

# **Plum Island Study Guide**

## **Plum Island by Nelson Demille**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Plum Island Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1-2.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 3-4.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5-6.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7-10.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11-13.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 14-16.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 17-23.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 24-29.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 30-33.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 33-38.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>



# Plot Summary

Plum Island is a fictional novel about a convalescing New York Police homicide detective named John Corey, who gets involved in a multiple murder investigation while he is supposed to be recovering from serious wounds. John is originally working as a consultant for the small township, where an old friend of his is the Chief of Police, but when he is relieved of this position, he continues the investigation on his own. Eventually the county detective assigned to solve the case, Beth Penrose, invites him to collaborate with her and the team solves the original double murder, and all of the murders committed by the same man, Frederic Tobin.

John Corey is relaxing on his Uncle Harry's deck when Sylvester Maxwell, Chief of the local police, asks John to accompany him to the murder scene. Tom and Judy Gordon, biologists at the nearby Plum Island biological animal research center, and recent friends of John, have both been shot in the head on the deck of their home. John meets Detective Beth Penrose of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, Foster of the FBI, and a man named Ted Nash who says he is from the Department of Agriculture but turns out to be a CIA agent.

The initial investigation focuses on the Gordons stealing a virus from the Plum Island facility and selling it to a foreign government. To this end, the team of Nash, Foster, John, Beth and Max are taken on a lengthy tour of the facility, including the uninhabited part of the island that contains a revolutionary war era abandoned fort. While on the tour, John and the team meet the head of security, Paul Stevens. They also learn that the Gordons were involved in researching a vaccine for Ebola, were amateur archeologists, and had free reign to bring their boat to and from work every day, fish and swim off the beaches of the secure island, and were well liked by the entire staff. When the team meets with the director of the lab, Dr. Zollner, he suggests that the Gordons stole a vaccine, not a virus or bacteria, and that becomes the official line of the lab, the FBI and the CIA.

Max tells John he is no longer needed as an investigator, but Beth continues to consult him. John begins interviewing other people who knew the Gordons, including their neighbors the Murphys, Frederic Tobin, and Emma. Tobin and John develop an adversarial relationship, and Emma becomes John's lover.

When Emma tells John about her historical knowledge concerning Captain Kidd and the buried treasure, John realizes the Gordons were not involved in vaccines or viruses, or even drugs, but actually with the treasure. He is convinced that with Tobin's assistance, the Gordons had found the treasure on Plum Island and were going to move it to the land they had recently purchased near the water.

Tobin realizes John is approaching the solution to the murder. John does not realize how desperate Tobin is until the morning when Beth comes to John's house and advises him that Emma is dead, as are the people who found the Gordons, the Murphys.



The hurricane is breaking over the island, but John is relentless in his search for Tobin. Beth is with him and is constantly trying to get him under control, but John uses his jeep and an ax to break into Tobin's office. He discovers a map made to look ancient that shows the treasure located on Tobin's own personal land. This convinces John that Tobin killed the Gordons and never intended to keep them as partners. Tobin was using the Gordons for access to Plum Island and nothing else.

As the hurricane rages, John and Beth go to Tobin's house, only to find they have missed him by a few minutes and he has taken his big cabin cruiser boat, a smaller boat in tow, a couple of rifles and shovels and gone out to sea.

John heads to the boathouse and gets the power boat that his left started up. Beth joins him at the last minute and the two battle the seas to chase Tobin. With the weather and their lack of boating knowledge, John and Beth are soon soaked, lost and taking on water. Tobin has used his radar and circled around behind them, intent on colliding with their boat with his larger one. As he gets close to them he is also firing his rifles, intending to kill them that way.

John and Beth manage to maneuver their sinking craft that is also almost out of gas to a crash landing on the beach of Plum Island. They find where Tobin has landed, and Beth thinks the best move is to wait there. John disagrees, feeling that he needs to hunt down and kill Tobin, wreaking his own justice for the murders of the innocents and his friends. John sets off, finds two more dead bodies at the fire station, and continues his search for Tobin. He finds Tobin in an artillery bunker and the two men fight. In the course of the fight, John discovers that Tobin does not have the treasure, and believes the Gordons told John where it was. John overtakes Tobin, cuts him open and leaves him for dead. As John leaves the bunker, he encounters Stevens, who has a rifle. Stevens says he has the treasure, and the last laugh. Just as Stevens is about to shoot John, Beth shoots Stevens and kills him.

The next morning, when the hurricane has passed, John and Beth take Tobin's boat to the ferry dock and Max meets them there. John heads for Manhattan to face the wrath of his NYPD supervisor. At his home, he finds a letter from the Gordons, written before their murder, verifying everything he has now discovered. John goes to meet with his supervisors and negotiate a way out of the trouble he is in for disobeying orders.

The last chapter shows John teaching homicide investigation, as a retired police officer. It is several months after the Plum Island incident, and he misses the police force, but accepts what needed to happen. He is also unattached. John is surprised to see that Beth Penrose has enrolled in his class. She catches him up on the latest from Suffolk County, and is gently offering to be in his life again. While he initially resists, he announces to the class that he is taking her for drinks that night.



# Chapters 1-2

## Chapters 1-2 Summary

John Corey, the narrator of this novel, is sitting on the porch of a cabin belonging to his Uncle Harry. The cabin is located on part of Long Island called the North Fork, and the cabin is facing the Great Peconic Bay. John is into his fifth month of convalescing from bullet wounds received while on duty as a New York City Police Department Homicide Detective. One bullet pierced a lung, but the recovery is going well. John is watching a yacht in the harbor and listening to the radio when Chief Sylvester Maxwell of the Southold Township Police Department, an old friend, joins him on the porch. Max just came from the Gordon house, about four miles away, where Tom and Judy Gordon have been found murdered. Max wants John to come look at the scene and work for the Township Police Department on a consultant basis. John is reluctant to become involved, but feels obligated to help his friend. The two men head towards the scene of the crime.

In Chapter 2, John and Max arrive at the Gordon house, and there are already several police cars and some media personnel. John and Max sign in and go to the scene of the murder. Tom and Judy Gordon are lying on the deck, their boat is nearby, and the engine is warm. Max and John look at the site, then Max goes to make a phone call. John's experience as a homicide detective allows him to see deeper into the evidence than most people, and he knew the Gordons when they were alive. John knows the couple are not dressed in their usual clothes, and that they were probably shot by someone they knew. He is still thinking about what he is seeing when Detective Penrose from Suffolk County questions his right to be at the scene of the crime. John purposely makes it difficult for her by not responding directly to her questions and telling her to go talk to the chief.

John steps into the Gordon boat and Penrose finally demands he get out. First John looks around, suggests to her that a guard be placed on the boat immediately, then attempts to get out of the boat. As she is helping him out of the boat, Penrose quickly removes his gun. When John tells her his name, she recognizes it from the publicity following his shooting. She returns his gun and walks away. John joins Max as Penrose is questioning the hiring of John as a consultant. John asks about the aluminum ice chest that is normally in the Gordon boat. Max instructs one of his officers, Bob Johnson, to drive John back home. Bob is speculating about the connection between the murders and the biological research station, and John tells him to stop talking and stop speculating immediately.

## Chapters 1-2 Analysis

These chapters are the exposition section of the plot, which provides the setting of a seemingly boring township that is becoming the scene of a brutal double murder. The



tone for the novel is set with John's flippant and sarcastic attitude, his never-off-duty approach to his life. In this introduction of the main character and the narrator, Corey is presented as a thick-skinned street cop who has seen plenty of action and is not repulsed by the idea of seeing dead bodies. His injuries represent a man who is tough but still human enough to require substantial recovery time. John's thoughts are cautious and jaded. Max is introduced as the strong silent type, a good partner and backup for the protagonist. Any comfort the reader is experiencing from this strong team is dashed when John mentions that the dead couple worked for a scary biological research center nearby.

The suspense increases as John's considerable homicide investigation experience reveals this is no ordinary murder. Obviously John is not a team worker, as he causes unnecessary difficulties between himself and Detective Penrose, as well as between Penrose and Max. John is cocky about seeing things that others don't. Vital clues are provided in this chapter with this detailed description of the bodies, the scene, and what is missing from the scene.



