

Pacific Vortex Study Guide

Pacific Vortex by Clive Cussler

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Contents

Pacific Vortex Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Chapter 1.....	5
Chapter 2.....	6
Chapter 3.....	7
Chapter 4.....	8
Chapter 5.....	9
Chapter 6.....	10
Chapter 7.....	11
Chapter 8.....	12
Chapter 9.....	14
Chapter 10.....	15
Chapter 11.....	17
Chapter 12.....	18
Chapter 13.....	19
Chapter 14.....	21
Chapter 15.....	22
Chapter 16.....	23
Chapter 17.....	24
Chapter 18.....	26
Characters.....	27
Objects/Places.....	31
Themes.....	34
Style.....	36



Quotes..... 38
Topics for Discussion..... 40



Plot Summary

Pacific Vortex is a thriller that opens with the main character, Dirk Pitt, lying on a beautiful Hawaiian beach. Gazing out over the sea, he spots something glistening in the waves. He swims out to retrieve the item, which turns out to be a communications capsule from a missing nuclear submarine. He opens the capsule and reads the contents, a missing twenty-six page section of the ship's log. In it, the captain, who has apparently gone over the brink of madness, tells of the strange goings-on in the Pacific Vortex, an area of the Pacific that is like the Bermuda Triangle with strange disappearance of ships.

Pitt, a scientist and adventurer, is thrown into the world of international intrigue with Russian spy ships, sunken islands, assassins, and espionage. After delivering the canister to Admiral Hunter, later that evening Pitt experiences being the object of his first assassination attempt at the hands of the lovely Summer Moran. He doesn't yet realize that the events in the hotel bar are related to the canister and the ship's log. The missing U.S. submarine, the *Starbuck*, was on a test voyage when she went missing. On board are nuclear warheads.

Pitt, who is a scientist for the NUMA, National Underwater Marine Agency and an Air Force Major, is assigned to the Navy at Pearl Harbor for the purpose of finding the missing sub. The nuclear warheads could fall into the wrong hands causing an international disaster if the missing sub isn't found. The captain's log indicates that the ship went off-course to investigate a mysterious fog, radioed its last set of coordinates and referred to a mysterious "they." The *Starbuck* has entered a mysterious part of the Pacific where numerous ships have disappeared without a trace in the region of the legendary island of Kanoli. What is this mysterious island?

All that is known is that legend has it that the island just mysteriously sunk, without a trace. Before Pitt reports for duty, he checks with a friend, George Papaola at a museum about the Pacific Vortex, and finds out about Kanoli. Before he can even reach the base, he is followed and shot at. Pitt survives his second of many assassination attempts. Arriving at the base, he is briefed on what the Navy knows about events in the Pacific Vortex. Realizing that the coordinates sent by the *Starbuck* are fake, they set out on a search mission that evening on the *Martha Ann*, an undercover salvage ship, to search a different area of the Pacific. There, they find the missing sub, with a crewmember alive, and begin to solve the mystery of the Pacific Vortex, the graveyard for missing ships. As the story unfolds, it becomes obvious that the missing sub has to be removed or destroyed. Those missiles with nuclear warheads and the advanced technology of the *Starbuck* are worth millions if they fall into the wrong hands, which they already have. Lying on the ocean floor in international waters, the nuclear sub is fair game for any salvage operation, if the salvagers can survive the mysteries of the Pacific Vortex and the missing island of Kanoli. The novel comes to a surprise conclusion in the caves of the underwater island where a secret crime organization of underwater assassins and international thieves has existed for over thirty years, the period during which so many ships met their strange fate in the Pacific Vortex.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The book opens on a sandy beach called Kaena Point in Hawaii, where Dirk Pitt is sunbathing. Gazing out at the sea, he sees something shiny, bouncing among the waves. "The smart move, Pitt decided, would be to simply lay there and let the force of the surf bring the unknown object to him; but he pushed sound judgment from his mind, rolled to his feet, and walked slowly into the surf" (pg. 2). Curiosity gets the better of him and he swims out to find the object, which turns out to be a yellow flotsam with an attached canister that says U.S. Navy on it. Returning to shore, he opens the canister to find a hand written manuscript that he reads in its entirety. The name Admiral Leigh Hunter is at the end of the manuscript. Dirk heads to Pearl Harbor to see the Admiral, who brings him into a meeting, Dirk tells them where he found the canister. They tell him that it is a communications capsule used on a submarine. He tells them that the manuscript is twenty-six pages from the *Starbuck's* log.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Dirk's curiosity gets to him when he spots the flotsam and swims out to retrieve the object. He could have drowned or been the victim of a shark, but he still swam out far from shore. The whole scene with the Admiral and his staff would have been avoided if he hadn't and if he hadn't been so confrontational. Dirk realizes what he has found is part of the manifest from the missing submarine, *Starbuck*. He knows right where to find Admiral Hunter and proceeds directly there instead of going through the proper channels.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter contains excerpts from the *Starbuck's* log. Commander Dupree claims responsibility for the decision that took the ship off of its assigned course to investigate the fog bank. He relates the story of an explosion under the ship that caused it to sink. Dupree and the explosion survivors stayed in the secure areas of the sub, where he writes the log, telling of no food, water or air. He rambles on about ordering the doctor to give them all lethal injections to save them from suffering, of tapping on the hull; "they" were there again, etc. The Admiral wonders why Dupree wants the log delivered to him.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Dupree has clearly been driven to the brink of insanity by what has happened. He admits it is his decision that brought the catastrophe on them all; because he was curious about the fog bank and that he ordered the deviation from the assigned course. What could have happened in those five days?



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Dirk sits in a bar at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel thinking over the events of the day. He talks to Captain Orl Cinana about the Starbuck. Cinana doesn't think it will be found. After Capt. Cinana departs, his old girlfriend, Adrian Hunter, daughter of Admiral Hunter arrives. As they are talking, another woman arrives and gets into a verbal battle with Adrian and then they both go outside together. The mysterious redhead, named Summer, showing signs of having been in a fight with Adrian. Dirk leaves with Summer, who attacks him on the beach. He knocks her out and finds a syringe in her hand. He pockets the clear liquid syringe, lifts Summer over his shoulder, and heads back to his hotel.

Summer regains consciousness in his hotel room and stops Dirk from calling the police. She tells him she works for a government, not the U.S., that wanted information on Adrian's lover who has been trying to obtain classified information and that the syringe contains scopolamine, a truth serum. Dirk, knowing that Hunter does not have access to classified information knows that Summer is lying. He confronts her with this information. Summer claims she is sick and locks herself in the bathroom, escaping through a window by knotting towels together.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Pitt is numbed by the events of the day regarding the *Starbuck* and the confrontation with the Admiral and his staff, as is revealed in his discussion with Captain Cinana. In his encounter with Adrian and Summer, he doesn't even press for details about the physical fight they had or why. He does go out to look for Adrian.

