

Riptide Study Guide

Riptide by Douglas Preston

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Plot Summary

"On an afternoon in June 1790, a Maine cod fisherman named Simon Rutter became caught in a storm and a strong riptide. His dory overloaded with fish, he went badly off course and was forced to put in at Fog bound Ragged Island, six miles off the coast. While waiting for the heavy weather to pass, the fisherman decided to explore the deserted spot." (Prologue, pg. 1) Thus begins the exciting adventure, *Riptide* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. Rutter returns to explore the area and dig at a mysterious spot where there is a depression, moved a rock and the area flooded with seawater, killing Rutter. The area became known as the Water Pit and it was the subject of many legends, including that of pirates treasure. Treasure hunters were still trying to access the tunnel into the twentieth century, and each met with disaster and filed bankruptcy. There were several injuries and deaths associated with the digging throughout the years. Hatch bought the island in 1940, and died, bankrupt, two years later.

Malin Hatch has always refused offers to dig on the island, until Captain Gerard Neidelman appears one day with an offer he decides not to refuse. Hatch has buried the past by leaving Stormhaven some twenty years earlier. He is now ready to tackle the past and put it to rest by facing the island and its secrets.

Thalassa Ltd has the latest technology and equipment and hires specialists in each of the areas. They try to deny the curse by the use of science and technology. Neidelman, like any treasure hunter, is motivated by greed but it is more than that. He is obsessed with St. Michael's Sword, and this is his undoing in the end.

The Thalassa people have done their research on the pirate and vault designer, Macallan. They have his journal which was written in invisible ink and encrypted. They think that if they break the architect's code, they will hold the key to the Water Pit and the estimated two billion dollars in treasure that it holds. The team, along with Hatch, study the other works of the architect to discover the secrets of the Water Pit and how Macallan, who knew he would be killed by the pirate, orchestrated his revenge.

As the work begins, they find a mass grave with many skeletons who were buried with their valuables. They have unexplainable computer problems on the island, and their people come down with strange illnesses. Is this the curse at work?

Preston and Child have written an exciting and suspense filled novel that the reader will find hard to put down. The book is fast reading and well worth the reader's time.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

"On an afternoon in June 1790, a Maine cod fisherman named Simon Rutter became caught in a storm and a strong riptide. His dory overloaded with fish, he went badly off course and was forced to put in at Fog bound Ragged Island, six miles off the coast. While waiting for the heavy weather to pass, the fisherman decided to explore the deserted spot." (Prologue, pg. 1) Thus begins the exciting adventure, *Riptide* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. Rutter returns to explore the area and dig at a mysterious spot where there is a depression; he moved a rock and the area flooded with seawater, killing Rutter. The area became known as the Water Pit and was the subject of many legends, including that of pirate's treasure. Treasure hunters were still trying to access the tunnel into the twentieth century, and each met with disaster and filed bankruptcy. There were several injuries and deaths associated with the digging throughout the years. Hatch bought the island in 1940, and died, bankrupt, two years later.

Chapter One begins in July 1971. The two Hatch children, Malin and Johnny are playing outside their home. They can see the islands, including Ragged Island from their yard. Their parents are in town and the boys decide to take the small outboard boat to Ragged Island to look for the treasure. Even though their father owns the island, they had never been there because their father forbids it.

The boys ride over in the boat and begin to explore the island. They find a leg bone. The legend is that a pirate named Red Ned Ockham buried his treasure on the island. The treasure was supposed to be gold and a jeweled sword called St. Michael's Sword. The boys heard all these tales at school. They find a cave entrance behind a boulder that had become dislodged due to a storm. The two boys enter the cave, using a match for light, deciding they will split the treasure equally.

Malin asks about the curse and Johnny tells him not to worry about it. Both are spooked when they hear a loud groan and gurgling sound, but decide it is due to the tide coming in. They continue deeper into the Water Pit. They come to a door with a seal and think they have found the treasure. Johnny opens the door and Malin drops the matches. When he finds and lights a match, Johnny is gone and Malin is surrounded by a pool of blood.

Twenty years later, at the opening of Chapter Two, Malin becomes a doctor and medical researcher. He is working in his lab at Mount Auburn Hospital when his assistant, Bruce, tells him he has a visitor, who is Captain Gerard Neidelman. Neidelman had read a newspaper article about Malin and his travels. He wants to dig for the treasure on Ragged Island. His company Thalassa Holding Ltd has formed the Ragged Island Reclamation Corporation for twenty-two million dollars. He tells Malin that his group knows the design of the Water Pit. Neidelman leaves his phone number with Malin, who



spends the rest of the evening thinking about the proposition. He doesn't call Neidelman until three in the morning.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The Prologue explains the background of Ragged Island and all the tales of pirate's treasure. There is a great deal of mystery surrounding the island due to all the different groups that had tried to find the treasure over the past one-hundred-eighty years. There was nothing but a steady string of disasters and bankruptcies, including the wealthy Alfred Hatch who purchased the island in 1940. There were storms, explosions and floods that killed or injured the diggers.

These myths and tales are not unknown to the children of the area including Malin and Johnny Hatch, who take their parent's boat to the island in their absence. They are forbidden by their parents to go to Ragged Island, but they are bored and curious, like most young boys and feel their father will be surprised and proud if they find the treasure. They feel that this is a good enough reason to disobey their parents.

They enter the Water Pit, using a match for light. Malin becomes scared and says maybe they should go home and tell their father but Johnny is too drawn by the idea of riches and treasure and says no. Both boys know their father hates the place. Johnny is the braver of the two and very attracted by the treasure, and it is Johnny who disappears after opening the sealed door.

Twenty years later, Malin, now a medical researcher, is approached by Captain Gerard Neidelman, whose Thalassa Holding Ltd. has formed the Ragged Island Reclamation Corporation with twenty-two million dollars in financing. They want to dig at Ragged Island. He feels sure that they will find the treasure and that Malin will want to know what happened to his brother Johnny.