# Chapters 3-4

## Chapters 3-4 Summary

It is Monday night, and John has changed clothes and is at the Olde Towne Taverne, his favorite hangout in North Fork. Detective Elizabeth Penrose joins him. After another adversarial conversation, Elizabeth tells him to be at her office the next morning at 9:00 am. After awhile, she returns, telling him she is going back to the scene of the crime to meet with someone from the Department of Agriculture. She asks if John would like to come along, and suggests they start their relationship over. John agrees to meet her there. John finishes his meal, thinking that his reactions to Elizabeth's body are a good sign his health is returning. John also thinks about Tom and Judy Gordon, and what could have made them murder victims. He is reminded that these people were government workers at a highly secret installation, and their style of living seemed more extravagant than a government salary would allow.

In Chapter 4, John drives over to the Gordon house in his new Jeep. He is irritated that the vehicle has a voice system to alert him that his lights are on, his parking brake is on, and other cautions usually just relayed to the driver by blinking lights or beeps. John asks the crime scene recording officer why the Department of Agriculture official has not signed in, and the non-committal answer confirms John's theory that the official is actually CIA or FBI. Inside the house, he joins the group of detectives and officials. John believes it is significant this meeting is in the kitchen and not in the mobile command post where it should have been. The FBI is there, and a man named Ted Nash is introduced as the representative from the Department of Agriculture. During the discussion, John politely informs Ted Nash that he forgot to sign in.

It is mentioned that John Corey knew the murdered couple, and the FBI begins asking him questions, but John has a few of his own. When he asks what the FBI interest is in this case, he is frostily told they are being cautious about something that might threaten national security. As the meeting participants begin to work out what happened, John notices that Detective Penrose and Ted Nash are on a first name basis. In the course of the discussion, John begins to make demands, and it is revealed that Nash is not, after all, with the Department of Agriculture, but with an agency involved in international espionage. John wants to interview the security personnel at Plum Island immediately, and Max negotiates for the next day. John questions what Plum Island is involved in, and Nash replies that the government facility is studying biological warfare as it applies to human/animal transference of diseases. There is a long discussion on how the bacteria is untraceable because it is so tiny and could multiply on its own.

## Chapters 3-4 Analysis

John and Elizabeth reset their cooperation with each other, and John feels some sexual sparks there. Mentioning international kidnapers and eco-terrorists present a variety of



reasons for eliminating this young and supposedly happy couple. The battle lines between the conflicting and overlapping law enforcement agencies involved are drawn, and John Corey is the lone man out, as usual. At the end of the chapter, a sense of urgency is introduced as the FBI agent describes the very real threat of the death of thousands of American citizens by an plague, virus or bacterial terrorist action.





# Chapters 5-6

## Chapters 5-6 Summary

John leaves the group and goes to the room where the Gordons' home computer was kept. There is a county officer working on it, and he allows John to take the financial printouts to the next room to study them. John passes the bookshelves where there are some sailing and boating books, and remembers that the Gordons did not fish or swim, just liked to drive the boat fast. He pulls down a book of navigational charts and finds a number written on the bottom of one of the pages: 44106818. He asks the forensics officer, Sally Hines, to check the book for prints. She mentions that whoever murdered the Gordons was probably wearing gloves. John reminds her to get prints from the two government officials in the kitchen.

John walks outside near the dock and is tired, so he sits down to rest. He notices the flag post in front of the Gordons is flying the pirate flag, but remembers they often flew whatever flag struck their fancy. He sees Beth Penrose sit down further along the beach. She is very angry with him for his actions and words in the meeting. Beth says John is making her look bad in her first homicide investigation. He apologizes and they return to discussing the case. He offers her his house as a place to stay for the night. He tells her about the number he found, and offers a theory that this murder is about drugs, not plagues.

As Chapter 6 opens, it is 2:00 am the next morning, and John is sitting in the kitchen of Uncle Harry's cabin, reviewing the Gordon financial statements. He finds that they were not wealthy; in fact, they were overextended, like many American couples. He does find a check for \$25,000 made out to Margaret Wiley. He calls her, even though it is early in the morning, and finds out she sold them a piece of land. The Gordons told Ms. Wiley they wanted it as a place to watch the sea. The land does not appear to have any other possibilities, not even as a building site. The phone rings, and it is Beth, notifying John they will be taking the ferry the next morning to Plum Island. John goes to bed, thinking about his motives for staying involved in this investigation and realizing it is because he needs to prove some things to himself.

John is feeling his age, and the lapse in action since his shooting is beginning to wear on him. He welcomes this opportunity to be needed again, although he does not realize that is what he is doing.

## Chapters 5-6 Analysis

A new theory is presented, to slow down the tension and suspense in the plot. This chapter is dedicated to displaying John's ability to bypass the normal channels of investigation, to form new theories, and to maintain his independence. He and Beth have recovered from another argument, and are working together again.



More clues are revealed, with the number in the chart book, that the perpetrator wore gloves and that the flag pole is waving the flag of pirates. These clues are laced between the action, so the reader is not immediately aware of their importance.

Chapter 6 reveals the vulnerable and human side of John Corey. He has escaped death by shooting, but wants to return to his previous strength and abilities. More clues arrive, and the reader is being led to believe the drug dealing theory.



# Chapters 7-10

## Chapters 7-10 Summary

John drives through the area's vineyards on his way to the ferry and makes a mental note to speak with Frederic Tobin, who was a friend of the Gordons and a winemaker. John is thinking about Plum Island and the rumors he had heard in the past that Lyme disease had come from that research facility. He remembers the summers he and his family used to spend on North Fork as guests of Uncle Harry. John arrives at the ferry dock and arranges his vehicle so he can watch who gets off the early ferry. As he suspected, it is Ted Nash and the FBI man. John wonders why the federal officials went over to the island before the rest of the team, and realizes it is because they want to find out the truth before the locals discover anything. John knows Max will not like someone taking over his investigation.

Max arrives soon after, but John does not tell him about the federal agents having already been to the island. Detective Penrose arrives and they board the ferry. John realizes Beth was at the ferry landing the same time he was, and has made the same assumption about the federal officials as he did. The security officer Stevens behaves as if the FBI and Nash have just arrived, although he was one of the people John saw on the ferry. As the ferry makes its way to Plum Island, Stevens says nothing is missing from the island and there is no suspicion that the Gordons' murder had anything to do with their job. A helicopter flies close and John sees a man at the door with a rifle. Stevens explains that this is the deer patrol, the people assigned to make sure no deer swim out from the mainland to the island. Stevens explains the level system of the labs, and remarks that Plum Island has one of the few Level Five biolabs in the world and has been receiving the Ebola virus. Shortly afterwards, the group arrives at Plum Island.

Chapter 8 begins with the team waiting for Stevens to arrange their visit. Beth asks Nash who he is with and he responds CIA. Beth tells both Foster and Nash that if they ever visit the crime scene again they are to sign in with their true affiliations. John asks Stevens if this location is where the Gordons parked their boat as they came to work every day, and is informed it is. John also asks what caliber gun the security personnel carries, and is informed it is a .45, as is the murder weapon. As the group is driven around the island on a bus, Stevens talks about the history of the island, and references several archaeological sites that had been identified by himself and the Gordons, and the interest the Peconic Historical Society had in these sites. Stevens continues his patter throughout the trip, and John is only half listening as he looks at the island. To him, it seems it would be easy to breach the security. Stevens indicates there is more security than can be observed. The group stops at Fort Terry, an old Revolutionary War site.

A definite conflict arises between John and Stevens, the security director. John instinctively feels threatened by this man who looks so cool and professional and has



such empty cold eyes. John thinks Stevens is hiding something, and that he probably has a military service background in special ops, a trained assassin.

In Chapter 9, Stevens shows the group the old fort and explains there are many tunnels underneath, all abandoned. There are some uncovered cannon balls, and Stevens says the Gordons found those. As they are walking around the old fort, they see that the fort is in ruins, but many of the battlements are intact and the tunnels underground are all closed off. When John asks Stevens what is stored in the tunnels, he is sarcastically told they contain the aliens from Roswell.

John and Beth get a moment alone. He tells her he has some news, and she has some as well, so they plan to meet for dinner later. John sees part of a small hill eroding and notices some red dirt that matches the dirt John saw on the tennis shoes of the Gordons. He takes some and Stevens asks what he is doing. John refuses to give up the dirt. The group continues on their tour, and John continues asking questions. Stevens keeps his cool but is getting angrier at John. The bus stops at the headquarters.