Dirk, again does the unthinkable by taking the unconscious Summer back to his hotel, instead of calling the police outside the bar on the beach where he was attacked by her. He is not a trained operative. His curiosity is again getting the better of him, and his actions are based on curiosity instead of logic and common sense. He, again, avoids using proper channels and takes things into his own hands.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The next morning Dirk is awakened by his boss, Admiral James Sandecker, Chief Director of the Naval Underwater and Marine Agency, who has flown out from Washington. He informs Pitt that he is on special loan to the Navy, by special request of Admiral Hunter. In the past thirty years the Navy has documented thirty-eight ships missing in the area where the *Starbuck* disappeared. Sandecker tells Pitt that he made himself a security issue by reading the log before turning it in and he's a sitting duck for any foreign government wanting to find the sub.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Dirk is obviously into things he never even thought of. His encounter with Summer is beginning to reveal to Dirk, that he never even took seriously the part about the foreign government or what information they would want from him, even though she told him the syringe held a truth serum. Dirk's curiosity in reading the log instead of just turning it in raised a security issue. Dirk also finds out the Admiral Hunter group does not just do salvage operations, but undercover salvage operations. Admiral Sandecker has to remind Dirk that he is still active in the Air Force as a major and doesn't have much choice in helping in the salvage operations in the area of the Pacific known as the Pacific Vortex.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

While getting ready to report to Admiral Hunter, Dirk decides to carry a weapon, since he is beginning to understand the implications of the alteration with Summer. He detours on the way and stops to see an old friend, George Papaaloo at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum of Polynesian Ethnology and Natural History. Dirk wants to know what George knows about the Pacific Vortex. George tells him about the legend of the mythical island of Kanoli, an Atlantis-like island. Leaving the museum, Dirk realizes he is being followed. "Pitt is ready to dismiss the trailing truck as fantasy - his subconscious was beginning to see enemy agents, complete with trench coats and beady eyes, lurking behind every clump of philodendron" (pg. 54). The gray pick-up truck stays on Dirk's tail and starts shooting at him. Unable to out drive Pitt on the hilly, curvy roads, the gray pick-up goes over the edge of a cliff. Pitt calls Admiral Hunter who tells him not to call the police for another ten minutes to give his security men a chance to clean up the mess.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Dirk is finally beginning to realize the seriousness of the situation. He is trying to learn what he can about the Pacific Vortex by checking with a friend at the museum, but again, he isn't a professional. By the time he realizes that he is being followed, it is too late for him to do anything by try to out drive his pursuer. His gun is not where he can reach it. After reporting the accident to Admiral Hunter, he realizes that there is more than one entity following him. Returning to the accident scene was not the smartest thing for him to have done. Someone could have been waiting for him. One gets the impression that Dirk has been very lucky so far.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Dirk finally reports for duty and finds himself in a lavishly furnished underground bunker, accessed through a Quonset hut. Hunter tells Dirk that they think the Russians are in the area trying to find out where the *Starbuck* is, since the *Starbuck* was the most advanced nuclear sub of the day when it was lost on its test run. Denver and Borland, his staff, join Hunter and tell Dirk the stories of other ships lost in the Pacific Vortex. Pitt reads the file on a ship called the *Lille Marlene*, the only ship that went down in the Pacific Vortex to have sent a distress signal. A Spanish freighter trying to help found the passengers and staff all dead, and the ship blew up and sank taking the Spanish boarding party with it.

The four discuss the situation. Pitt further learns that the *Starbuck* was not outfitted with secret equipment yet, since she was just on a test run and was broadcasting without a code machine. Hunter relates that the Pacific Vortex area was thoroughly searched after the *Starbuck* disaster and they found nothing. Pitt points out that they should have found something of the other thirty-seven missing ships. The conclusion is that they aren't in the Pacific Vortex area, but 180 degrees to the southwest. A search is set to begin that night, with the location input data being reversed.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Dirk does much better in his second meeting with Admiral Hunter's staff. In discussing the myth and legend surrounding the Bermuda Triangle and the Pacific Vortex, Dirk lets it be known that he isn't falling for any of the science fiction malarkey. After they discuss the situation and the report on the *Lille Marlene*, it becomes obvious how quick Dirk's mind is. If the Navy thoroughly searched the Pacific Vortex area after the *Starbuck* went down, why didn't they find anything of the other thirty-seven wreckages? They conclude that the *Starbuck's* last radioed positions were fraudulent and that the *Starbuck* and the other wreckages were in the opposite direction. It seems strange that nobody would have noticed the absence of wreckages before.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Pitt drives to and boards the *Martha Ann*, the salvage ship. He talks to a visiting Commander Denver, who tells him of something strange that happened nine months ago when their oceanographic ships were charting the bottom of the Kurile Trench near Japan. They detected the sound of a high speed under water submarine traveling at 110 M.P.H. at nineteen thousand feet. Both ships had identical readings and a similar event happened at the Cayment Trench near Cuba. Denver also relates a story of picking up strange sounds on a microphone near Iceland.

Borland joins them, and over coffee, they discuss the danger of the mission. Pitt reminds them that they have the helicopter, which he can fly. They tell Pitt that, although the *Martha Ann*, looks like a rusty, decrepit salvage ship, that it is camouflage: the ship is equipped with the latest technology. "The masquerade comes in handy for the, shall we say, more delicate reclamation projects" (pg. 86). Denver further relates the fact that they know there is a Russian oceanographic ship, the *Andrei Vyborg*, which they call a spy ship that has been looking for the *Starbuck*. There is nothing that connects the *Martha Ann* to the U.S. Navy, and that is why they cannot have an armed escort. Satellites will track the salvage vessel and they have a code to radio if they find the *Starbuck*. Denver says his goodbyes and the ship sets sail.

Chapter 7 Analysis

It is obvious that Pitt still does not fully appreciate the gravity of the full situation as he boards the *Martha Ann* with all of the security procedures. Only when Borland, Denver and Pitt are discussing the events in Japan, Cuba and Iceland does the reader begin to sense the danger. They discuss the fact that the *Martha Ann* might experience the same fate as the other ships and Pitt wants to know why they can't have an armed naval escort. It is then that they tell him about the Russian spy ship and others that are all looking for the *Starbuck*. The Russians want the technology aboard the nuclear submarine, and in international waters the submarine is fair game for any salvage ship. The tension is thickening as the *Martha Ann* sets sail



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As the ship sets sail, both Pitt and Borland are on-deck. Dirk thinks of the events of the last forty-eight hours, of all that has happened to him from assignment attempts to truth serum, of a lost island named Kanoli and a giant man with golden eyes, that George had told him about, who he has yet to meet. What is it that ties them all together? Is it something so obvious that they've all overlooked it? Borland calls Dirk to the bridge to inform him that they've entered the search area.

Borland takes Dirk to the Flash Gordon Room, a room packed with the latest modern electrical and technological equipment. He explains some of the equipment and tells Dirk that they are lowering the sensors and cameras into the ocean to start scanning. The onboard computer is tied to Pearl Harbor and can be overridden by the base staff in the event of an emergency. The computer runs the vessel and can return it to base even if something happens to the onboard staff. Borland finds that Dirk is already familiar with most of the equipment from his work at NUMA.

The crew discovers they are over an uncharted fracture zone in the ocean floor and are near a seamount. They decide to investigate. After several hours they discover a very quickly rising sea floor and switch to manual operations. The instruments indicate a green coloration and the instruments are indicating findings on the ocean floor. Boland announces that they may have found the graveyard in the Pacific Vortex and for the crew to be on alert. The wreckages begin to become visible on the monitors, which fascinates Pitt. The onboard computer begins to identify the wrecked ships on the ocean floor.