Over the years Malin had always refused the requests of those who wanted to dig at Ragged Island. There was too much hurt and bad memories involved for him. But Neidelman claimed his group knew the design of the Water Pit, having the journal of the man who designed it. After thinking about it until there in the morning, Malin decides to allow the project.



Chapters 3-6

Chapters 3-6 Summary

Malin returns to Stormhaven to meet Neidelman. Neidelman wants to see Ragged Island before his group makes a commitment to the project. Malin and Neidelman talk on the boat ride to Ragged Island, and Neidelman tells Malin how he became interested in treasure hunting. He refuses to discuss the design of the Water Pit since there is no signed agreement, only finding Malin won't take him to the island. They shake hands on the agreement. Neidelman tells him that the Water Pit was designed by an English ecclesiastical architect named Sir William Macallan. Neidelman goes on to say how his people decoded the architect's notes, which were written in invisible ink. Macallan was believed lost at sea but was actually captured by pirate Red Ned Ockham. He designed the pit as a safe holding place for the pirate's treasure, which Neidelman estimates at two billion dollars, which they will split when it is found.

They agree in Chapter Four that Malin will be able to halt the project at any time that he feels it is too dangerous and that he will be the expedition doctor for the project, which they anticipate will take four weeks.

At the beginning of Chapter Five, Malin plans to stay on the boat, the Plain Jane, while his family house is readied for him to move into. He does his grocery shopping at Bud's Superette and is warmly greeted by Bud, when he realizes who Malin is. Malin doesn't tell Bud about the salvage operation, just that he has returned on business. He learns from Bud that two helicopters had recently been flying around the island. Bud thinks they were Army helicopters but isn't sure. Malin promises Bud he will tell him about his business soon.

Chapters 3-6 Analysis

Malin is nervous as he returns to Stormhaven, a place to which he never thought he'd return. He has to show Neidelman around before his group will commit to the project. He tells himself that he is not ready to physically visit Ragged Island. Taking Neidelman around the area is a very emotional experience for him. As they arrive at Ragged Island, Hatch has to confront all his emotions, memories and history. In the end, it is the lure of the treasure and what he feels is owed to his grandfather, father and brother that is the deciding factor.

Neidelman realizes how emotional the experience is for Hatch and tells him that he can't bring Johnny back to life but promises that they will find out what happened to his brother. Hatch, who is experiencing a lot of emotional turmoil at the island, is very happy when they head back to shore.



Hatch wants some say in the project and doesn't just want to be a silent partner. Neidelman agrees to allow Malin the right to be the expedition doctor and to have the right to terminate the project if he feels it is too dangerous.

Malin moves to Stornhaven for the summer. He confronts his fears and bad memories and renews his acquaintance with Bud who owns the local grocery store. He tells him he is there on business but doesn't tell him about the dig. Malin knows how fast the news will travel around the area and isn't ready to face the towns people yet.



Chapters 7-10

Chapters 7-10 Summary

Malin is staying aboard the Plain Jane and will meet Neidelman that evening. When Malin takes the boat out, he finds an antique fireboat moored a quarter mile offshore. As he approaches the boat, he finds a small fleet of other boats approaching the island. Neidelman is on the fireboat and addresses the people telling them about the great project and challenge upon which they are about to embark. He talks about Macallan and Red Neck Ockahm. The curl of gold that a previous expedition uncovered is proof of the existence of the treasure, and they will begin their work the next day. Neidelman details an overall plan of attack and introduces Malin.

Chapter Eight opens with Malin on the Plain Jane prepared for the beginning of the work on Ragged Island. The crew is already working on the island. As he is eating on his boat, he receives a radio call from Neidelman about a member of the crew requiring medical attention. He races to the spot on the island where a man named Ken Field is trapped as a result of a cave-in in the shaft. Since the shaft was rapidly filling with water, the only way to save the man's life was to amputate both legs, which Malin did with an axe. Field is not breathing when they reach the surface, and Malin revives him and calls the Coast Guard to transport him to a hospital. He tells the others to retrieve the amputated legs if they can safely do so. The man is airlifted to a Bangor hospital and will live.

Chapter Nine begins with Malin visiting his childhood home. The house was just as he remembered it and had been prepared for him to move in. The realtor, Doris, thinks he wants to sell the house and says that she has a client. He says no.

Chapter Ten opens with a meeting aboard the Griffin. Neidelman takes responsibility for the conditions surrounding the accident and says they have reviewed their safety procedures. Risks are a part of the job and they shouldn't weaken because of Ken's accident. They are all given a chance to quit if they want. Those who remain will receive a share of the treasure instead of salary. They all want to stay on. Neidelman introduces Christopher St. John, who is their historian, and Kerry Wopner, their computer specialist. They are still breaking the code of the second part of the journal. He goes on to introduce other members of the team.

Chapters 7-10 Analysis

Malin has a day aboard the Plain Jane to himself since he doesn't meet Neidelman until that evening. He is a little nervous about having nothing to do but think, yet he feels he has been successful in confronting his fears surrounding the return to Stormhaven and Ragged Island. Malin feels the project will somehow lay his brother Johnny to rest. He also hopes it will settle his own mind. Malin knows he will never feel comfortable on



Ragged Island because of what has happened in the past, but he feels he made the correct decision. He will put his share of the fortune into a foundation in his brother's name.

There is a medical emergency on the first day and Malin is called to the island. He saves the man's life but is angry at himself for allowing the project to proceed. Even though he was on Ragged Island for the first time in years, he was unprepared for the encounter with the island, and determines that he will be prepared the next time.

Malin re-enters his childhood home for the first time since he and his mother left for Boston, twenty-five years earlier. He has mixed emotions as he sees the house and the belongings exactly as they were when they departed, taking only their clothes. Malin remembers having had a happy childhood until Johnny's death. Even though the realtor has a buyer for the house, he isn't interested in parting with it at the present time.