In Chapter 10, the group is finally shown into the headquarters building, and after a brief tour, are ushered into a cafeteria to wait for their meeting with the director, Dr. Zollner. Max and John are off to one side, talking about the possibilities of getting any information regarding the Gordons' activities at the research facility. It does not look good. John tells Dr. Zollner's assistant they need to see the office where the Gordons worked, and Max backs him up. Once there, it is clear to John, Max and Beth that the office had already been searched. Beth is beginning to assert herself regarding control of evidence and the investigation, and butting heads with the federal officers. The group is taken to the communications office, where they meet a man named Gibbs and question him about the Gordons. Gibbs reveals that the Gordons and their boat were often in the area around the island, and that the Gordons were bending the rules.

The routine for the patrol boats and the helicopters are discussed in detail, and other security measures are mentioned. There is another location for the security equipment, in the basement, but the team will not be allowed to visit that area.

## Chapters 7-10 Analysis

These chapters serve to highlight the conflict between John and any form of authority. Mysteries deepen as John observes the FBI, Stevens and Nash keeping secrets from the other law enforcement people. The concern about plagues and missing bacteria seem more real than before, even though Stevens is denying any connection with the death of the Gordons. Stevens the security chief represents the cold and calculating government, heartless and ruthless in its pursuit of its own goals. The conflict between John and all other law enforcement personnel, with the exception of his friend Max, is defined more clearly in this chapter. Although he is not the primary on this case, John asks all the questions, makes all of the observations. Example after example of the lax security leads the reader to believe there is more here than meets the eye. John



continues to be obnoxious, especially with Stevens, and it is difficult to understand why he is behaving that way. There is considerable distraction from the plot while these law enforcement officials who are pursuing a murder investigation are carted around on a bus like aged tourists instead of being taken directly to the headquarters and to the security personnel. More clues, more confusion and more lies build. John begins to ask pointed questions, but backs off when the FBI and CIA men start paying attention. It is difficult to tell whether the federal officers are covering up something or just overplaying their roles in keeping secrets. John continues to be alarmed about the lack of security against a large attack, and wonders why the Gordons were allowed so much freedom



# Chapters 11-13

## Chapters 11-13 Summary

The group is ushered into Dr. Zollner's office and made to wait again. John tells the gatekeeper June that if Dr. Zollner does not show up within ten seconds, they will charge him with obstruction of justice. Dr. Zollner enters the room and brings them into his private office. Dr. Zollner offers the suggestion that instead of stealing a virus, the Gordons have invented a wonderful vaccine and that is what has been stolen. All of the law enforcement officials say they agree with this theory. Dr. Zollner then says they are going to the containment area.

In Chapter 12, Dr. Zollner guides the group into the clean room, where they meet one of the Gordons' colleagues, Dr. Chen, who agrees with Dr. Zollner's assessment of the problem. John continues to ask Dr. Zollner questions, and learns that the Gordons took a trip to England to visit the sister lab to the Plum Island facility, and extended their trip by a week to stay in London for personal reasons. John does not remember any charges on their financial statements. Zollner continues the tour, and interjects a lot of stupid jokes that are beginning to get on John's nerves. The tour ends when they are taken to Zone Four and see the infected animals. John is riveted to one cell where there is a pig dying, and the bleeding from the animal is going down into the cell drains. John relates to this pig because it reminds him of when he got shot in New York City and was lying in the gutter, watching his own blood go down into the drain.

In Chapter 13, the group showers and are disinfected, and Dr. Zollner tells them goodbye. John notices that for a man who runs a facility that may have just lost a multi-million dollar vaccine, Dr. Zollner does not seem concerned. John also wonders what will happen next, now that Zollner has presented the vaccine theory. John knows it will lessen the fear and tension everyone has been feeling regarding a potential plague wiping out all of New York City. On the ferry back, John speaks to the ferry driver and finds that even he is now thinking a vaccine was stolen and not a virus. When the group reaches the ferry landing at North Fork, the federal officers say they are satisfied with the case and leave it to Beth. Max says he has other things to do and says the same. Everyone leaves.

## Chapters 11-13 Analysis

Another theory as to why the Gordons were murdered is offered by Dr. Zollner, who needs to keep this investigation as quiet as possible. Beth is still asserting herself. There are many questions, but the answers are not logical. The theme of an evil American government that has the power to kill the country several times over is heavy in this chapter. The director of this death facility is ironically a character who looks like Burl Ives or Colonel Sanders, which causes the reader to think there is no harm being done there.



Chapter 12 reinforces the evil government doing scary things theme, while having a benevolent large man explain that it is necessary and vital. John wants to know everything so he looks at everything, and every phase of the research facility is described. It is not clear what, if any, of this information is relevant to the plot, but the persistence of John's questioning shows his investigative style. The government representatives seem satisfied that the case is now a matter of a simple murder, not international terror, and leave Beth to do her job. But is this just a ruse? John is paranoid.



# Chapters 14-16

## Chapters 14-16 Summary

John and Beth interview the Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, the neighbors who found the Gordon's bodies. The neighbors say that the locks were changed on the Gordon house last week. The Murphys are an old couple who have seen a lot of vehicles at the Gordon house, including John's. The Murphys also mention a sports car and a man who came often to the Gordon house, but they don't know who he is. John and Beth walk next door and try to reenact the scene of the crime. They are unsure about the position or importance of the missing ice chest.

In Chapter 15, Beth and John go to Mrs. Wiley's house to ask her about the land she sold to the Gordons. The old woman takes them to the land, and as they are following her, they talk about the puzzle of two government workers who could be transferred at any time, paying a lot of money to own land they could have leased. Also, the land is not suitable for landing a boat or growing anything. As they look around the land, it is beautiful, but it is difficult to imagine buying it just for that. Beth finds a rope tied to a tree, and when they follow the rope they find a small cave below the high tide level. All this does is raise more questions, so they return to John's house. Beth leaves him there with a promise to meet the next day, if possible. The investigation appears to be at a standstill, awaiting forensics to recover the bullets, the autopsies, and other details.

When John goes home, there are ten messages on his answering machine, mostly from his family. There is a message from Max saying John's services are no longer needed in the investigation, a veiled threat from Ted Nash, and a message from Beth saying she might not see him again for a while. John begins to feel he is being edged out of the action, and he thinks about the Gordons. Tom and Judy had been nice people, and John is concerned about their reputations as engineered by the government and people like Nash.

Chapter 16 begins with John waking up the next morning. He walks out on the dock of his Uncle Harry's cabin and vividly recalls the day the Gordons tied up their boat there and asked John to come for a ride. He remembers them being bright and beautiful and wonders at the conversations they had, searching for clues as to who could have killed this couple. John decides to go interview the vintner, Tobin. Tobin is pleasant but guarded and responds to John's questions with pat answers. He shows John around and gives him a bottle of wine. John is his usual obnoxious self, and keeps comparing the wine to beer. He manages to get himself invited to a Peconic archeological society event as Tobin's guest.

Tobin is a man with very extravagant tastes, and is concerned about his appearance. His winery is elegantly appointed, and the decor is upscale and beautiful. John notices the wine tasting room is full of customers and that the wine is selling well.





As John leaves, he is sure Tobin knows more about the Gordons than he shows. John also notices that Tobin drives a white sports car.

## Chapters 14-16 Analysis

These chapters serve to increase the action in the novel, and to alienate John from the rest of the law enforcement officials. The teamwork between Beth and John is becoming more solid, but the mystery is more confusing than ever. John Corey, smart mouthed New York cop, has just been removed from the murder investigation and reminded that he should be recuperating and staying low. Because he is a stubborn and courageous character, John uses this quiet time to review the evidence and form new conclusions, rather than be bitter about his exclusion from the program. Frederic Tobin is introduced as yet another person who knows more about the murdered couple than he is willing to share. This chapter reinforces the relationship John had with the Gordons, and reinforces the determination of John as an investigator with something to prove.



# Chapters 17-23

## Chapters 17-23 Summary

John tries to find the historical society location, and phones Mrs. Wiley to let him in. Then he takes Tobin's wine brochure to the Murphy house and asks them if Tobin is the man they saw at the Gordon house a few days before the murder. The Murphys recognize Tobin as the man they saw, and John draws the shape of a Porsche, the type Tobin drives. The Murphys confirm the shape as the sports car they saw. John's curiosity is raised at this point, because Tobin indicated the relationship with the Gordons was casual, and that the Gordons had sought him out for company.