Boland instructs the radio operator to send a coded message to Admiral Hunter so they know where the *Martha Ann* is. The sonar operator suddenly announces the presence of a submarine. It is the *Starbuck*, resting on the bottom at a depth of ninety feet. Boland wants Pitt to fly back to Honolulu but Pitt wants to dive to check out the *Starbuck*. Boland concedes, telling him he can only do a visual survey. "Poor old Boland," Pitt said softly to himself. "He hasn't the vaguest notion of what I'm up to" (pg. 109).

Chapter 8 Analysis

For the first time Pitt pauses to reflect on the events of the past two days: finding the canister, his run in with Hunter, Borland and Denver, the events at the hotel bar, his conversation with George, being chased by assassins. He begins to wonder what he has gotten involved in and how all of these pieces tie together. This reflection adds a little more credibility to Pitt's character. He's not just bumbling through the situation. He's beginning to appreciate the seriousness of the situation and the danger and that he is a part of some sort of international intrigue.



The reader also gains some insight into Boland's character. From the time of Pitt's arrival on the *Martha Ann*, he introduces Pitt to no one on the vessel. When he starts explaining the equipment to Dirk, he finds out that Dirk is familiar with all of it and can use it and interpret the output. Boland seems to have found a new immediate respect for Dirk, and suddenly starts introducing him to some of the crew. Boland suddenly realizes that Dirk isn't around just to fly the chopper; he can make a definite contribution to the scientific nature of the mission. This may be why Boland let's Dirk talk him into making a dive. The reader begins to wonder about Dirk when he comments that Boland doesn't know what he's up to. What is Dirk up to?



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Lt. March makes the dive to the *Starbuck* with Dirk. March takes pictures of the submarine as they examine it. He is increasingly fearful as Dirk wants to examine the escape hatch. Together, they finally open it. Dirk's plan is to enter the ship through the escape hatch, in spite of an angry and nervous March, by reversing the escape hatch procedure. They are successful and enter the sub. They find the forward torpedo room empty and one of the nuclear reactors still operating, which is why they have breathable air. Pitt tells March that he takes full responsibility for their actions and wants to explore the sub. They find the engine room with the nuclear reactors, one of which is still functioning. The galley, they figure, has been flooded and cleared. Reaching the radio room, they make contact with the *Martha Ann*.

Boland, in the mean time, has two men preparing to dive with extra air tanks for March and Pitt, when the radio contact comes through. Pitt informs Boland that the *Starbuck* is not flooded and that there is no sign of the crew, even though they haven't searched the aft areas yet. Boland orders March and Pitt back to the salvage vessel when the radio transmission goes dead.

Chapter 9 Analysis

This chapter gives us a new perspective of Dirk. He has tricked Boland by not revealing his plan and has jeopardized his and March's lives by entering the sub without orders. Pitt's sense of adventure, curiosity and determination to prove his own point concerning the sub are becoming obvious. The experienced seaman March was afraid to enter the sub, but Pitt wasn't. Now they are stuck in the sub without radio contact.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

"Pitt sat there without moving, gaping speechlessly at the wild-eyed, heavily bearded apparition that stood in the doorway of the radio room. He sat there while he absorbed the shock, waiting for the repulsive and foul-smelling thing to dissolve back into the hallucination where it belonged. He blinked, hoping his mind would erase the image, but the thing simply blinked back" (pg. 127). Pitt begins to learn about the mysterious "they," from Seaman First Class Farris. He also learns that there are two guards on board. He finds March dead in the sickbay area. He kills one of the guards with the shark gun, using its only shot. He finds the weapon that killed March and takes it. As he and Farris move through the boat, they meet the other guard, who Pitt kills. With his leg injured from Farris falling on it, Pitt realizes that the other two men that he sees are from the *Martha Ann*. Boland sent them with extra air tanks.

Pitt wants to flood the *Starbuck*, which the two men reluctantly agree to do. As the four are leaving the sub, Pitt's air valve gets stuck on the escape hatch and the other three rise to the surface without him. Freeing his air valve, Pitt finds himself confronting a big hammerhead shark. Pitt has only the weapon he found that had killed March. It is enough to stun the shark and give Pitt enough time to reach the surface and be pulled to safety on the *Martha Ann*.

Later on, Boland tells Pitt that he isn't to blame for March's death. Pitt explains why he flooded the compartment of the sub, which was to make sure the ship stayed on the sea floor for a few days. The guards are from a group that come and go from the ship. The group can't move the *Starbuck* now. Pitt tells Boland that the *Martha Ann* is in danger. Boland tells Pitt the salvage vessel will stay anchored where it is and will begin salvage operations in the morning, in spite of Pitt telling him that the *Martha Ann* will join the graveyard wreckages before then. Pitt and Boland discuss the radio communications. How come Hunter hasn't acknowledged any of the communications? They've been jammed, Pitt tells him. Boland orders another transmission sent and finds out its being intercepted and answered on the wrong channel. Now they know they have a problem. Who are these people? Then, Boland is notified that fog is rolling in.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter we begin to see the strength of Pitt's character. He had made it known that he didn't buy any of the science fiction regarding the Bermuda Triangle and the Pacific Vortex. The reader can now see the trained scientific investigator in Dirk Pitt, as he and Boland discuss their predicament. It is Pitt who figures out the radio transmission and interception and exactly how much trouble they are in. Boland should have been questioning the lack of response from Hunter and Pearl Harbor, given what

they knew about the *Lille Marlene* and other ships. Both Boland and Pitt understand the significance of the fog.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

They all watch the fog come upon them. Pitt announces it is hardly a normal situation given the weather conditions and then identifies the smell of eucalyptus. Boland gives the order to pull up anchor and get out of the area. The underwater monitors indicate the presence of large fish, which Pitt announces are underwater divers swimming toward the ship. Pitt wants them to evacuate in the chopper and goes out to warm it up. He notices two intruders come on the *Martha Ann*. Pitt kills them with his Mauser. As the battle continues, more of the crew arrives at the helicopter. Pitt learns that Boland and Stanley were overcome by their attackers. Pitt makes one last check of the salvage ship before leaving and finds the injured, still-alive Boland who he rescues and drags to the chopper. Lifting off, the helicopter heads for Hawaii.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Pitt's scientifically trained mind is quick to grasp the situation. Communications are jammed and intercepted, and then the fog comes in serving as a decoy. Underwater swimmers, appearing on the equipment as large fish, approach and board the vessel and add try to add it to the underground graveyard. Dirk now has the scientific explanation he has been looking for.

Pitt is the only one aboard who can fly the helicopter, yet he is the one that makes the last check of the *Martha Ann* before taking off. Luckily, he finds Boland alive and rescues him. If something had happened to Pitt, none of the crew would have gotten off of the vessel.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Flying back to Hawaii, Pitt again ignores orders to land at Pearl Harbor landing pad and instead lands on the lawn next to the military hospital. After treatment for his leg, he returns to his hotel. After a few hours he is awakened by a frantic Adrian Hunter, who tells him of a break-in to her apartment that killed her lover. She reveals that her lover is the, now dead, Captain Orli Cinana. Pitt manages to reach Admiral Hunter on the phone and brings him up to date on Cinana. Hunter tells Pitt he will have his security handle the situation and that he wants Pitt and Adrian to go to Pearl Harbor. Before they can leave, five men enter the room. "They came ten minutes later, not to escort them to Admiral Hunter's headquarters at Pearl Harbor, but to abduct Adrian and murder Pitt" (pg. 159). Dirk identifies one of them as the man with the golden eyes, the man that George Papaaloo had described to him.