Neidelman accepts responsibility for the circumstances surrounding the accident and reassures Malin that they have reviewed the safety procedures. Everyone is given the chance to pullout before they begin work again, but no one does. They all share in the treasure which is the big attraction in spite of the risks.



Chapters 11-14

Chapters 11-14 Summary

Hatch joins Neidelman on the Cerberus, where Neidelman shows him the computer and other equipment. The boat is a converted whaling ship and contains many weapons. They talk to Kerry Wopner who he explains how the equipment is hooked up to the island and how it functions and will be controlled from the command center on the island. Malin asks questions and receives answers. Neidelman leaves and Kerry takes Malin to Christopher St. John's work area where Christopher explains the de-encryption on which he is working. They explain how Thalassa estimated the treasure to be worth two billion dollars. The historian goes on to relate stories of how Ned Red functioned and how he and Kerry are working together to decode Macallan's journal. They even show him the code.

Chapter Twelve has Hatch relaxing on the porch of his house. He is examining the printouts Kerry had given him earlier in the day. The text of those documents is presented in Chapter Thirteen. The Ockham biography explains how he became a pirate and how ruthless he was in his quest for treasures. The report mentions the treasures he plundered during his career. His command ship was found adrift with all dead in 1697, and it is believed that his wealth was hidden in one of three places: Ragged Island, the Isle of Palms in South Carolina or Ile a Vache off Hispaniola.

Chapter Fourteen opens with Hatch taking the Plain Jane to Ragged Island. The island is almost unrecognizable due to the amount of work that the crew has performed. There is now a Quonset hut that houses his medical office, and this is his first time seeing it. He finds that it is well equipped and includes a small infirmary and apartment if he wants to sleep. In the command center, he finds the staff looking over some test results. They are not happy with the results. Even though everything appears to be normal, there are some discrepancies from the earlier test run from the Cerberus. They think there is a bug in the program and send for Wopner.

Chapters 11-14 Analysis

Hatch visits the Cerberus and learns the history of the ship and the equipment. He is fascinated by the Macallan journals and Kerry says he will print out a copy for him. Malin reads the printouts later that evening. The key to the design of the Water Pit is supposed to be in the code that Wopner and St. John are trying to break. They don't know for sure what is in that encrypted section of the journal and the success of the digging depends on that information.

Malin goes to the island to check on the progress. He hardly recognizes the island with all of the work that has been done and the Quonset huts that had been erected, one of

which is a medical office for him. The fact that he doesn't recognize the island because it looks so different eases some of his fears makes it easier for him to be on the island.

The staff is bothered by some test results that are inconsistent with results from the previous evening. Neidelman feels it is a bug in the programming and sends for Wopner. No one mentions the fabled curse and wonders if it is an omen of some kind.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

Neidelman is pleased that Malin likes his office and the progress they've made on the island. He leads Malin to a hole where several engineers are working. Neidelman shows Malin a computer printout and says the text results indicate that this hole is the Water Pit. It has been verified by carbon 14 tests that pinpointed the date of the wood. When the tide comes in, they plan to dump a high intensity dye into the Water Pit and see where it appears in the water outside the island. This will help them find the floor tunnel which they will seal with explosives. This will keep the Water Pit from flooding and allow them to work in a more manageable environment.

Hatch dozes on Streeter's boat as the divers prepare to dive, one of whom is a French woman named Isobel Bonterre. She is looking for the old pirate camp. The other diver is Sergio Scopatti. The crew is preparing to drop the dye bombs in the Water Pit. Wopner reports that all computer systems are performing normally as the work begins. The spot where the dye appears is where Hatch had seen the whirlpool from the Plain Jane, right before he received the call to treat the injured Ken Field. Then the dye appears in other places. The divers took cameras down so the crew could view the area on the video screen. They begin to experience computer problems and the system crashes, and diver Isobel Bonterre is sucked into a tunnel but is rescued and is fine. She tells them of an underground cavern with cement and stones. Then Wopner tells them that the computer's ROM is damaged.

Chapter Sixteen has Hatch attending the Stormhaven Lobster Bake. The Thalassa group are the guests of honor. Their presence has been good for business in Stormhaven, and at the lobster bake, they mix with the locals. It is also Hatch's first chance to mix with the people from the town where he grew up. He has a strange conversation with the town minister, Woody Clay, who asks prying questions about the project at Ragged Island and how much they think they will earn from it. Clay makes it clear that he doesn't like all of the activity in their town and will do what he can to protect the town.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Hatch learns that Neidelman has faith in his staff, especially Wopner. He tells Hatch that Wopner served three years for hacking but not to mention that Hatch now knows that. Thalassa brings in people as they need them. As soon as they finish their work, they leave the area. This way they always have the minimal number of people necessary to perform the tasks on hand.

The curse of the island continues as there is a computer failure. Diver Bonterre is sucked into a cavern which she is able to describe to them. They are now confronting



some strange problems they can't answer. There should not have been a back current with the tide going out, and somehow, the computer's ROM has been rewritten which prompts Wopner to say the system is cursed. The beginning of the book told of the myth of the curse on those who tried to retrieve the treasure. Is Thalassa doomed as the others were? The reader begins to wonder.

Hatch meets Woody Clay, the town's minister at the lobster bake. Clay makes it clear that he thinks greed is the motive for the Ragged Island project and doesn't like it. It will ruin the town and the kind of life that the town's people had. He mentions the curse and tells Hatch that God punishes those whose motives are based on greed. What kind of trouble will Clay cause for Hatch and Thalassa?



Chapters 17-20

Chapters 17-20 Summary

Hatch walks away from the lobster bake after his confrontation with Clay. He has to return for the speeches but meets Professor Horn as he is walking back. They discuss the confrontation, and Horn warns Malin not to underestimate Clay. Malin asks Horn his opinions of the Rugged Island project and finds he is not in favor of it and tells Hatch that he is a fool. Horn tells him to return to Boston before he is ruined like the others before him were.