John has some calls on his answering machine he is not responding to, one from Max and another from his boss in New York City. John is also saying some strange things about Beth, telling Mrs. Wiley they are getting married and telling the Murphys she is pregnant. John returns to the historical society and meets Emma Whitestone, who was sent by Mrs. Wiley to assist him. John's conversation with Emma is revealing. She tells him Tobin sought out the Gordons, Emma used to be Tobin's lover, and Tobin told her the Gordons dealt in cocaine. She also reveals that Tobin is a gambler and has lost a lot of money. John is attracted to Emma and she is flirting with him. They go to lunch.

In Chapter 18, John and Emma go from lunch to his house, to bed. They go swimming afterwards and spend the afternoon and evening in the water and making love. He asks her to spend the night. As they are looking at the stars and talking, Emma is still talking about history and mentions Captain Kidd's treasure which is thought to have been buried somewhere on the island. Suddenly John thinks he has the answer to the murders, but he needs to think about the evidence and the interviews a bit longer.

Chapter 19 begins the next morning. Over breakfast, John tells Emma about the numbers he found and she says they were in a letter Captain Kidd sent to his wife before his death. John drops Emma off with an agreement to meet at four that afternoon, and drives around. He ends up at the Plum Island ferry landing and disobeys an order from security to pull over. He leaves with four security guards waving at him. He drives back to the land the Gordons purchased, then to a state park called Captain Kidd's Trees. John's theory is that the Gordons found the buried treasure of Captain Kidd on Plum Island, wanted to move it to their new land on North Fork, then dig it up and claim it as theirs. His theory also is that the Gordons had a partner and that the partner is the murderer. John heads to Tobin's vineyard again.

In Chapter 20, John goes to the library and does some research on buried treasure, learning that if it is found on your own land, you do not have to pay taxes on it or share it with any government entities. John decides that this is the reason the Gordons bought the seemingly useless land from Mrs. Wiley, so they could transfer the treasure from Plum Island to that land and behave as if that is where it was all along.



In Chapter 21, John goes to meet Emma and they have sex in the museum while he is wearing a pirate outfit. John realizes he is becoming very attached to Emma.

In Chapter 22, in the time after making love, Emma is teaching John the historical records of Captain Kidd, and they begin theorizing as to how the Gordons found anything of importance. The archeological digs, the research in the archives, and the trip to England all could be part of their search. Emma and John leave to get a drink.

In Chapter 23, John and Emma go to dinner and spend time laughing and talking and their interest in each other deepens. The restaurant they dine at is the one where John originally met the Gordons, and he remembers the night well. Emma says she will spend the night with John again.

## Chapters 17-23 Analysis

The reader is distracted again with John's libido taking over the investigation, and this serves to slow down the pace of the novel and lull the reader into thinking nothing is happening. John's unconventional style of investigating and asking questions has resulted in a sexual experience and perhaps the answer to who killed the Gordons. After much meandering around and seemingly aimless questions of unrelated suspects, John is honing in on a theory about the murder that does not include a virus or vaccines or drugs. His library research substantiates his theory about the reason the Gordons bought land that was unusable for anything else. The historical data explored and detailed in these chapters help to flesh out the truth about the treasure's worth and to verify the attempts of the past to recover the plunder. These chapters also serve as a reinforcement of an increasing romantic relationship with Emma, with a reminder of the promise he made the Gordons to find their killer.



# Chapters 24-29

## Chapters 24-29 Summary

When John goes down to the kitchen the next morning, Emma is having coffee with Beth Penrose. Emma calls a friend to give her a ride back to town and Beth is there for the financial records. Beth seems a bit angry, and so does Emma. John listens to his messages and there is one from his NYPD partner, saying the Anti-Terrorist division of the FBI wants to speak to him. John thinks about going back to New York City early. Beth brings John up to date on everything she has done on the investigation since they parted. John listens to her and learns little that is new or relevant to his investigation, but commends Beth on her thoroughness.

In Chapter 25, John is torn about his duties to respond to his supervisors, and his increasing interest in solving this murder case in North Fork. He thinks about the Gordons again, and remembers them lying dead on their deck. John is irritated with the federal authorities damaging the reputation of this bright happy couple, especially when they cannot defend themselves against the accusations. He thinks about the story of the buried treasure, about drug running, and about the continuing possibility that these biologists might indeed have stolen something nasty from the labs where they worked.

In Chapter 26, John and Beth walk along the dock behind his house, and she tells him she suspects Stevens. John believes Beth is the type of detective who believes the answers are in the paperwork. Beth summarizes the extent of the investigation so far, and she agrees that the theory from Dr. Zollner is probably incorrect. She summarizes the additional investigation she has done and the results of the autopsies. Judy Gordon was one month pregnant. Beth tells him that some very old wooden slivers were found on the Gordon boat. The printout of registered gun owners in the area revealed Max and Tobin owning .45 guns, the same as the murder weapon.

Beth expects John to then tell her what he has learned, but he just teases Beth with clues and avoids answering her questions directly. Just as she is leaving, she comes back to the house and asks him if he thinks the murders involved buried treasure. He still won't answer, as he is having fun giving her a difficult time. She calls him and he won't talk on the phone, saying he will see her at Tobin's party the next night. John's paranoia makes him think the federal officers have tapped his phone.

In Chapter 27, John goes to ask Emma for lunch, but she is a bit cool to him and says she is busy. He drives out to the bluff the Gordons bought and eats a sandwich he had bought. Then he drives to Foxwoods, the large casino north of New York City, where Tobin was rumored to have lost most of his money. As he is gambling, John thinks about the clues and about who might be the murderer of the Gordons. He goes over the clues, the motives, and the evidence, trying to match it all up with his theory. He believes Tobin discovered that Captain Kidd's treasure was located on Plum Island. Since Tobin did not have access to Plum Island, he had to develop a strong relationship with someone who



did, and the Gordons fit the bill. Working with the Gordons, and possibly Stevens, the plot could have been to remove the treasure from the government secured facility to another location where it could be discovered and kept without paying the IRS too much. This plan involved the purchase of the land, a lot of cavorting about in power boats between North Fork and Plum Island, and trust between the conspirators. At some point, John knows, the trust was broken and the Gordons paid the ultimate price.

The next morning he heads back to North Fork but takes a detour in Connecticut, stopping at Stevens' known address. The security director is not home and the house is alarmed. John tricks Stevens into coming home by leaving him a message on his voice mail, saying there is a water leak in his house. When Stevens shows up, he is distracted enough to give John the advantage in a fist fight. John lands a strong fist on the big man's jaw and Stevens is out cold. John removes the weapon Stevens is carrying and empties it of bullets, then returns it to the holster. When John knocks Stevens out, he further humiliates him by using a water hose to bring him around. John yells at Stevens, demanding to know who killed the Gordons. Stevens comes to and draws his weapon, attempting to shoot him. When Stevens looks at his weapon, wondering why it won't fire, John knocks him out again. This time John leaves him out and ties Stevens' shoelaces together. John drives back to North Fork the long way. When there is no pursuit by law enforcement officials for what he did to Stevens, John knows Stevens is involved in the murders.

It is time for John to go to the party Tobin is holding for the historical society, so he drives to the Tobin estate.

Chapter 28 begins at the party, and many clues begin to fall into place. John finds a boat in Tobin's boathouse that could have been the one used to transport the killer to the Gordon house. He meets up with Max, who apologizes for getting John into this mess. John sees Emma talking to Tobin and leaves. She catches up with him and they go to dinner. They go home to Emma's house for awhile, then for a long drive. John decides to spend the night alone and leaves messages for Beth to meet him at his house for coffee on Monday morning. He has seven messages for him on the answering machine but goes to bed without listening to them.

In Chapter 29, John is waiting for Beth to arrive, and when she does, there is nothing but bad news. Emma has been murdered, and so have the Murphys. All victims were hit with fireplace pokers and crowbars.

## Chapters 24-29 Analysis

The story has been short on facts and long on John's suppositions and wild guesses for the past several chapters, so this is a refreshing reminder of how the police work has been proceeding. John's two romantic interests meet and size one another up, and he is surprised to find that neither of them are keen on him for a few days.