Events begin to fall into place for Dirk, who realizes that the canister from the *Starbuck* was planted for him to find. What they didn't count on was Pitt ascertaining that Dupree's final message was a fake. Dirk also finds out that there is an informant on Hunter's staff and that they are dealing with a man known as Delphi. The man tells Dirk how they plan to kill him, in his own bathtub, and take Adrian hostage. Dirk finds out that Summer is Delphi's daughter. Delphi and his organization want freedom from the Communists and the imperialists, and are watching their thirty years of work becoming exposed due to Pitt. Delphi departs, taking the unconscious Adrian with him moments before Hunter's security men arrive.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Again, Pitt shows his independence and rebelliousness in his refusal to obey orders when he lands the chopper at the military hospital. He also does not contact Admiral Hunter; he returns to his hotel after being treated at the hospital. The arrival of Adrian is somewhat surprising. She can't find her father, the Admiral, so goes to Pitt after the murder of Cinana. Was she followed? Did she lead Delphi's group to Pitt?

Dirk also learns that he is being used by Delphi and that his usefulness is apparently coming to an end, with Delphi's plan to murder him. He tries, but can't get much information from Delphi about his organization. Dirk manages to avoid execution, apparently with Summer's help. Apparently, his usefulness to Delphi has not come to an end, or why would Summer help him, if it was Summer? He never sees Summer, he only smells the fragrance of plumeria, Summer's fragrance.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The security guards take Pitt to Admiral Hunter. Denver tells Pitt that flooding the compartment of the *Starbuck* was an "act of genius" (pg.170) to prevent the sub from being moved. They are joined by two more members of the team, Dr. Raymond York and Dr. Elmer Chrysler. Pitt is asked to relate his account of the events aboard the *Martha Ann* and in his hotel room. Pitt begins with the discovery of the elevation of the sea floor and imparts the whole story to them. The only fact he omits is Summer. When he relates that part about the man with the yellow eyes, the scientists identify him as a Dr. Frederick Moran, an anthropologist who disappeared at sea more than thirty years ago. Two other names used by Delphi are known to the scientist: Lavella and Roblemann, one a physicist specialized in hydrology and the other a surgeon working on a mechanical gill system for implantation in humans. After it is explained to Pitt, he understands now why none of the men who attacked the *Martha Ann* had diving gear.

The group listens to Pitt's story and asks question. Hunter confirms that Lavella and Roblemann were on the first ship that disappeared in the Pacific Vortex over thirty years ago, along with Frederick Moran. They discuss the possibility of Delphi's group living in an underwater seamount, possibly their island of Kanoli, or in caves, since eucalyptus is used to purify mine air. Dr. York relates that Lavella is one of the few men in the world who could devise a way to pump air into underwater sea caves making them inhabitable for humans.

Dirk catches a few hours sleep and awakes to find that Delphi's transmitter has been located. The transmitter is located on Maui. They find that the old army installation had been sold to the same company that owned the first ship that went down in the Pacific Vortex, the one that had Moran, Lavella and Roblemann aboard. He also finds that the computer navigated *Martha Ann* will be docking the next day, having had another crew airlifted aboard. Dirk is also advised that the Pentagon has decided to destroy the *Starbuck* rather than raise her, since they don't want any of her missiles to fall into hostile hands. Pitt questions the wisdom of the Pentagon decision and tells Hunter that he refuses to obey the command. Hunter gives in.

Chapter 13 Analysis

In relating the events to Admiral Hunter's team, Pitt omits mentioning Summer, even though she is Delphi's daughter. He never saw her at the hotel, but smelled her fragrance and found a flower lying in an ashtray. It doesn't seem possible that Summer would help Dirk escape, costing the lives of two of her father's men, or that Delphi would sacrifice two of his own men for some plot involving Summer and Pitt. Was Summer having second thoughts because she almost accidentally killed Pitt instead of Cinana?



Dirk defies the Pentagon order to destroy the *Starbuck*, based on the strength of his conviction that they will never know the whole story of the Pacific Vortex and the missing ships if they destroy the sub. He gets Hunter, who now also defies the Pentagon, to go along with the plan instead of blindly following orders. Pitt says, "Simply put; we put a trained submarine crew inside the *Starbuck* and order a squad of marines to shut down Delphi's transmitter before 0500 hours tomorrow" (pg. 183). The reader begins to wonder if all of the insubordination and defiance is going to catch up with Dirk.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Pitt and, Al Giordino, his friend since high school, take off in a C54. Pitt leaves Giordino at the controls, and goes back to the fuselage to talk to the twenty men who volunteered for the mission. These volunteers are the skeleton crew for the submarine, plus Navy SEALs in case they meet any opposition. During communications with Hunter, communication is intercepted by Delphi. Pitt, as well as Hunter, knows what has happened. Pitt begins to have second thoughts about the whole operation. Giordino convinces Pitt that there is no way Delphi would think they would ditch an aircraft to enter the sub and take the sub back to base. Pitt and Giordino set the plane down on the ocean in the fog bank. The men prepare themselves to leave the plane and find the submarine.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Pitt's plan becomes known: ditch the plane in the sea near the submarine and have the crew man the submarine and sail it back to the base. For the first time, we see Dirk waiver, unsure as to whether they should abort the mission. Giordino talks him out of it, saying even Delphi would never think they would try anything so audacious. Pitt agrees, as the team prepares to leave the plane.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The men quickly locate the submarine and begin to enter it, as per their plan. Once the men are aboard, Pitt and Giordino have eighteen minutes of air remaining to look for the seamount entry. Sitting close to the *Starbuck* on the ocean floor, they find another wreck. They begin to search the sunken trawler. Pitt identifies it as the *Andrei Vyborg* and assumes Delphi's group sunk the Russian spy ship when it found the *Starbuck*.

Realizing they are running out of air, Pitt joins Giordino outside the trawler, where they discover an approaching underwater vehicle. They hide as best they can until the vehicle passes them. They continue to examine the seamount, looking for an opening, as their air is running out. Giordino and Pitt are caught in a swirling current by the seamount, causing Giordino to hang on the Pitt's leg to keep them from being separated. Giordino feels Pitt's body go limp when he is knocked unconscious. Giordino finally finds a safe underwater cave for himself and Pitt.

Back at Pearl Harbor, Hunter and his staff wait in tenseness. Crowhaven, the skipper on the *Starbuck*, manages to get through by using a Honolulu commercial radio station frequency, giving them a status report. They are ahead of schedule getting the sub up and running but they have lost contact with Pitt and Giordino.