Chapter Eighteen begins the next morning. Hatch is in his medical office on the island. Wopner and St. John are talking about the problems with the code breaking and the computer. Wopner says one of the computers has chips that have been altered. The system is functioning properly now but failed before. St. John is more concerned with the code-breaking problem. They decide to work on their own problems during the day, as Hatch sits there listening; he asks what a polyalphabet cypher is. St. John explains and tells him why they don't have the time to try it.

In Chapter Nineteen, the crew is working on plugging the water tunnels. Isobel tells Hatch that the pirates built a stone wall around the base at the end of the island. This is what allowed the pirates to work in a dry area. Hatch and the others will watch the blasting from inside the Orthanc, a suspended cage that is lowered into the hole. After a systems check, the explosions begin. After sealing the water tunnels, they begin to pump the water and drink champagne to celebrate the situation. Neidelman tells them that nonessential people can have the afternoon off. Then he receives a report that the water level is no longer falling. They can't pump the water out, so Neidelman says they will cofferdam the shore, just as the pirates did.

Chapter Twenty has Hatch having dinner with the crew on Cerberus. On the way back to shore, he has problems with the Plain Jane, but it passes and he stops at the Griffin and is invited below for a drink with Neidelman. They discuss the project and Macallan's journal. Neidelman's point of view is that Macallan would not have used codes if the journal didn't contain the secrets to the Water Pit.

Chapters 17-20 Analysis

Clay had provoked Malin in the conversation at the lobster bake. The confrontation had been public and Hatch is upset for allowing himself to be provoked. Before he recovers from the encounter, he meets Professor Horn, a man he respects immensely. When Malin asks the professor his view of the Ragged Island project, he is shocked and disappointed at Horn's answer. Horn tells him that he is a fool and to look at what happened to all those who tried before him. He should return to Boston. Hatch seems to need Horn's approval and is disappointed when he doesn't receive it.



The Thalassa group is having problems like the previous groups had. St. John and Wopner are having problems breaking the code, and the computer situation is called impossible by Wopner. If the chips have been altered, somebody had to do the altering which would mean sabotage.

Hatch talks to Neidelman about how he learned about Macallan, and Neidelman tells how he tracked down the books which were sold in an auction of items from Ockham's deserted pirate ship. Neidelman's belief that the journal contains the secret of the Water Pit is based on logic. Why else would Macallan write a journal in code and invisible ink?



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

Wopner goes to the post office looking for a package when he encounters Clay. He doesn't want to talk to him, but Clay begins to talk about the buried treasure, and Wopner lets it slip that the treasure is valued at two billion dollars. Clay asks if they are having problems and Wopner says no. Clay brings up the disasters that have befallen other groups that tried to dig for the treasure and also the people that have disappeared at the island. Just then the postal mistress arrives with Clay's packages and he goes outside.

Chapter Twenty-Two opens with the next day as Hatch walks around the island checking on the progress of the cofferdam the crew is building. It is the end of the workday. Isobel is riding back to shore in the Plain Jane with Hatch. She openly flirts with him and suggest they have dinner together.

Chapter Twenty-Three has Malin and Isobel going to dinner. The restaurant is full of Thalassa people. Isobel tells Hatch that they found the pirate camp and will begin to excavate the next day. As they are talking, Claire, a past flame enters the restaurant with Woody Clay. She is his wife.

Chapter Twenty-Four begins with Wopner trashing one of his computers. He tells Hatch about the problems with the computer and how the ROM programming was overwritten and that there is no known way of doing that. The problem is with the computers on the island and not with the one on the boat. Wopner blames the problem on the Ragged Island curse. He tells Hatch he learned of the curse from Woody Clay. St. John arrives telling him that Isobel want Malin to come to the dig site and then the conversation turns to the codes. Hatch suggests that the code is based on numbers and not letters which excites St. John. Wopner says he will write the program based on that approach.

Hatch visits the excavation site in Chapter Twenty-Five. They have found a skull and bones. He tells them that the bones indicate that they have found the remains of two people. There are also several gold coins and an emerald stone. Isobel shows Hatch the artifacts they have found in the past two days. They find three more skulls while Hatch is there. They seem to have found a mass grave and wonder what could have happened.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

Woody Clay is very interested in the work on Rugged Island as his conversation with Wopner indicates. He brings up all the tragedies surrounding the island and wants to know if the Thalassa group is experiencing problems. It seems that not only is he prying, he also seems to be trying to spook Wopner.



Isobel is openly flirtatious with Malin. They are both single but he doesn't seem interested in any romantic involvement with her. Malin feels Isobel represents trouble but doesn't say why. His behavior is guarded when he is with her, but he still agrees to have dinner with her. He finds that she is very astute in reading people as she ascertains that Claire, now the wife of Clay, is a former lover.

Hatch finds out the Clay has been talking to Thalassa personnel when he learns that Wopner attributes the computer problems to the Ragged Island curse. Hatch finds Clay to be an irritant and figures he must do something about him before they have problems with the townspeople.

Hatch finds that St. John seems to be under the spell of Isobel Bonterre and it bothers him. Does he feel jealous?



Chapters 26-29

Chapters 26-29 Summary

At a meeting on the Griffin, Neidelman gives Hatch the gold doubloon that was found at the camp excavation site. St. John and Wopner announce that they have made some progress on the code. The group is going to attempt to drain the Water Pit again and plan to enter it the next day. If all goes well, the first people to enter the Pit will be Neidelman, Isobel and Malin.

Chapter Twenty-Seven reveals that the pumping has successfully progressed and no water entered during the tide. The crew was cleaning debris out of the Water Pit. That night after dinner he examines some of the skeletons. He determines that they suffered from scurvy. The doorbell rings and it is Professor Horn. Hatch shows him the bones, and the old man examines them and promptly diagnoses scurvy. Horn says he came to apologize to Malin. He does not favor the project but says he had no right to question Malin's motives.