These chapters provide the inciting force of the plot, the deaths of more innocent people and the murder of the woman he might have been capable of loving. Any ideas John had about obeying the rules or allowing the wheels of justice to grind are abandoned and John takes over the murder investigation by force.

At the beginning of the chapters, John and Beth are back working as partners again, and share their knowledge. There is foreshadowing of more deaths and more danger as Emma shares more information about buried treasure, and John is doing so much analyzing and reflection he is underestimating the power and determination of the murderer



# Chapters 30-33

## Chapters 30-33 Summary

John tells Beth the method of his investigations, fleshing out his theory about the treasure of Captain Kidd being found on Plum Island, with the help of Tobin. Tobin encouraged the Gordons to buy the land on the bluff and relocate the treasure there so they would not have to pay taxes or turn it over to the federal authorities. As they are talking, the front edge of a hurricane is reaching their shores. John is convinced Tobin is the murderer and that Stevens is an accomplice. Instead of going to Manhattan, as he was supposed to do, John takes Beth with him to find Tobin.

In Chapter 31, John and Beth go to Tobin's office and John breaks in. They find a treasure map that shows the treasure is buried on Tobin's house property. They realize he never planned for the Gordons to put the treasure on their land at all. John and Beth head to Tobin's house. The hurricane winds are increasing.

In Chapter 32, John and Beth drive through the 70 mph winds to reach Tobin's house. When they arrive to find the iron gates locked, John drives through them. He also breaks down the door to the home and finds Eva, the maid, cowering in one of the bedrooms. She tells them Tobin took two rifles and a shovel and took the boat out in the high seas. Before he left, he got something from the cellar. John and Beth go down to check it out. They find the aluminum chest missing from the Gordon boat, and there is an old skeleton and some pieces of gold inside. There is no longer a question about the guilt of Frederic Tobin.

In Chapter 33, Beth heads outside to meet the forensic team and John heads to the boathouse with the intention to take the other boat to chase Tobin. As he starts up the engine, Beth joins him, saying she is coming along. As they enter the bay, John is trying to remember what he knows about boating, and it is not very much. The sea is very rough and the two of them are having problems navigating. Several waves wash over the boat and they are now soaking wet, cold and unsure about where they are. When they finally get back under control, John notices they are almost out of gas. He and Beth talk about what must have happened to the Gordons the day of their murder. As Beth and John deal with the high seas and try to figure out how to navigate, they fail to look behind them. Suddenly, Tobin's boat is on a collision course with them from the rear.

## Chapters 30-33 Analysis

These chapters display an increase in tension while providing an overview of the facts, and serves to reinforce the reason John has decided to take the law into his own hands. The hurricane is approaching, and North Fork is about to have another hurricane in human form: an angry and revengeful John Corey.



The approach of the hurricane is increasing in force with the pace of the action as the plot reaches the crisis point. John wants Tobin, but Tobin is not to be found. Tension increases with the force of the wind as John makes his way from location to location, his fury justifying his destruction and flagrant violation of the rules of evidence and search and seizure.

These chapters are replete with symbolism. John and Beth are separated from the other law enforcement personnel by the sea and by their choices to pursue a suspect without backup, and the author handicaps them further by giving them a boat that is almost out of gas and taking on water, and limited weaponry. The villain, Tobin, has not one but two boats, some long guns, and his boat is bigger than theirs.





# Chapter 33-38

## Chapter 33-38 Summary

In Chapter 34, Tobin begins screaming at them over the electric bullhorn and then fires his rifle at them, breaking the windshield of their boat. Beth returns fire with her 9mm and breaks his windshield as well. The two boats are leaving the sheltered area and entering the hurricane force winds and seas between the North Fork and Plum Island. John pulls away and they decide to go to Plum Island and fight Tobin on land. Beth discovers that she has been hit, a grazing shot along her ribs. John and Beth are maneuvering the boat to get near Plum Island, but they are taking on water, running out of gas, and unable to navigate in the heavy seas. Suddenly, Tobin's boat is once again nearing them. Beth shoots out the spotlight, and when Tobin tries to ram them, she shoots a signal flare into the cabin.

John and Beth are able to escape again, but they are moving much slower and the seas are heavier. It is still their intention to reach Plum Island. There is a very real possibility they will either smash on the rocks at Orient Point or sink in the waters on the way to Plum Island. Tobin is gaining on them and is now shooting his rifle at them, but missing because of the wild seas and the boats pitching. They make it through the very worst part of the seas and are approaching Plum Island. As they get closer, they see a green light from the island, which means someone is observing them. Their boat finally crashes on the beach of Plum Island. John and Beth are not hurt, but the boat is useless now. They are on Plum Island, but so is Tobin, and he has rifles.

John and Beth do a quick inventory of wounds, weapons and ammunition. Beth has a cut on her head, a bullet wound, has lost her binoculars and shoes, but still has her weapon and several rounds. John has also lost his shoes, and his weapon only has one round in it. He is suffering from the wounds he received in his shooting in April. Beth thinks they should head to the Plum Island Security station, but John decides to go find Tobin, and Beth reluctantly joins him. With no shoes, they are going very slowly. The eye of the hurricane is over them at this moment. John rigs some of their clothes to serve as protective coverings for their bare feet. They find Tobin's boats. John sneaks onto the boat that brought Tobin ashore and disables the engine. John and Beth huddle together to wait for Tobin to return. John has already decided he will kill Tobin. After a few minutes of waiting, John decides to track Tobin down rather than wait for him. Beth disagrees, but cannot change John's mind. John takes off, and the rain begins again.

John approaches the ruins of Fort Terry. As he is zig-zagging around the buildings, wondering where Tobin is, he hears gunshots. He soon realizes no one is shooting at him. He realizes the shots were fired in the fire station, and now an ambulance is coming out of the building. It goes down the road and John goes into the fire station, where he finds two men dead in their bunks. John finds some socks and boots and pulls them on, and finds some chocolate bars that he consumes for energy. He runs up the road after the ambulance and finds it parked in front of a tree that has fallen across the



road. He disables the hydraulic lines and some electrical wires beneath the vehicle, then looks around for Tobin. As he is waiting for Tobin to show up, he hears a siren and realizes it is a biohazard warning siren. Even though John thinks the bacteria escaping from the research facility will probably kill him, he decided to continue tracking Tobin. He finds an artillery bunker with the door partly open and goes inside. He finds the underground railway that was used in the past to move artillery along from one part of the island to another. He follows it to an ammunition room, and knows this is where Tobin is, waiting for him.

In Chapter 36, the two men are there in the dark, and Tobin throws a rock against a wall. It startles John, but not enough to make him fire his one bullet. There is a dim light from a hole in the roof, and John thinks he sees a glint of metal. A shotgun blast hits the wall about ten feet from John and he fires at the muzzle blast. Now he has no bullets. Tobin flashes the light on John and makes him put his hands on his head. Before he does, John slips the knife into his jeans. Tobin has the flashlight in one hand and the gun in the other. He starts asking John questions about how he figured out what happened. John finds out that the Gordons had decided to turn the treasure over to the government, and that is why Tobin shot them. Tobin asks John where the treasure is now, and says the Gordons had moved it and left him a note, which he just now discovered. Tobin thinks the Gordons shared the secret with John. John tries to talk Tobin into turning himself in, as all is lost. Tobin is considering John's words when he realizes John is pursuing him not as a law enforcement officer, but as someone bent on revenge. John dives away from the light and Tobin starts firing wildly. John is able to tackle him and breaks Tobin's nose. John starts beating Tobin, thinking of all the innocent lives that have been lost. John takes his knife and cuts Tobin's abdomen open, pulling out Tobin's intestines and putting them on Tobin's face. Then John walks away and leaves Tobin to die.

Chapter 37 begins. When John climbs out of the hole, he sees that the hole was surrounded by a four foot barbed wire fence. He climbs the fence, numb to the pain. He is in a concrete gun emplacement area and there is a man in a hood there with a rifle. It is Paul Stevens. He tells John he has the treasure. Stevens wants to kill John because of the beating John gave him in his backyard. Stevens tells John the siren warning was a test and there is no biohazard. Just as John charges toward Stevens in a futile attempt to keep from being shot, Beth shoots and kills Stevens. Beth and John huddle together to keep from freezing while the remainder of the storm passes overhead. They return to the beach, sink the beach boat after taking it to Tobin's larger craft, telephone Max, and head to port. Max meets them at the dock and receives their report as they get warmed up and fed. Max leaves to make some phone calls, and John asks Beth for dinner. She says things are too complicated. Max tells John that NYPD is coming to get him, and John takes the train to Manhattan. When he reaches his apartment he scans through his mail, and there is a letter from the Gordons that was mailed before their death. The letter tells John everything he had already figured out.