In the underwater cave, Pitt regains consciousness. They survey the situation and decide to do some exploring. Pitt dives and finds a hidden room. He signals Giordino to come. They have found the entrance to Delphi's cave. Even though they are cut up and bleeding from being thrown around on the rocks, they decide to look around. They have to find a way out. Pitt finds a luxurious room with a bed. In it is Summer.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Pitt again, goes his own way, this time with Giordino. Even though he had doubts about the mission, he and Giordino still go off exploring, after they have the crew in the *Starbuck*. After leaving the *Andrei Vyborg* and avoiding the underwater craft with Delphi's men in it, they still pressed on to look for the entrance to Delphi's seamount, instead of returning to the *Starbuck*. Pitt's sense of adventure and curiosity now has him and Giordino trapped in Delphi's seamount. Losing Giordino and finding himself in Summer's bedroom, get him knocked out from behind.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Pitt regains consciousness and finds himself face to face with Delphi. He finds out that he and Giordino were caught in the power turbines' current. It is the heating and cooling system in the caves that create the fog on the surface. Delphi's men have found Giordino and the plane. Delphi demands an explanation and gets nothing meaningful from Pitt. A quick glance at his watch reveals that there is fifty minutes until the excitement begins: the Maui transmitter will be hit along with the seamount being attached by the *Monitor*. Pitt knows there is very little chance of getting out alive.

Aboard the *Starbuck*, all has not gone smoothly. After the message to Hunter, the Navy Seals and Delphi's men battled in the control room. Delphi's group is overcome, with casualties and injuries on both sides. Crowhaven is trying to get the submarine to move, but the ship won't budge, no matter what he tries. At the same time in Maui, the group trying to take out Delphi's transmitter is having the same kind of luck. Once inside the perimeter, all kinds of security devices are set off, and they are greeted with automatic weapons fire from what looked like a deserted building. The men manning the transmitter destruct the transmitter and building.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Pitt's team has trouble on all fronts. Pitt's scientific curiosity still has him asking questions, finding out how the whole scheme works. They have underestimated their adversary in all areas. They were waited for on the sub, which they were not totally prepared for; and at Maui, where they were not prepared for the security or the weapons. The transmitter is destroyed by the men manning the station, not by Pitt's men. Pitt, in the seamount, knows nothing of any of these events.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Delphi's men drag in a badly injured Giordino. Delphi lets it be known that he knows who Giordino is and that he and Pitt are boyhood friends. Pitt begins to dig, telling Delphi that he knows Cinana was the informer. Summer had mistaken him, Pitt, for Cinana in the hotel bar where he was with Adrian. Summer had even addressed him as Captain, accidentally. Pitt keeps digging, knowing that he is making Delphi nervous finally telling him he is wearing yellow contact lenses, and then mentioning the names of Lavella, Roblemann and Moran.

Delphi lunges for Pitt and misses. Delphi pulls a gun from his desk drawer. They are all interrupted by Summer who tells her father that he cannot kill in his house. Delphi gives in to his daughter and says they will put Pitt and Giordino on the surface water let them find their way back to land. Pitt tells him that in thirty-one minutes his seamount will be blown. After a little verbal bantering, they decide to talk. Pitt wants to know about Lavella, Roblemann and Moran and Delphi wants to know who else was on the plane.

Delphi tells Pitt that he is the son of Moran. He tells them of how and why they set themselves up in an underwater seamount to be free from the radiation of the bombs of the nuclear holocaust the world was going to have. It took the original three men one year of work before the caves were livable. Pitt starts digging again, telling Delphi that whatever scientific purposes his father had, his were pure criminal. Delphi's men sign on for a voyage on ships passing through the area, divert them and after the boarding party arrives, kill them. They sell the cargo, repaint the ship, reregister it from Pisces Pacific and eventually scuttle it and collect the insurance money.

"'You're a cunning man,' Delphi said slowly. 'Far more cunning than I gave you credit for. But it makes little difference now. You've played a bluffing game. Your guesswork is fairly accurate'" (pg. 242-243). Delphi tells him it wasn't his father's scheme, it is his scheme. He also tells Pitt how they captured the *Starbuck*. They snagged the propellers with steel cables, forcing it to stop. Then they forced in water to flood it.

The Andrei Vyborg was sunk because it became curious about the *Martha Ann* spending so much time in one place in the middle of nowhere. The Russian trawler came to investigate and had to be sunk by Delphi. Pitt also learns that Delphi's men didn't have time to sink the *Martha Ann*, having been warned by Cinana of the new crew on the way. In response to why he is there, Pitt says he and Giordino have come to rescue Adrian Hunter. Delphi hits him and accuses him of lying and then tells him why they've come: to rescue the submarine.

Pitt agrees and tells him that the seamount will be hit with a small nuclear weapon in about ten minutes and it will all be over and that the order came from the Pentagon, not from Admiral Hunter. Pitt finds out that the Maui installation was sold to the Russians



and that there were seven of Delphi's men on the *Starbuck* waiting for them. Delphi tells Pitt that he and his organization will relocate to a different place in the morning. He has already sold the *Starbuck*, complete with nuclear missiles, to an Arab entity. Delphi orders his men to throw Pitt and Giordino into the sea, as he goes to check on the *Starbuck*.

Chapter 17 Analysis

This chapter reveals a lot about Delphi's personality. The whole criminal operation is his and never was his father's, Frederick Moran's. He uses his daughter to kill people. He sent her to kill Cinana that night she walked into the hotel bar when he was with Adrian and she mistook him for Cinana. Several times he laments the fact that he did not kill Pitt. It is Pitt that is bringing his whole organization down. Pitt seems to be playing for time, by telling Delphi what he has put together and that it is all in a file with the Navy. Pitt seems to be trying to give the submarine time to get away.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

After Delphi leaves and the guards are taking Pitt and Giordino to the surface, Pitt asks Summer to walk with them. Giordino, feigning unconsciousness, knocks out the guards. Summer tells Pitt she loves him and will help them. He wants to know where Adrian is. Summer takes them to Adrian's room, next to hers. The seamount shakes as the missiles from the *Monitor* hit the water. They escape through Summer's room and the tunnel, as the seamount begins to flood. They are met in the room at the end of the tunnel by an armed Delphi. Just then the ceiling cracks and they are buried in falling rocks. Giordino blocks Delphi's gun, saving his friend's life. As they start to prepare to go to the surface, Summer says she can't go and wants to stay where her mother and father are buried. Pitt thinks he talks her into following, but finds out, when he reaches the surface, that she didn't. As he starts to look for her, he is rescued by Crowhaven, who tells him the *Starbuck* broke lose during the concussion of the seamount explosion.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The value of friendship and knowing each other's moves saves the lives of Pitt, Giordino and Adrian in the end. Pitt and Giordino go back so far together; they each know how the other thinks. This is what keeps them alive on this mission. It is obvious that Pitt underestimates the hatred of Delphi, who even risks his daughter's life trying to kill Pitt. Pitt also underestimates Summer, thinking she will follow him, falling for the thin story of love he tells her. He doesn't realize that Summer doesn't know any other way of life but in the caves. But the mystery of the Pacific Vortex is solved and the *Starbuck* is rescued.



Characters

Dirk Pitt

Pitt is the main character of the novel. The son of a senator and a scientist at the NUMA, National Underwater Marine Agency, he is a lover of the water and a diving expert. As a scientist, he not only has a trained, but a curious mind. This combined with his sense of adventure, comes close to nearly getting him and others killed many times during the course of the novel. This is evident from the opening pages of the novel, when he swims out to retrieve the communications capsule, to the ending pages of the book when he is swimming around an underwater seamount. His knowledge of the sea and how to survive save him and others from the near disasters that his curiosity and sense of adventure keep getting them all into.