Horn asks to hear the story of the skeletons and Malin tells him. As Horn is leaving, he tells Malin what is wrong with the theory of scurvy. Pirates may not have known the cause of scurvy but they all knew the cure. Something made some one quickly bury eight people and leave the island in a hurry.

Chapter Twenty-Eight opens with a flurry of activity in the Command Center. They are having trouble with the ladder array's electronics. Neidelman wants Wopner to accompany them to the Water Pit but he wants to work on the code. Neidelman says his services are more important at the Water Pit than they are with the code.

At the Water Pit, Hatch and the others begin their descent. They find a system of struts like a staircase. Hatch descends the ladder in Chapter Twenty-Nine. Wopner and others calibrate sensors and enter data into a palmtop computer. They look around the area as the others place the sensors. Streeter calls on the radio and says there is a problem, and they should return to the surface. St. John has broken enough of the code to find that the crypt is a tomb for anyone who enters, designed that way by Macallan who knew that the pirate planned to kill him. Neidelman feels the reference is to the flood that killed Simon Rutter and that there is no danger now. Malin and Isobel disagree as the ladder array trembles. They call for Wopner so they can leave the Water Pit and find him buried in debris and rock, severely injured. The rocks continue to shift, as Neidelman and Isobel try to call Malin away.

Chapters 26-29 Analysis

It is obvious that Professor Horn and Malin have a lot of respect for one another. Malin is genuinely fond of the old man and has his ego slightly deflated when Horn quickly reached a diagnosis of scurvy. The two played scientific quiz games when Malin was a



child and they continue to quiz each other, each enjoying the company of the other. Horn leaves Malin with something to think about. Scurvy doesn't make someone dump eighty bodies in a mass grave and leave quickly without even taking any valuables.

Neidelman orders Wopner to the Water Pit instead of allowing him to work on the codes. It was not a good decision. By the time they find out from St. John what the coded passage says, Wopner is already severely injured. Macallan who knew that Ockham was going to kill him achieved the ultimate revenge. He designed the crypt with a series of booby traps so that anyone who entered would be killed. Even the pirate couldn't retrieve his treasure.



Chapters 30-32

Chapters 30-32 Summary

Hatch is in his office waiting for the coroner to come for Wopner's body. Neidelman tries to console Hatch and tells him how Neidelman's son died in a salvaging diving accident. He tells Hatch that accidents are a part of the business and that Wopner's death should not deter them from the project. Neidelman mentions the possibility of sabotage, particularly in reference to the computer problems and says it has to be someone who had access to the computer. He mentions Rankin, Magnusen, St. John, Bonterre and even Wopner himself. Neidelman also mentions industrial espionage as a reason for the sabotage. Neidelman feels the solution is to keep working without a break. Hatch wants to halt the operation until the following spring. The coroner then arrives.

The beginning of Chapter Thirty One reveals that Clay is preparing a special sermon and the church is packed. The subject is the treasure hunt and how it will spoil life in Stormhaven. He reveals the stone that has been stored in the church basement, taken from the island many years before. It is the stone that had been removed by Simon Rutter. He basically says that those motivated by greed will suffer and that is also true of Stormhaven.

Chapter Thirty-Two has activities continuing at the site. They brace the ladder array and performed tests on the structure. Hatch finds some new rules in effect when he asks to see a copy of the journal and finds he needs Neidelman's permission, which he receives. Dr. Magnusen is running computer tests and blames Wopner for messing up the computer. St. John is trying to identify booby traps in the Water Pit, and Hatch studies the images on the screen with him. Neidelman appears and tells him that they have completed the final measurements and the data is in the system. They all look at the screen. They play with the images on the screen and finally conclude that the Water Pit is designed as an inverted cathedral spin.

Chapters 30-32 Analysis

The tragedy of Wopner's death has Hatch very shaken. He wants to suspend operations until the following spring, giving them time to perform more research during the winter. Neidelman believes the proper course is to proceed without stopping. He feels Wopner would have wanted it that way. Neidelman also raises the issue of sabotage and industrial espionage feeling that whoever tampered with the computer is one of their inner circle. This is an angle that Hatch hasn't thought of or put together with Clay saying that his portfolio had included mining stocks.

Clay's church is packed on Sunday because of the news that he has prepared a special sermon. In it he attacks the treasure hunt as being motivated by a curse and subject to a curse. He says the same is true for the town of Stormhaven and those who profit from

the treasure hunt. It will wreck life in the town, even though a few people may profit from it. But they will suffer from their greed.

Neidelman sees the real adversary as Macallan and St. John comes to agree with him. The design of the pit doesn't change over the years and kills people other than the pirates and that Macallan had to know that would happen. Believing that there is some method to the design, they keep entering data and studying the images on the screen and conclude that the Water Pit is designed as an upside down cathedral spire.



Chapters 33-36

Chapters 33-36 Summary

Hatch explores the attic in his house and is overcome with memories. The crew has finished surveying the Water Pit and is waiting for the insurance adjuster who arrives the next day. Malin is looking for a book his aunt had about European cathedrals. He knocks over a dusty wardrobe accidentally and it comes apart. In it are old newspapers and hand written pages.

Chapter Thirty-Four opens with Malin walking through the Burnt Head area and thinking about the past. Claire appears and they sit and talk. She tells him that she knows he isn't doing Ragged Island for the money and then talks about her husband and marriage. Malin tells her about the progress at the dig site and how they discovered the upside down cathedral spire design and how they think they can reach the treasure. They talk about the Curse Stone, and Claire closely questions Malin about him lying about the value of the treasure. Malin learns that the fishermen are planning a protest. They begin to kiss but Claire pulls away before things go too far. She runs off.