In Chapter 38, the closing chapter, it is January of the next year, and John has retired from NYPD and is working full time as a professor at John Jay College, teaching homicide investigation. He is amazed to see Beth Penrose is in his class. She tells him



she bought a house on North Fork and that she has been to Emma's grave. Tobin survived his fight with John and is in prison awaiting trial for all of the murders. John is unattached and Beth is very carefully coming back into his life. John is undecided about this but does plan to take her out for drinks that night. The novel ends with John beginning the class.

## Chapter 33-38 Analysis

Beth's role in this novel during the crisis is unclear. She is an excellent shot and good backup, as evidenced by her quick foraging of the ship stores and using a signal flare to save them from Tobin's rifle fire. Sometimes John even allows her to steer their boat. Yet at the moment they are heading towards the beach, throttles full open, she is clinging to him like a little girl. When they recover from their crash, she recommends caution and waiting, but John marches into the forest, intent on finishing his hunt. John's exaggerated view of his abilities makes him refuse Beth's gun, which has nine rounds, and he takes his own small weapon with one round into battle.

John must go underground to locate the symbolic snake, Tobin.

The fight in total darkness represents two men who think they know everything and who find out quickly they do not. John thinks Tobin has the treasure, but all Tobin has is a note from the Gordons. Tobin thinks John has the treasure.

John expends his one round uselessly in the fight with Tobin, and resorts to using a knife on the villain. Just as he thinks he is alive and has been the victor, another evil shows up. Fortunately for John, the weak woman he left behind in safety is clear headed enough to figure out he might need backup. This chapter highlights the difference between John and Beth, as he forges ahead with anger and force and Beth works things out logically and methodically. Both methods combine to bring a successful conclusion to the conflict.

The last chapter represents closure for John and Beth, and for the reader as well. John has lost one battle with society when he is forced to resign from the job that gives him his identity. He has some power as a professor at a law enforcement academy, His experience with Emma has slowed down his bed-hopping record, but he has not analyzed his reasons for that. John is actually a good man who needs to control his emotions and not reserve them for chasing criminals. Beth appears to be a good match for him, interjecting logic and compassion into his life.



# Characters

## John Corey

John Corey, NYPD homicide detective, is recovering from an attempt on his life.

Convalescing from three bullet wounds, he is supposed to be relaxing at his Uncle Harry's house in a rural seaside town. He retains his tough cop attitude, always has a gun nearby, and likes Budweiser beer. Since his injury, he is no longer healthy, and has trouble sleeping, eating and drinking. He is beginning to feel his age.

John's macho attitude, wisecracking and devil-may-care attitude dominates his personality. This adversarial approach to life and all its occupants may be a very well developed defense mechanism, but any emotional aspect to this character is seldom seen in this novel.

John is the narrator of the story and the undisputed hero. He is an experienced police officer with many homicide investigations in his resume, so it is not surprising he is well enough acquainted with the laws to know which ones he can break. John has problems with authority, believes himself to be a swashbuckler and a heartbreaker, and it is no surprise that he does not have a wife or steady girlfriend.

He is, however, an extremely skilled investigator. He thinks outside the box and is not afraid to take risks. This character is something between James Bond and Sherlock Holmes, with leaps of logic and an independent thread that runs through the novel.

John's recovery and solitude is interrupted with a request from a friend to assist in a police investigation of two murders. John knew the couple, the Gordons, and had been on their boat and attended their parties. The murdered couple worked at a top secret research facility at Plum Island, and for some time, the law enforcement officials believe the couple stole a virus or bacteria from the facility. A visit to the Plum Island facility results in another theory, that the couple stole a benign vaccine instead. John takes a personal interest in the investigation, and when his services are no longer needed or wanted, he persists in the investigation anyway.

John's investigation pairs him with Beth Penrose, an attractive detective from the county. Beth believes in documentation, following rules of evidence and investigation, and is a very good detective in her own style. She soon sees John as a loose cannon, and for a time in the novel, leaves him to his own devices while she follows another line of inquiry.

John uses this time to interview Tobin, the winemaker and friend of the Gordons, a young woman, Emma, who is president of the local historical society, the Gordons' elderly neighbors, and to conduct research in the local library. John also follows up on another suspect he has identified, Paul Stevens, who is director of security at Plum Island. John charms Emma into bed, aggravates Tobin beyond his endurance, and



irritates everyone else, especially Stevens. It begins to dawn on John that Tobin is the murderer and the Gordons were part of a conspiracy with Tobin to move buried treasure from Plum Island. As a result of John's persistent inquiries, Emma and the neighbors are murdered.

When Beth tells John about the murders, John knows Tobin and Stevens are involved and is determined to track these men down and kill them. With Beth as his backup, John uses an ax to enter Tobin's office and house, then takes Tobin's boat to follow him to Plum Island. All of this is during a raging hurricane. John is unstoppable, even when their boat crashes into Plum Island and Beth has a bullet wound.

John tracks Tobin down in an artillery bunker in the ruins of an old fort, fights with him and cuts him open, leaving him for dead. John is surprised to learn Tobin did not find the treasure, only a note from the Gordons. When John gets out of the artillery bunker, he is confronted by Stevens, who does have the treasure and is going to kill John. Beth shoots Stevens before he can fire.

When John returns to his Manhattan apartment, he finds a letter from the Gordons that confirms everything he has discovered. When he meets with his supervisors, he is severely reprimanded for disobeying orders and he takes a disability retirement. John is now a teacher at a law enforcement academy and is surprised yet pleased to see Beth Penrose in one of his classes.

## Frederic Tobin

Frederic Tobin is the antagonist in this story. He is a fashionable, attractive older man who owns a winery and a beautiful house, and has a beautiful younger girlfriend. He is, however, consumed by debt. Tobin researches the Captain Kidd treasure lore for years and discovers that the twenty million dollar treasure is on Plum Island, a restricted and highly inaccessible island where the government has a biological research station.

Tobin is a murderer and a user. He uses Emma to learn how to read old maps and old English documents. He uses the Gordons' good reputation and reliability with the Plum Island officials to gain access to the restricted area. He uses the society of his town and the beautiful young woman who is his lover to make him feel good. He uses his winery as a jumping off spot to allow him to become richer with the treasure.

Tobin is in the background for the first half of the novel, but when John finally interviews him, the reader trusts John's investigative abilities enough by then to recognize that Tobin is a dangerous man.

When the hurricane approaches, Tobin knows that John is also nearing a conclusion about him, so it is time for Tobin to tie up the loose ends and make his escape. He kills Emma and the Murphys and loads his cabin cruiser for a long trip. He heads to Plum Island first, to gather the treasure the Gordons left there.



Tobin does not reckon on the determined John Corey, or the sharp shooting abilities of Detective Penrose. Tobin has a very difficult time getting to the island, and once there, is disappointed to see no treasure, only a note from the Gordons. His encounter with John results in a horrible injury. Tobin is arrested, and in the final chapter, John says Tobin's trial is coming up.

## Detective Beth Penrose

Elizabeth Penrose is attractive, has a nice voice, and good body. She dresses professionally. She is in her early thirties, has reddish medium length hair, blue-green eyes, fair skin, pouty lips, and wears light makeup.

Beth is working on a career in law enforcement, and believes in the process of documentation, thorough investigations, covering all the possible bases. She does not yet have the instinct that John has, but he observes that she has the ability to develop it with experience.

Beth's inexperience is evident when she chooses to go with John's unorthodox methods rather than asserting her own way of investigating. The author indicates that it is both John's determination and strength and her feelings for John that sway her over to breaking all the rules by his side. Beth is a good shot, and saves John several times from getting killed by Tobin and especially from being shot by Stevens.

Beth and John have an attraction, but the duties of the investigation and the entrance of Emma into John's life interrupts that for most of the novel. At the end, though, it appears they will be reigniting the interest.