Pitt is also brash and rebellious, something not expected in an Air Force Major. Many times during the course of the novel he overtly disobeys orders, and talks others into doing so. He questions orders from superiors over and over. This doesn't work against him though. He comes out looking like a genius several times as a result of his insubordination that eventually leads to the rescue of the sub and the solution to the mystery of the Pacific Vortex. A great deal of his insubordination is the result of his curiosity. He can't just take something at face value and leave it for later for others to do. He has to go and explore himself.

Pitt is not a trained operative agent, even though he had to have some training in the Air Force. But he is not just an ordinary guy laying on a Hawaiian beach either. He is basically set up by the crime organization to deliver the message regarding the missing *Starbuck*. The crime organization leader realizes too late, how much it underestimated Pitt, as the story of thirty years of missing ships and crime unfolds.

Commander Felix Dupree

Dupree is the captain of the missing submarine *Starbuck*. The most advanced submarine in the U.S. fleet is under Dupree's command on her first maiden voyage. The highly skilled Dupree has an excellent reputation in the Navy, but he also has a sense of curiosity and adventure. When his staff reports changes in the depth of a rapidly rising sea floor, Dupree is curious, but he is unconcerned. When he sees the fog, he can't resist the temptation to investigate. He orders the vessel to change course and steers into the fog, thus sealing the *Starbuck's* fate.

Admiral Leigh Hunter

Admiral Leigh Hunter, a career naval officer, is in charge of the Navy's 101st Salvage Fleet, which engages in undercover salvage operations around the world. He is also the father of Adrian Hunter. It is Hunter's office that has kept records for thirty years of the



ships missing in the mysterious Pacific Vortex and the circumstances involving the disappearances. Search and salvage operations were carried out under his command. Admiral Hunter requests Dirk Pitt's assignment to his group after the delivery of the communications capsule. It is Hunter who orders the search for the *Starbuck* in the new area that they define.

Hunter is placed in a precarious position more than once by Pitt's actions. Pitt tells Hunter that he flat out refuses to obey an order originating with the Pentagon. This shakes the career naval officer, but he goes along with Pitt. This gives us some insight into Hunter's character since he sees some of himself in the younger Pitt. He defies Pentagon orders to give Dirk Pitt the chance to save the submarine.

Commander Burdette Denver

A member of Admiral Hunter's staff, Denver is with Hunter, Boland and Cinana when Pitt arrives with the communications capsule. It is Denver who recognizes Pitt as a NUMA Special Projects Director and the son of a California senator, who chairs the Naval Appropriations Committee. Denver keeps Hunter from calling the Shore Patrol during their first encounter with Pitt. Denver is also a career naval officer who has been involved in the salvage operations and is instrumental, along with Boland, in informing Pitt about events in the Pacific Vortex and in ascertaining the bogusness of Dupree's last message.

Commander Boland

Boland is a member of Hunter's staff who was with Hunter, Cinana, and Denver that first day when Pitt arrived with the *Starbuck's* communication capsule. He is a part of Hunter's inner circle, along with Cinana and Denver, and is the Executive Officer of the 101st Fleet Salvage Operation. An experienced, career naval officer, Boland is the skipper of the *Martha Ann*, the undercover salvage vessel sent to find the sunken submarine. Boland allows himself to be manipulated by Pitt, instead of following orders, when he allows Pitt to dive to investigate the just found submarine. This is what opens up the whole story of Delphi and the island of Kanoli.

Adrian Hunter

Adrian is the daughter of Admiral Hunter, a former amour of Pitt and the present one of Cinana. She is the catalyst that almost gets Pitt killed by Summer the first night after the episode in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel bar. Her role in the novel is not major, but she appears at crucial times, like the hotel bar scene and again after Cinana is killed. She is kidnapped and held hostage by Delphi who thinks he can use her as a pawn against her father, Admiral Hunter.



Captain Orl Cinana

Cinana is the officer in command of the salvage fleet. He is present when Pitt first arrives at Hunter's office with the communications capsule and he is the one who becomes nervous and wants the Shore Patrol called. He is also present at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel bar later that evening and apologizes for the altercation at the Admiral's office. He is apparently waiting for Adrian, who shows up after he leaves. This leads to Dirk's encounter with Summer, who has been sent to kill Cinana, and mistakes Dirk for Cinana, since he is sitting at the bar with Adrian when Summer arrives. Cinana is Delphi's informant on the Admiral's staff and is eventually killed by Delphi's men when he becomes too nervous about the investigation.

George Papaaloa

George is an acquaintance of Dirk's who works at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum of Polynesian Ethnology and Natural History. Dirk visits George to find out what he can about the Pacific Vortex. It is George who tells Dirk about the legend of the sunken island of Kanoli. He tells Pitt that only one other person has ever come and asked questions, and that was a man with golden eyes who came soon after the end of the Second World War.

Summer Moran

Summer is the mysterious woman who appears at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel bar; lures Adrian outside to engage in a physical fight, then comes back in to Dirk. While walking outside looking for Adrian, Summer tries to stab Dirk with a syringe. She later tells him that the syringe contains a harmless truth serum but analysis proves it to be a deadly poison. Summer, strangely enough, helps Pitt avoid execution by her father's men after Cinana is murdered. Dirk again comes into contact with her in the caves of Kanoli.

Delphi Moran

Delphi, the father of Summer, is the head of the crime organization that is responsible for the missing ships, including the *Starbuck* and the *Andrei Vyborg*. He is the son of Frederick Moran, who the museum curator described as the man with the golden eyes. His father and two other scientists created the underwater living quarters in the caves of Kanoli to escape the nuclear holocaust they thought the world was coming to. Delphi is the one who build the crime organization based on piracy, murder and insurance fraud that survived for thirty years and created the mystery of the Pacific Vortex.



Lieutenant March

March is the navigation officer on the *Martha Ann*. He is a skilled diver and is familiar with submarines. He is assigned by Boland to accompany Pitt on his first dive to investigate the *Starbuck*, just after it is located. He is the only one to show fear, as they swim around the sunken submarine. He doesn't want to enter the sub, but does so at Pitt's prodding. After they enter the submarine and find a survivor. March is killed by Delphi's men while aboard the *Starbuck*.

Seaman First Class Farris

Farris is the sole remaining survivor that Pitt and March find on the *Starbuck*. He has been driven mad by the treatment he has received by Delphi's men, who have kept him alive in the hopes that he will show them how to operate the submarine.

Al Giordino

Al Giordino is a boyhood friend of Pitt's who can also fly and dive. Giordino joins Pitt on the mission to put a crew on the *Starbuck* and sail her back to base. He is also involved in exploring the seamount and finding the entrance to Kanoli with Pitt. When they unknowingly get caught in the current from the cave's powerful turbines, it is Giordino who saves Pitt by hanging on to him and finding a place of safety in a cave. Both Giordino and Pitt are injured during the incident but this doesn't stop them from finding the entrance to the Kanoli cave system and finding Delphi. Giordino and Pitt are there together at the end, and with Adrian, escape from the caves. Like his friend, Giordino also has a sense of adventure. It is he who prods Pitt on when they learn that their communications have been jammed and intercepted, as well as when Pitt has thoughts of aborting the mission.

Lieutenant Commander Samuel Crowcroft

Crowcroft is a member of the mission to take the *Starbuck*. He is an engineering officer who has volunteered to rescue the sub, along with a team of nineteen others. He is not mentally prepared for the opposition and the battle with Delphi's men, who are waiting for them on the sub. In the end, he frees the sub and rescues Pitt, Giordino and Adrian.



