Joe Howard. Both provide information that the Marines use to inform the men on Baku that a rescue attempt is taking place. Neither has heard from the men for the four months that they are on Baku Island.

Nurse Joanne Miller is assigned, along with Barbara Cotter, to care for John Moore when he has malaria. Joanne becomes romantically involved with Moore, who wants to marry her.

These are the main romantic relationships in the book and give the characters a more human side.



Style

Point of View

Line of Fire is written in the third person point of view with the narrator being the author, W.E.B. Griffin. The use of the third person point of view allows the author to provide the necessary background information regarding history, setting, characters, equipment and other information that is useful to the reader. The author provides all of the information that the reader needs to understand the equipment and technical terms and to keep the action of the novel flowing smoothly. The use of the third person point of view avoids the problem of the first person, in which the reader is only privy to information that is available to the story teller. This problem does not occur when the third person point of view is employed.

The reader has the chance to become familiar with the personalities of the main characters since there is plenty of dialogue between the characters so the reader can see how they interact with one another. The point of view used is the proper one for this kind of book and it contributes to the enjoyment of the reader.

Setting

The action of the novel takes place in different locations in the United States and the Pacific as the characters move around. There are plenty of scenes in Washington D.C. at the White House, different military offices and the Foster Lafayette Hotel. Parris Island in South Carolina is the site of the Marine boot camp. Lakehurst, New Jersey and various places in Florida are the sites of Naval Air Stations where several of the main characters go. San Francisco is where the home of Fleming Pickering is located and where many of the characters pass through on their way to and from the Pacific. Hawaii is a United States Territory where major military bases and hospitals are located. Australia is a setting for some of the action. Brisbane is the location of MacArthur's Supreme Headquarters. Queensland is where the Coastwatchers headquarters is located. There is also a great deal of action on the islands in the Solomon group. Baku Island, the object of Operation Pickle, is where the Coastwatchers station Ferdinand Six is located. Guadalcanal is the island where Henderson Field is located. The rescue mission is launched from Port Moresby, New Guinea.

Language and Meaning

Line of Fire is written in an easily readable style. The language of the novel is everyday English that is easy for the reader to understand. There are a few foreign language phrases that do not detract from the action or readability of the novel. There are technical terms and the names of the equipment used, but most of these are well described or defined by the author. At no time does the reader wonder what the author is talking about or trying to describe.



There are some sections where the coded messages have hidden meanings. The author presents the coded message and how the meaning of the messages is deduced by the characters. This section at the Coastwatchers station on Baku Island adds to the realism of the situation and it is rather interesting for the reader to see how the communication occurs. The writing style of the novel is appropriate to the kind of novel that Griffin writes and makes the novel realistic and interesting for the reader.

Structure

The structure of the novel is typical of the Griffin novels in this series. The novel is divided into seventeen chapters with no chapter titles. Each chapter is divided into different parts with each part designated by a number, written in parentheses. Below this is the location, date and, in some cases, the time of the action. This is very useful for the reader who always knows exactly where and when the action is occurring. The events of the novel occur in chronological order..

There are many secret communications in the novel that are presented in a different type so the reader always knows the difference between the actual message and the discussion of the contents. This also adds to the realism of the novel as does the section showing the coded messages sent to Ferdinand Six and how the men ascertain the meaning of the messages.

There is no Table of Content, Preface, Introduction or Index, but none is needed. There are no maps showing the locations; the inclusion of maps might have been helpful for some readers.

The structure of the book is appropriate to the novel and contributes to the readability of the novel.



Quotes

Same drill. We generally get thirty minutes' notice from the Coastwatcher people, via either Pearl Harbor or Townsville. That gives us enough time to get off the ground and to altitude. By then the radar can usually give us a vector. We shoot them down or they shoot us down. That will go on until one side or the other runs out of airplanes. (Chapter 1, pg. 26)

On the one hand, going to MacArthur could raise more problems than it solved: MacArthur believed in the chain of command. Since colonels are de facto smarter than majors, majors do not question what colonels do. (Chapter 2, pg. 44)

Colonel Carlson talked to enlisted Marines—not just the senior staff noncoms, but the privates and the corporals, too—like they were people, not enlisted men. Like he was really interested in what they had to say. (Chapter 3, pg. 55)

In Stecker's opinion, the key to success as a second lieutenant was invisibility. Second lieutenants should be neither seen nor heard. With Pickering, that was difficult. Pick was a living example of Scott Fitzgerald's line about the rich being different from you and me. (Chapter 4, pg. 85)

That Navy captain business was bad enough, but at least I have the right to wear those four gold stripes. I am an any-ocean, any-tonnage master mariner, entitled to wear the four stripes of a captain. (Chapter 5, pg. 111)

"The operation to surround and recapture Guadalcanal will truly decide the fate of the control of the entire Pacific," Edson read aloud. (Chapter 7, pg. 166)

"By then I'll be on Guadalcanal" Pickering said softly. "And even if they do catch me, I will swear that I was alone. So relax, George." (Chapter 8, pg. 191)

"They took us by surprise, Jack. Hell, I didn't expect them to attack at all last night. I was going to send out patrols this morning, right about now, to see what they were up to." (Chapter 9, pg. 201)

Although Major Dillon was fully aware of the penalties provided for a Marine who failed to appear at the proper time and the proper place in the properly appointed uniform—which was the definition for Absence With Out Leave—it took him no longer than five seconds to put himself at risk of those penalties. (Chapter 10, pg. 224)

Just as soon as I can get out of here, my intention is to go back to Australia and get our people to do whatever is necessary to bring Howard and Koffler back. For reasons I don't want to get into, they seem to have just written them off. (Chapter 12, pg. 275)

In consequence, Banning arranged for agents of the Army's Counterintelligence Corps to sweep Captain Pickering's quarters whenever he left them. Since he didn't trust Mrs.



Feller on general principles, he kept the sweep in operation after Captain Pickering's departure. (Chapter 13, pg. 301)

The reason I am being humiliated like this is because Banning hates me, has been waiting for an opportunity to humiliate me, and now he's found it in spades. Not only is he denying me access to whatever he and that offensive Major Jake Dillon are up to, but he is rubbing that humiliation in my face by ordering me out of Water Lily Cottage. (Chapter 14, pg. 327)

An attempt to land the replacement team and equipment from a submarine will be made as soon as possible. If that fails, an attempt will be made to make the insertion and extraction by airplane. (Chapter 15, pg. 367)

For one thing, we are not invading Buka, we're sneaking ashore. And with a little bit of luck, we won't even see a Japanese soldier. (Chapter 16, pg. 370)

And then the sobbing came, and she went to him and put her arms around him, and he put his arms around her, and it didn't matter that they were ulcerous from his shoulders to his wrists. (Chapter 17, pg. 414)

Topics for Discussion

Why does Fleming Pickering want to leave his position with the Navy? What is the result of his discussion with the President?

What are the Coastwatchers? What is the significance of their contribution to the war effort?

What actions of Pick Pickering would lead one to think he is immature and irresponsible?

What is Fleming Pickering's role in the Office of Management Analysis? What is the nature of his work?

What is MAGIC? Why is it considered one of the top secrets of the war?

What is Operation Pickle? Who is involved? How do they carry out the mission?

What surprise does Daphne have for Steven Koffler? How does he react?