## Tom and Judy Gordon

Tom and Judy Gordon, biologists who worked at Plum Island, and are murdered before the first chapter begins. The couple had been living on North Fork for two years with a nice house and boat. The couple were friends of a local vintner, and John had been at their parties several times. Tom once confided to John that his biggest fear was being kidnapped. At first the investigation looks at this couple as if they are terrorists, then opportunists, then drug dealers, and finally treasure hunters. In the end, though, John learns that the Gordons decided not to participate in Tobin's scheme to bilk the government, and that is what cost them their lives.

## Emma Whitestone

Emma is the lovely and naïve president of the local historical society, and John's love interest for a week. She was Tobin's lover until Tobin was done with her, and she collected antiques. She had a vast knowledge of local history, especially concerning Captain Kidd and his treasure. Emma is raped and then murdered by Tobin after her affair with John begins.



## **Paul Stevens**

Stevens is the Director of Security for Plum Island Research Facility, and unbeknownst to the Gordons, was involved in the scheme to steal the treasure from Plum Island. Stevens is a cold man with a professional appearance but a diabolical and psychotic mind. When Stevens and John fight in Stevens' backyard, the true character of Stevens comes out, and John knows the man is involved in the murders in some way. At Plum Island, the tension heightens when Stevens encounters John and is killed by Beth before Stevens can kill John.

## **Ted Nash**

Ted is one of the original law enforcement officers who was involved in the investigation when it was thought the Gordons had stolen something viral from the labs. He said he was with the Department of Agriculture, but he was actually CIA

## **Dr. Zollner**

Dr. Zollner is the Director of the Plum Island Research Facility, and gives the team their tour of the research station. Dr. Zollner is a fat man with a German accent, who wears glasses and has a Vandyke beard. He reminds John of Burl Ives. This character represents the powerful and enigmatic government.

## **Sylvester Maxwell**

Max is the laid back Chief of Police of Southold. He is in his mid forties and has wavy blond hair, ruddy skin and blue eyes. Once he brings John Corey into the investigation of the double murders, he takes a back seat and is seldom heard from during the remainder of the novel.

## **Mrs. Wiley**

Mrs. Wiley is a descendant of one of the longtime residents of the area, and she is very old. She is somewhat cantankerous, but takes John and Beth to the land she sold to the Gordons. She did not want to sell the land, but she liked the Gordons so finally gave in. She had no idea what they wanted the land for, but had been told the Gordons just wanted a place to look at the view.



# Objects/Places

## North Fork/Southold

This is where most of the plot is centered for the novel, as this is the location for John Corey's convalescence from his wounds. The Township of Southold is one hundred miles from New York City and consists of eight hamlets and one village named Greenport, located in Suffolk County. North Fork is the area of Long Island where this story is placed, and is described as looking like Cape Cod. Year round the population is approximately twenty thousand people, but the number swells during the summer with tourists.

## Uncle Harry's House

This is an 1890s Victorian farmhouse, on the Great Peconic Bay, with a wrap around porch, painted cream with green roof and trim. Uncle Harry is John's uncle, recently widowed, who loans the house to John for his recovery. Uncle Harry and Aunt June hosted the Corey family at the house for many summers when John was a boy.

## Plum Island

This is the top secret biological research station located two miles off the tip of Orient Point. The island is also the home of a Revolutionary War era fort, and has many remaining ruins and underground battlements. The facility and the island actually exist.

## Gordon Home

This is the murder site that brings John into the investigation. It is a renovated 1960 home, leased by the Gordons with an option to buy. This is the site of the murder of Tom and Judy Gordon.

## Aluminum Ice Chest

An aluminum ice chest that John remembers as always being on the Gordon boat and used for beer and storage. It is missing from the boat on the day of the murder, and John Corey suspects whatever was in that chest was critical to the motive for murdering the Gordons. Later in the novel, the ice chest is discovered in a dark alcove in Frederic Tobin's basement, and there is a skeleton and some gold coins inside.





## Power Boats and Cabin Cruisers

These are boating vessels, both with very powerful engines. The Gordon boat is well known by the Plum Island personnel, and plays a big part in the scheme to remove Captain Kidd's treasure from the island. Tobin has a similar power boat and a cabin cruiser. The cabin cruiser handles the open sea better than the power boats, and is an advantage in Tobin's race to Plum Island.

## Captain Kidd's Buried Treasure

The inappropriate sailing vessel had been robbed. The resulting treasure is worth twenty million in modern dollars, and Kidd reportedly hid the gold and jewels somewhere near Long Island before he was executed. It is this treasure that Tobin locates on Plum Island, and the resulting scheme involving the Gordons and Stevens comprises the plot of the novel.

## 44106818

This number appears on a nautical chart that John finds in the Gordon home. Later, in a conversation with Emma, he discovers that this was a number Captain Kidd included in a letter to his wife just before his death. Over the three hundred years since that letter, many people have tried to determine what those numbers signify: paces from the treasure, astronomical markings, map designations, etc., but no one knows what it means.

## Tobin's Winery

The winery and executive offices, as with everything Tobin owns, is plush, upscale and pretentious. Tobin uses the wine to launch other projects and to keep up the appearance that he is wealthy and exclusive.

## Beth Penrose's Duty Weapon

This is a Glock 9mm caliber automatic weapon, that fires using ammunition clips of eight to nine rounds. Beth is an excellent shot. This weapon represents the future of law enforcement, as opposed to John's .38 revolver, which can only hold five rounds.



# Themes

## Revenge

John Corey is a violent man who views the world with a jaded eye. He is accustomed to observing scenes of violent death, but when the victims are people he has recently met, he feels a special obligation to seek out their killer. When his newfound girlfriend, Emma, is raped and murdered by the same person who killed the Gordons, John is driven to a white hot hatred and drive to not only find the killer, but to exact a lasting revenge upon him.

Revenge is also a motive for Tobin, against the Gordons. After years of concocting a scheme to deprive the government of the Captain Kidd treasure, his plans are ruined by the Gordons' change of heart. When Tobin discovers that John is sleeping with Emma, Tobin's ex-girlfriend, Tobin adds rape to the crime of murder to deliver some revenge to John as well.

What society did to Tobin to make him feel he is owed a treasure is unknown. Because revenge for perceived wrongs against a psychopath or sociopath is often their motive for criminal activity, Tobin's personal history is not examined in this novel.

John Corey's actions in this novel are also an attempt by him to revenge himself on life for being alone, getting older, and being ambushed and shot. John feels the need to prove to himself that he still has the ability to be the best homicide detective in the world.

## Greed

There are many levels of greed in this novel. Tobin's overwhelming desire for money and power is the most obvious, but John is just as guilty of desiring and pursuing a goal based on greed.

Tobin has everything: successful business, good social standing, beautiful home, and a young girlfriend. Yet he gambles extravagantly for even more money, and when it cannot be obtained legally, searches for illegal funds to be even more rich.

Tobin's greed drives him to murder not only the Gordons, but Emma, the Murphys and two innocent firemen on Plum Island. Somehow in Tobin's mind, he has justified to himself that he deserves these riches and can escape the law.

John's greed is to be a powerful and strong detective again. The shooting brought him down physically and emotionally, and scarred his vision of himself as invincible and too smart to get shot. As John gets deeper into the investigation, he takes unrealistic risks and walks into unnecessary danger, all to satisfy this greed for his old vision of himself. His mindless risk taking endangers everyone around him, but he does not recognize it.



There are some lower levels of greed in the novel. Emma's greed for someone to love, Beth's greed for assertiveness in her job, Mrs. Wiley's greed for money, the Gordons' greed for fortune and fame. The author's message is that greed is not a worthy motive for life choices.

## Man vs Society

John Corey is a man at odds with authority, teamwork, relationships and regulations. He is an experienced homicide detective who uses wisecracks and illegal procedures to achieve results.

With regards to authority, John ignores Max when he says John is off the investigation. John chooses not to return calls to his NYPD supervisor, knowing his boss is upset with John's involvement in the North Fork case. John taunts Nash and Stevens constantly, verbally battering them into adversarial positions. Even Beth, who he likes, suffers from John's refusal to stop investigating the case.

Teamwork appears only to appeal to John when he is working with his old partner at NYPD. Otherwise, he is a loner, refusing to share his discoveries with anyone. When Beth tells him everything she knows, he gives her humorous clues instead of facts, holding on to his information to the last minute. Instead of openly sharing what he knows with someone who desperately needs the information, John allows only a trickle of information to come out.