Objects/Places

The Pacific Ocean

The Pacific Ocean, in and around Hawaii, is the site of the location of the Pacific Vortex and the scene for the action of the novel. The area known as the Pacific Vortex is another Bermuda Triangle in that it is the locale of the strange disappearances of many ships. It turns out that the search area is not the sight of the ships graveyard; that is found to be in the opposite direction where the entrance to the sunken island of Kanoli is located.

Kaena Point Beach

The novel begins and ends on this beach. This is the beach where a sunbathing, vacationing Dirk Pitt is relaxing when he spots the canister bobbing around in the water and swims out to see what it is, which begins all of the action of the novel. This beach is the scene of the brief epilogue where a reflective Pitt goes to think about the events that have occurred.

The Starbuck

The Prologue takes place on the *Starbuck* as we see the chain of events that led Dupree to alter the sub's course and investigate the rise in the seafloor and the fog bank. The sub is visited by Pitt and March after it is discovered on the sea floor. On it, they find a surviving crewmember and two of Delphi's guards. The Navy either has to destroy the sub or rescue it, since it is sitting on the ocean floor with its nuclear reactors and missiles intact. In the end it is rescued, as Crowhaven gets it free from the bottom during the percussion from the explosions.

Pearl Harbor

The base at Pearl Harbor is the home of the 101st Salvage Fleet. Most of the meetings take place on the base in Admiral Hunter's office or command center. The command center is underground, entranced through a bunker surrounded by security.

Royal Hawaiian Hotel Bar

This is the bar in the hotel where the vacationing Pitt is staying. This is the bar that Pitt retreats to after delivering the capsule to Hunter. Here, he runs into Cinana, Adrian and Summer.



Royal Hawaiian Hotel - Pitt's Room

Pitt does not spend much time in his hotel room, but it is the scene of some important events. He returns to the room with the unconscious Summer after she tries to stab him with a lethal syringe. Summer escapes through a bathroom window. Adrian comes to his hotel room after Cinana's death, followed by Delphi and his men. The planned bathtub execution of Pitt fails, because Summer loosens his bonds and slips him a knife.

The Martha Ann

The *Martha Ann* is the Navy's undercover salvage ship. It is loaded with the latest technology and has an onboard computer that allows remote operation of the vessel from the base. This is the vessel that Pitt, Boland and the crew set out in and find the ship graveyard where the *Starbuck* lay. The *Martha Ann* is the vessel that escaped being sunk by Delphi's men because of its remote computer control.

The Andrei Vyborg

This is the Russian trawler that has been looking for the *Starbuck*. Curious about the *Martha Ann* spending time in the new search area, the Russian spy ship comes to investigate and is sunk by Delphi's men. Pitt and Giordino find the wreck lying near the *Starbuck*.

Douglas C54 Aircraft

This plane, piloted by Pitt and Giordino, carries twenty volunteers who plan to rescue the *Starbuck*. Navy Seal volunteers are along in case of unexpected problems, which they run into. The plane is ditched in the Pacific, with the crew leaving the plane and entering the submarine.

Pisces Pacific Corporation

This is the front used by Delphi's crime organization. It was used to register ships and to collect the fraudulent insurance claims. It is situated in an old former army barracks on a remote corner of Maui where Delphi's transmitter is located. The team sent to capture the transmitter encounters unknown security equipment and armed resistance, as the staff inside blow up the transmitter and building. Pitt learns that Delphi has sold the installation to the Russians.

Kanoli

Kanoli is the legendary island that sunk in the Pacific. Dirk first hears of it from George Papaaloo at the Bishop Museum. He learns of a man with golden eyes, Delphi's father,

who was also a scientist, who Hunter's associates later identify along with two scientists that went missing.. The missing scientists, before they died, had created a posh living space in the underwater caves of the seamount. This underwater island of caves functions as Delphi's home and base of operations for his criminal organization for over thirty years, before Pitt and Giordino find it.



Themes

Sense of Adventure

The overriding theme of the novel is man's sense of adventure. This is what makes the novel a thriller. Pitt, Giordino and the rest of the cast of characters are not content to sit and watch. They are all doers. Most of the time they realize the sense of danger involved, but that, perhaps, is the allure of the adventure. It is Pitt's sense of adventure that leads him to delve into things that he shouldn't delve into, like entering the *Starbuck* when they located it.

Pitt is the only one who can fly the helicopter aboard the *Martha Ann*, yet he is the one who makes one last check for survivors before taking off. Granted, he finds and rescues the injured Boland. Couldn't one of the crew have made the final check? If any thing happened to Pitt, they all would have died, as Pitt is reminded when a crewman tells him that he is the only chopper pilot they have. Pitt's sense of adventure leads him to take unnecessary risks throughout the novel.

During the rescue of the *Starbuck*, Pitt and Giordino have eighteen minutes of air remaining. Do they follow the plan and join Crowhaven and the volunteers on the submarine? No they go off to look for the entrance to Kanoli and its system of underwater caves. They almost get killed in the current of the cave's heating system. Both are injured and lose most of their equipment, but that seems to make it more exciting for them. But it is this sense of adventure and danger that makes the novel interesting and a thriller. If Pitt was not constantly getting himself into situations, the novel would be boring, and the reader would be willing to put the book down. Pitt, who is a trained scientist, diver and pilot, is not a trained operative. There are times when the reader feels that Pitt is in over his head, as with the syringes filled with poison. But Pitt survives and accomplishes his mission.

Curious Nature of Man

A second, closely related theme is the curious nature of man, exemplified by Dirk Pitt. Dirk, a scientist, has an inquisitive mind. He has to, not only know how things work; he has to find out for himself. He does not appear to be able to delegate authority to those under him or those with him, as mentioned above when he has to make the final check of the *Martha Ann* by himself. The scientist in Dirk did away with any of the science fiction concepts for events in the Pacific Vortex. The scientist in him makes him want to find out how these ships' disappearances are accomplished.

When Pitt first confronts Delphi's divers boarding the ship and he kills two, he has to check out the apparatus they are outfitted with, in spite of the danger, so he knows how they board a ship. When he is verbally battling with Delphi in Kanoli near the end, he has to find out where the fog comes from. Every fact and detail has to be put into place



by his scientific mind. This curiosity combined with his quest for adventure is what is responsible for getting him into the situations he finds himself in. This is evident from the opening chapter of the novel. Most people sitting on the beach and seeing a floating object far out in the waves do not risk their lives swimming out to retrieve the object. Even though Pitt is a trained diver, it is his curiosity that causes him to act, not his common sense.

We do see Pitt hesitate at times, as when his boss tells him that he cannot refuse the assignment to Hunter's Salvage Fleet since he, Pitt, is an active Air Force Major. The only other time we see him hesitate is in the cockpit of the C54 when he finds out that Pisces Pacific has intercepted and jammed communications between the C54 and Hunter. His friend Giordino talks him into continuing the mission.