Chapter Thirty-Five begins with Hatch at work on the island where he finds St. John poring over books, looking for information that would help them with the Water Pit. Hatch has the papers that he found in the wardrobe. These are the records that his grandfather had written. The documents contain research from Spain that refer to a terrible treasure which seems to be the fabled St. Michael's Sword.

St. John has found that the evidence seems to indicate that Macallan was involved in intelligence work and was a double agent for Spain. This is why he was so good with codes. They also find that Rankin's computer analysis indicates gold buried under the Water Pit.

Chapter Thirty-Six reveals a busy day on the island. They are three days from Hatch's deadline of August 28. When Hatch sorts through his mail, he finds a letter from Claire. She is leaving her husband and going to New York where she has a job.

Chapters 33-36 Analysis

Like everyone who goes through old family belongings, Malin has a lot of memories as he looks for a book on cathedrals that he remembers his aunt had. When he knocks over an old wardrobe, it breaks and he finds hidden handwritten pages and newspaper clippings.

More memories surface as he walks around the wooded area of Burnt Head. As he sits in the glen thinking, Claire appears. They say hello. She doesn't want to stay, afraid of small town gossip, but sits to talk with him. They talk of the past and then Claire tells him that she followed him. Their discussion ends with them kissing and Claire leaving



before the situation went too far. Malin, who still has feelings for Claire, thinks he was foolish to even consider an affair with the minister's wife. The small town gossip would be too vicious.

Malin appears to be trying to control himself and to be striving for some kind of perfection in everything he does. It goes further than just doing things for appearances sake. He began the battle with the island for his brother's sake and he is determined to win.

Claire's encounter with Malin made her realize how unhappy she is with Clay. She decides to leave her husband and begin a new life in New York. In a letter to Malin she tells him that they can't recapture the past and shouldn't try.



Chapters 37-40

Chapters 37-40 Summary

The Thalassa people have braced the Water Pit, trying to make it safe to work in. Hatch is watching the work in the pit. Isobel approaches Malin and tells him that they have found the remains of Johnny. She leads him to the place where he looks at the skeleton. Johnny had been killed by one of the traps set by Macallan.

In Chapter Thirty-Eight, Hatch is on the water in the Plain Jane. He selects a spot on the beach and sets up his paints. He has found the closure he was so desperately seeking and is now ready to move on with his life. Isobel appears in a launch and joins him on shore. He paints as they talk. She tells him that Neidelman is working in the pit. He is now in such a hurry that he isn't bothering with computer analysis. He finishes the painting and they go for a walk, and Isobel coaxes him into talking about Johnny. Malin tells her that it was his idea to go to Ragged Island on the day that Johnny was killed.

For the first time Malin relates the story of what happened that day, how he crawled out of the cave and returned to his home. There was a big search but they couldn't find the body. Malin's father kept looking for months and drowned on the island. Six years later, Malin and his mother went to Boston and never returned to Stormhaven.

Chapter Thirty-Nine finds Hatch receiving an email from the Marquessa, from whom he had requested information. He kept losing his Internet connection on the island so he read his email with a mobile hookup on the boat. Hatch sends the message to a printer.

In Chapter Forty, digging in the Water Pit is in progress. Hatch goes to the pit and calls Neidelman. He wants to talk to him about the sword and is told by Neidelman that he will have to come down to the work site, which Hatch does. Hatch tells Neidelman what he has learned about St. Michael's Sword. It was during the time of the bubonic plague. Many deaths have been tied to the sword. Hatch hasn't been able to pinpoint the mysterious illness that the people died from but he is beginning to suspect the plague. Hatch doesn't believe in curses but he believes the sword is dangerous and many of the crew are in danger. He wants Neidelman to stop digging for a while and threatens to shut down the whole operation as per the contract.

Neidelman accuses Malin of wanting to shut down the operation to shut Thalassa out of their share of the treasure. He accuses Malin of sabotaging the computer. Hatch orders them off the island. They refuse to leave.

Chapters 37-40 Analysis

Malin needed closure in his brother's death. This was his real reason for allowing the Ragged Island project. He had to find out what happened to his brother, and he does



when they find his skeleton. It is a very emotional moment for Malin when he looks at the remains of his brother.

On the beach, Malin tells Isobel the whole story. All these years he has felt guilt since it was his idea to go to Ragged Island and that's what led to Johnny's death and ultimately, his father's death. He needed to talk about it and Isobel sensed that when she encouraged him to talk. It helped to expel the demons that haunted him all those years.

When Hatch tells Neidelman that he wants the dig stopped for safety reasons, since St. Michael's Sword is some how tied in with the bubonic plague and says he will use the provisions of the contract to halt the work. Concern with safety confronts greed as Neidelman accuses Hatch of trying to cut Thalassa out of their share of the fortune. He also accuses Hatch of sabotaging the computer. Hatch orders them off of his island and they refuse. Neidelman is armed and lets Hatch know it. Neidelman feels he is too close to the treasure to lose it now.



Chapters 41-46

Chapters 41-46 Summary

Neidelman is working in the pit when he hears the sound of approaching boats. He learns from Streeter that two dozen boats led by Woody Clay have surrounded the Cerberus. Neidelman decides to come up to the surface. They are eight feet from the treasure chamber and he is worried about Malin and what he might do. They have been sending all non-essential personnel off the island in anticipation of reaching the treasure. They plan to remove it from the island before Hatch can obtain an injunction. He tells Streeter to find out what Hatch's plan is.

Chapter Forty-Two finds Hatch watching the flotilla from his house. A Fedex truck delivers a package to him containing the results of an analysis performed at the Smithsonian. Malin had sent them bone samples. All the pirates died of different diseases. The only common element is a low white blood count. Professor Horn and Isobel are there and they discuss the illnesses among the staff. While they are talking, a very ill Donny Truitt, a local hired by Thalassa, appears.