John's relationship record is equally contentious. He marries a defense attorney, setting himself up for failure from the beginning. His remarks about her and all previous relationships reveal a man who does not feel deep emotion. John flirts openly with Beth and allows her to think he is interested in a relationship, then the day after she goes back to her Suffolk County home, John is in bed with Emma. The time with Emma is portrayed as mostly sexual, with John's thoughts straying from her body to her looks and not much deeper.

John's abuse of chain of evidence laws, interrogation procedures, weapons use, and record keeping is another example of his difficulties with society. It is difficult to rationalize this abuse of power with someone of his lengthy experience, and a reader with even the remotest knowledge of constitutional law would wonder how the prosecuting attorney will deal with John's trail of destruction in pursuit of Tobin.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in this novel is exclusively first person narrative, and that person is the hero, John Corey. All plot movement occurs within John's vision or is relayed to John through conversation with another person. John is heavily involved in every scene of the novel, and dominates all conversations. The reader is constantly in the mind of John Corey and is privy to most of his deductions. When Corey is finalizing his thoughts about the perpetrators and motive behind the stealing of Captain Kidd's treasure, the narrator no longer shares all of his thoughts, and the reader must wait until John and Beth are in the power boat on the way to Plum Island to discover his true thoughts.

The first person narrative is an excellent way to develop a character, but in this case, it is some time before the reader can feel comfortable with John's reliability as a narrator to tell the truth. The character's constant sarcasm and jaded outlook on life makes it difficult to feel sympathy for him. The author uses strong investigative techniques to secure the trust in his detecting skills, but John's romantic inclinations lean too far towards physical desire only.

John is so good at keeping his emotions at bay that he is unable to convince the reader that he would make a good romantic partner for either Beth or Emma. Conversations between the hero and the women in the story are so full of jokes and chauvinist observations that it is difficult to feel pity for John when Emma is murdered. The majority of the comments from the women in the story, directed to John, appear to be requesting him to stop making stupid jokes.

The reactions of other men in the story, as reported by our narrator John Corey, increase the lone wolf picture the reader develops of the man. Corey's belligerent attitude and disregard for society's values make him a difficult hero to accept, even when he solves the crime.

## Setting

The novel is set in September, in the state of New York. The book was written in 1987.

The setting takes John away from the hectic streets of New York City, where he had been ambushed and left for dead, and deposits him in a bucolic seaside town so he can supposedly relax.

Plum Island figures substantially in the plot. It is an island located off the coast of North Fork, Long Island, and is not a fictional place. Plum Island is home to the biological research center.



At the end of the novel, the setting is Manhattan, first at John's apartment, then at John Jay College.

A hurricane is a plot thickening device used by the author to increase the sense of danger and fear when Tobin is racing to Plum Island and being chased by John and Beth. The high seas, raging wind and pouring rain lend considerable suspense and drama to the final scenes between John and the killers.

## Language and Meaning

John Corey is the narrator, and his descriptions of people sounds like he is reading them from rap sheets. John's thoughts are laced with police terms and New York inside jokes.

The story is relayed entirely through observations, conversations and actions of John Corey. Additional information is brought into the plot via conversations with other characters, and everyone is speaking normal conversational English. All conversations and thoughts are brief, and there are no long soliloquies.

John's interactions with other characters are replete with sarcasm and wisecracks, and even his personal thoughts are full of contempt for society and authority, self deprecation, and irrelevant remarks.

When John describes people he meets, he includes considerable detail on their wardrobe, including the brand names.

The purpose of these exaggerated personality traits are to create a memorable character in the reader's mind, a character that might be interesting and confounding enough to generate more books with John Corey as the hero.

## Structure

The novel Plum Island consists of 574 pages, and the plot is broken into thirty-eight chapters. The chapters are of equal length and proceed in a chronological order with very few flashbacks. It is a mystery, written as a police procedural.

The two main protagonist characters, John Corey and Beth Penrose, are introduced in the first couple of chapters. Minor characters are introduced then fall into the background until the middle of the novel, when Emma Whitestone becomes John's love interest. It is also the middle of the novel when the antagonist, Frederic Tobin, is introduced and remains in action for the last chapters.

The novel begins with the murders of the Gordons. John, Beth, an FBI and CIA man and Max the Police Chief go to Plum Island to investigate the possibility that the Gordons stole a virus. Chapters 7-13 are spent on the island, with the team touring the



ruins of Fort Terry, the biocontainment labs, and several contentious arguments between John and everyone else.

Chapters 14-17 involve interviews with various witnesses and suspects, and there is a break in the partnership of John and Beth.

Chapters 17-23 describe John doing his own investigation, drawing his own conclusions that differ from the official statements, and beginning an affair with Emma. It is in these investigations and research about Captain Kidd's treasure that cause John to form his new theory about the murders.

In the next chapters, up to Chapter 29, John is a loose cannon, taking a trip to Foxwoods to gamble away a few thousand dollars, beating up Stevens, acting irresponsibly at a party at Tobin's house, and rejecting Emma's request to spend the night.

Chapters 29 through 37 describe the increase of action in the plot, with a hurricane upon the island, and John and Beth pursuing Tobin to a frightening and exciting conclusion of the investigation.

Chapter 38 is the finale, occurring in Manhattan several months after the Plum Island incident, and John is teaching a class at John Jay College. Beth arrives to provide the details of her life without John, and to re-enter his life as his new love interest.



## Quotes

"It occurred to me that the problem with doing nothing is not knowing when you're finished." Chap. 1, p. 1

"This would pose a multifaceted threat, the type of threat that would never be found in nature, and would be impossible to contain or control." Chap. 4, p. 50

"If we can determine it was drugs, we can rest easier. Until then, we have to go ahead with the idea that it's plague, because if it is and we're not on top of it, we could all be dead." Chap. 5, p. 66

"Better safe than sorry, I say. Until I knew who the killer or killers were, paranoia was my middle name." Chap. 13, p. 198

"I drove around - I hesitate to say aimlessly, but if you don't know where you're going or why, you're either a government employee or you're aimless." Chap. 19, p. 320

"Worse. If I find him home, I'm going to break his legs with this ax, then threaten to really hurt him if he doesn't talk." Chap. 31, p. 466

"Beyond the legal necessities, I realized that the only way I could bring closure to this case for me personally was to capture Frederic Tobin myself, and having captured him, to...well, I'd think about that later." Chap. 32, p. 483

"And crazy as it sounds, I almost enjoyed the ride - the feel of the throttles as I adjusted power, the vibrations of the engines, the helm in my hand. Suddenly in command. I'd been sitting on the back porch too long." Chap. 32, p. 487

"Scared? I was terrorized out of my fucking mind." Chap. 34, p. 516

"I didn't see any reason to argue what was already decided in my mind." Chap. 35, p. 536

"It occurred to me that Tom and Judy were like the animals they worked with - innocent, dumb, and doomed from the first minute they stepped onto Plum Island." Chap. 36, p. 566

"The meaning of life has not much to do with good and evil, right and wrong, duty, honor, country, or any of that. It has to do with cutting the right deal." Chap. 36, p. 567





## Topics for Discussion

Why did the author spend several chapters having his hero tour every inch of Plum Island when in the end the Gordons' work there had little to do with the plot?

Compare Emma and Beth. Who do you think would have been a good life partner for John Corey?

Do you think John Corey acted correctly in his pursuit of Tobin? Did he have the right to disregard law in this pursuit? Why or why not? Is it possible Tobin would have escaped justice if John had not injured him?

What do you think Stevens did with the treasure? Was he telling the truth when he said he had it or do you think the Gordons hid it somewhere else?

Why does John Corey need to prove to himself that he is still a strong detective? Isn't his long career proof of that already?

Was John's constant use of jokes and wisecracks a defense mechanism to protect him from feeling emotion about anyone?

Do you think John Corey would make a good instructor in any subject other than law enforcement?

Was Beth a good detective? John says that she was a good investigator but did not have that special instinct that he had. Do you think she developed it through working with John?

The author keeps his characters on Plum Island at the beginning of the story for several chapters and describes the biohazard facility in great detail. Why did he do this? Was it to distract the reader from other possible lines of inquiry for the law enforcement team or to heighten intrigue about a terrorist plot?

Is the character of John Corey one that would hold a reader's interest for a series of adventures in future books?