Value of Friendship

A third theme is the value of friendship. When Pitt devises the scheme to ditch the C54 in the ocean and put a crew aboard the *Starbuck*, he doesn't ask for an available pilot and diver. He calls on his childhood buddy, Al Giordino to join the mission. In this case, friendship implies not only trust and knowledge of how the other thinks and acts, but also knowing the other's actions and limitations. When Giordino saves Pitt's life and finds a safe cave for them, they are both injured with one air tank between them. Do they head to the surface? No, they work together to explore the caves. After an angry Delphi orders his men to dump Pitt and Giordano in the surface waters and let them fend for themselves, they don't go along passively. Pitt knows that Giordino is feigning unconsciousness, waiting for the opportunity to attack, which he does. The value of a lifelong friendship means the two know each other well enough to know what the other is going to do without having to ask. It means that if one is in some kind of trouble, he doesn't have to ask the other for help, even in spite of their gruff manner with each other. The value of their friendship means that Pitt's and Giordino's actions complement each other, or they wouldn't have survived. They were both willing to sacrifice for the other, but they both took care of each other. And they both, along with Adrian, emerged alive from the underwater caves.



Style

Point of View

There is no narrator, *per se*. The story is related by the characters and the nature of their dialogue, with the characters pretty much telling their own story. The feelings and thoughts of the characters, as well as description of the action, are revealed by the author in the text. Cussler is objective in his description of facts and events. There is no overkill in the text, as points are not repeated over and over. Much of this may be due to the fact that there is much dialogue. Instead of the author presenting and explaining facts and events with a lot of background text, the characters do this through their dialogue. This has the effect of making the reader feel like he is sitting at the meeting table during their discussions.

It is obvious that Cussler is fond of his Dirk Pitt character. He seems to let the character do whatever he wants without reprimand from his superiors. Cussler seems to be the hardest on Admiral Hunter's character. Adrian presents her father as a cold man, more interested in running around the world chasing shipwrecks than he is in his own family. Hunter himself seems to confirm this when he says he will sacrifice Adrian, if necessary, to do his job. Cussler seems neutral toward the other characters. It is also interesting to note that there is no emotion displayed between Delphi and his daughter, Summer, until the very end when Summer asks about her father's condition after he is killed, and then refuses to leave the caves with Pitt, Giordino and Adrian.

Setting

The novel takes place in Hawaii and in the Pacific around Hawaii. Pearl Harbor is the sight of the 101st Fleet Salvage Operation command, even though they operate around the world. The base, for the most part, represents the only place of safety in the novel. It is the place where the characters go to after something has happened. It is the scene of most of their meetings where information is imparted. Off base is where all the action takes place, from the quite beauty of Kaena Point beach to the underwater caves of Kanoli. Once the characters are off base, they are reachable by whatever is out there. This is evident in the scenes at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and bar. Every time Pitt is in his hotel room, something happens. It is obviously not a place where Pitt can safely relax.

Since the Pacific Vortex is the graveyard for shipwrecks, much of the novel takes place underwater. Cussler is good at describing the details so the reader is always aware of what is happening; and Cussler provides the proper amount of detail without losing the reader in confusion or overwhelming the reader with details. Even readers with no knowledge of diving or technology have no problems following. Although the novel is a thriller, it is the sense of adventure that makes it a thriller. At no time is the reader fearful or afraid.



Language and Meaning

The novel is written in everyday English, which the characters speak clearly and plainly. The reader is not overwhelmed with technical jargon, military jargon or the salty language of the sea. This is why the characters come across as real people and have credibility with the reader. Even when Boland and Pitt are talking about the technical equipment on the *Martha Ann*, the language is clear and concise. The author has a way of making difficult technical concepts very understandable to the reader so the reader doesn't have to have any knowledge of science or diving. Cussler also does not overload the reader with wordiness. There is just enough detail for the reader to know what is happening in plain everyday English. At no time is the reader bogged down in details or facts or left wondering what has happened. The use of any other language or style would not have had this effect on the reader.

Structure

The novel is divided into eighteen chapters, with a Prologue and a brief Epilogue. The chapters are unnamed and the story is presented, for the most part, chronologically. Any historical events are clearly identified as such, so the reader is not groping around trying to get a grip on the timeframe.



Quotes

"Every ocean takes its toll of men and ships, yet none devours them with the voracious appetite of the Pacific....Despite all this, the world's largest ocean tends to be a tranquil place; even its name means peaceful and mild of temper." (Prologue, p. vii).

"The *Starbuck* was built in San Francisco from the keel up, as no other sub had been built before; every component, every system in her pressure hull, was computer designed. The first of a new generation of underwater ships - the beginning of a submerged city capable of cruising at one hundred twenty-five knots through the timeless depths two thousand feet beneath the sunlit surface. The *Starbuck* was like a thorough-bred jumper at her first horse show, chafing at the bit, ready to show her stuff." (Prologue, p. viii).

"Many of the *Starbuck's* crew had served under Dupree on prior assignments, and although they didn't exactly offer him their blind devotion, they did respect and admire his ability and judgment. They trusted him to a man, confident that he would never make a critical mistake that would endanger their lives. Any other time, they might have been right. But this time they were all terribly wrong." (Prologue, pp. xii-xiii).

"Pitt was an old hand at rip currents and undertows; he had bodysurfed for years and knew their every trick. A man could be swept out to sea from one section of the shore, while a hundred yards away children cavorted in the diminishing waves without noticing the slightest tug from the current." (Chapter 1, p. 4).

"We have a saying in the Navy about ships lost out here.

Those who lie deep in the Atlantic Sea

Are recalled by shrines, wreaths, and poetry,

But those who lie in the Pacific Sea

Lie forgotten for all eternity." (Chapter 3, p. 21).

"He savored the delicate fragrance that whispered about Summer's body. This time he recognized it as plumeria, not an uncommon scent in the Hawaiian Islands, but it was the first time Pitt had sensed its presence on a woman." (Chapter 3, p. 30).

"Hunter stared at Pitt with a strange believing look indeed. *With this man, almost anything is possible*, Admiral Sandecker had told him earlier." (Chapter 6, p. 77).

"Admiral Hunter insisted on a skeleton crew during the search operation. No sense in wasting lives if the *Martha Ann* should meet the same fate as the others." (Chapter 7, p. 87).



"What a crazy group he'd run across in the last two days, he thought despairingly. A devious-minded girl who tried to ram a hypodermic needle into his back, an assassin with tobacco-stained teeth, a bastard of an admiral, a lieutenant commander with a ridiculous tattoo, and a little commander who was apparently the smartest of them all."

(Chapter 8, p. 91).

"Delphi passed his hand over his brow and rubbed his closed eyes. It was as though he was trying to erase a part error. 'You were my most inexcusable mistake. Three decades of perfect isolation and you nearly destroyed it.'" (Chapter 17, p. 242).

"The fragrance from the wisp of plumeria in his hand pierced his nostrils; from somewhere beyond the horizon a soft voice seemed to say; '*A ka makani hema pa.*'" The words were carried on the light breeze that drifted in from the ocean." (Epilogue, p. 269).

Topics for Discussion

Why did Summer try to kill Pitt outside the Royal Hawaiian Hotel bar?

What is the significance of Pitt's job at the National Underwater Marine Agency?

Boland's attitude toward Pitt seems to change on board the *Martha Ann*. Why?

In spite of having devised the plan to put a crew on the *Starbuck*, Pitt, while flying to the site, has second thoughts and considers aborting the mission. What changed his mind?

What is the role of the Pisces Pacific Corporation in Delphi's organization? How did its role change?

What is the significance of Delphi's underrating Pitt?

How might the sale of the Pisces Pacific Corporation have led to the fate of the *Andrei Vyborg*?