Chapter Forty-Three opens with Clay disappointed with the results of the flotilla protest. They surround the Cerberus and no one even appears. After several hours, the boats head to shore. Lem, the lobsterman, wants to quit the protest but Clay does not in spite of the coming noreaster. The other boats leave and Clay remains alone, not noticing the launch that leaves Ragged Island.

In Chapter Forty-Four, Hatch is tending to Truitt, having given him a sedative. He calls for an ambulance. Donny has the same symptoms that many of the pirates had. Finding communications busy or inoperable, Hatch and Isobel leave by boat into the raging storm. He hasn't told her where they are going or why.

Chapter Forty-Five has Clay still out on the water. The Cerberus has sailed off leaving him alone. He had tried to follow the Cerberus but lost them. Now he was lost and the boat is being tossed around in the rough sea. He recognizes Ragged Island. The boat hits the reef and Clay is thrown into the water.

Hatch finally tells Isobel that the symptoms Truitt and other have are symptoms of radiation sickness. Hatch believes the sword is radioactive. Isobel says that radiation might also be the cause of the computer problems they have. Hatch says they have to stop Neidelman from opening the lead box. The Plain Jane takes on water due to the storm. They just make it into the dinghy as the Plain Jane sinks. They see the light of the Cerberus with its harpoon gun aimed at them. Bonterre takes the dinghy alongside the Cerberus, too close for them to be hit by the weapons. They steer the dinghy to the reef area as the boat is hit by one of the weapons.



Chapters 41-46 Analysis

Neidelman is motivated totally by greed and is trying to remove the treasure, cutting Hatch out of his share. He isn't at all concerned with safety or anything else and just wants the treasure off the island before Hatch can obtain an injunction. He tells Streeter to find out what Hatch plans to do.

Clay organizes the boating protest and two dozen boats surround the Cerberus. Since most of the crew is on the island, no one seems to notice and after several hours, the boats return to shore leaving Clay alone in his boat. Clay is motivated by the strength of his conviction that the Ragged Island project is bad for Stormhaven. He follows the Cerberus when it sails and loses it. His boat crashes on Ragged Island and he is thrown into the water. Clay doesn't know when to quit. He should have returned to shore with the other before conditions became so bad, but he is driven by his desire to stop the Ragged Island project.

Hatch realizes Truitt and others have symptoms of radiation sickness. He and Isobel head for the island to try to stop Neidelman from opening the sealed lead box. If the sword is radioactive, many people can be affected. He blames himself for never checking for radiation on the island when he had all the equipment. Hatch is trying to save lives, but they are attacked by the Cerberus in the Raging storm. Greed has made Neidelman and Streeter blind to danger.



Chapters 47-51

Chapters 47-51 Summary

Clay makes it to safety on Ragged Island. He is elated, feeling he has been delivered by God and he was on the island for a reason. Clay takes shelter in a cave and builds a fire.

In Chapter Forty-Eight Isobel safely makes it to shore and looks for Hatch. She makes her way to the command center. Breaking into Hatch's office, she finds the Radmeter. Hearing a noise, she exits through the broken window.

Chapter Forty-Nine finds Hatch is also alive. He slowly remembers what has happened as he drags himself to the beach and then looks for Isobel. A search light is shining back and forth on the beach. Streeter begins to shoot at Hatch using a nailgun. He hides beneath the tarp with the skeletons until Streeter fires into it. The two men fight, and Hatch gets away. He falls into one of the shafts with Streeter following, firing a gun at him. Hatch is hit in the head and knocked out.

In Chapter Fifty, Isobel finds Rankin and wonders about approaching him. Streeter tried to kill them, and she doesn't know if Rankin is involved.

Chapter Fifty One tells of Hatch in the tunnel with Streeter. Hatch regains consciousness with Streeter standing over him with a gun. Neidelman arrives with Magnusen. Streeter tells Neidelman that he doesn't know where Bonterre is. Hatch tells him about the radiation, but Neidelman won't listen. He still thinks Hatch is trying to cheat him. They lift the lid off the chamber and they all look in and see the treasure. It is clear that they have plans to kill Hatch and Bonterre.

Chapters 47-51 Analysis

The bad storm causes the shipwrecks of the boats of Clay and Hatch. Clay, Hatch and Bonterre reach Ragged Island, with Streeter trying to kill both Hatch and Bonterre. Greed for the treasure is still driving Neidelman and Streeter, who now have Magnusen with them. When Hatch tells them about the radiation, they refuse to listen, still believing that Hatch is trying to cheat them out of their half of the treasure. They make it clear they plan to kill Hatch and Bonterre, they are so blinded by greed.



Chapters 52-57

Chapters 52-57 Summary

Rankin greets Isobel warmly. She tells him about the shipwreck and he tells her that they reached the treasure vault. Most of the staff were sent home because of the weather and they are functioning on battery power. They try the Radmeter and it indicates the presence of radiation, and Isobel tells him it's from St. Michael's Sword. Rankin agrees and says it explains the illnesses and the problems with the equipment.

Neidelman is still in the pit as Chapter Fifty-Three opens. Neidelman stands in the vault dazzled by the wealth. The sword casket is elaborately decorated and he caresses it. He has dreamed of this day for years. Asking for a torch, he prepares to open the casket. It dawns on him that the casket has never been opened by Ockham or anyone else. He will be the first.

In Chapter Fifty-Four Hatch is in complete darkness in the bottom of the well without a ladder. After Heidelberg and the others emptied the treasure vault, they would collapse the cofferdam; the pit would flood and Hatch would drown. He is in the same shaft where Johnny died and when he can't find a way out, he begins to panic. He begins yelling and screaming as he re-lives the moment of losing his brother in the cave many years before.

In Chapter Fifty-Five, Bonterre and Rankin are still taking readings with the Radmeter. The readings indicate dangerous levels of radiation so they figure Neidelman has opened the casket. Streeter walks in with a gun. He shoots Rankin in the hand and takes them both to the Pit.

Chapter Fifty-Six has Hatch in the shaft and shouting for help. A voice asks where he is. He answers. In his confusion, he thinks it is his brother's voice. Then he remembers that day in the cave many years ago. There was a sealed door with a sliding stone. The voice calls again and Hatch tells him to use a flashlight and look around. Clay finds the door mechanism and enters, reaching Hatch, who tells him about the radiation and how they have to stop Neidelman.

In Chapter Fifty-Seven, Neidelman was working on burning the bands of the casket. He slowly opens the lid and lifts up the sword and examines it and all of the magnificent jewels it contains. The blade is a strange-looking, rough metal that is purple in color. He remembers the story of St. Michael and thinks that he, Neidelman, is worthy of the sword. As Magnusen is loading a bucket with gems, Heidelberg removes the last band holding the casket. The cave begins to shudder and shake.



Chapters 52-57 Analysis

Rankin learns of the radioactivity from Isobel, as they read the Radmeter. He instantly understands the seriousness of the situation and why the crew became ill and there were so many computer problems on the island. He agrees with Isobel that they have to stop Neidelman from opening the vault but they have no way of communicating with Neidelman.

Neidelman and Streeter's plans are clearly to kill Hatch, Bonterre and apparently Rankin. Neidelman has spent many years dreaming of the treasure, and he is prepared to let nothing stand in his way. Streeter seems ready to do his killing and has rounded up Bonterre and Rankin.

Hatch, stuck in the shaft, has to force himself to think and remember the events as they happened the day Johnny was killed. He puts that knowledge together with what he has learned of Macallan's booby traps which enables Clay to reach him, or Hatch would have died in the same cave as his brother had died in.

Clay comes alive when Hatch tells him about the radiation danger and how it could affect Stormhaven. He had wanted the project stopped and now he has Hatch asking him to help stop Neidelman.



Chapters 58-63

Chapters 58-63 Summary

Bonterre tries to reason with Streeter telling him about the void under the treasure vault, but he won't listen. He is still holding them at gunpoint, telling them that they choose the wrong side. Rankin tells him the sword was made from a meteorite and is highly radioactive. As they are fighting, the whole structure begins to shake. It doesn't deter Streeter as he pushes them into the pit. As Streeter is calling Neidelman's name, he is jumped by Hatch. Streeter falls over the railing and is killed.

In Chapter Fifty-Nine, Neidelman is terrified at the tremors that are taking place. The floor splits and the treasure begins to disappear into the void, taking a screaming Magnusen with it. Neidelman manages to reach the bucket and begins to ascend, watching as the treasure disappears into the ocean. He has the sword with him, as the emergency power goes out. Seeing the body of Streeter, Neidelman begins to scream.

Hatch learns about the final booby trap at the beginning of Chapter Sixty. The Radmeter is showing high levels of radiation. The instrument indicates that Neidelman is alive and has the sword with him and the readings indicate that a one second exposure to the amount of radiation in the sword is lethal. If they go near Neidelman or have a direct path to the sword without rock in between, they will also be exposed to a lethal dose.

Hatch hears Neidelman's voice saying he saw Streeter's body and is coming for Hatch. He tells him to get rid of the sword. Neidelman refuses, blaming Hatch for rigging the vault with explosives. Hatch explains the progression of radiation sickness, but Neidelman won't stop. He is intent on killing them. Clay says he has an idea.

In Chapter Sixty-One, Clay descends the ladder array, as the caverns of the pit are collapsing below him. Neidelman is climbing up and begins shooting at Clay. Clay kicks the gun out of his hand. Neidelman attacks him with the sword.

Chapter Sixty-Two has Bonterre, Hatch and Rankin listening to the sounds of the fight. Clay emerges from the tunnel. He has thrown the sword and Neidelman to the bottom. Clay, who knows he will die, wants to say goodbye to Claire. The three manage to climb out of the cave to the surface. They board the Griffin and head for Shore.

In Chapter Sixty-Three, Hatch sells his family house. He is with Doris, the realtor, discussing the deal. After leaving the realtor's office, he encounters St. John, who says he is working on a paper on Macallan. The Thalassa yacht arrives and they say goodbye. He picks up Isobel and they drive to Boston.



Chapters 58-63 Analysis

Streeter is more irrational than Neidelman is when it comes to the treasure. He won't listen to Bonterre and Rankin when they tell him about the radiation or the booby trap of the void. Streeter has hated Hatch from the beginning and really believes that he is trying to cheat Neidelman out of the treasure. Streeter feels Neidelman has dreamed of the treasure all his life and that he is entitled to it, and Streeter lets it be known that he is prepared to kill for it.

They have to stop Neidelman or the exposure to the radiation will kill them all. Clay is the one who makes the ultimate sacrifice, throwing the sword and Neidelman from the ladder, knowing he has been exposed to a fatal dose of radiation. Clay felt a need to stop the project and in the end, he did and said he was happy to make the sacrifice. "Clay smiled, a strange smile that seemed partly rueful, partly euphoric. 'I knew exactly what I was doing. It wasn't a sacrifice. It was a gift.'" (Chapter 62, pg. 545).

Most of the survivors, except for Clay, were those who were not blinded by greed. Neidelman and Streeter were both so convinced of the conspiracy against them to deprive them of the treasure, that they were irrational and told they were insane by the others.

For Hatch, the whole situation represented closure. He had found out the mystery of Ragged Island and what had destroyed his family. He sells the family house and closes the past as he drives out of town with Isobel.



Characters

Malin Hatch

Malin Hatch is the younger brother of Johnny. He was born and raised at Stormhaven, became a doctor and medical researcher at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Malin and his mother left Stormhaven after Johnny's death in the Water Pit and Malin's father death searching for Johnny. They never returned. When Malin enters into the partnership with Neidelman, he returns for the first time and takes Neidelman to the island. It is a period of emotional turmoil, but he faces his fears and works with the salvage team.

He has many memories that surface as the work progresses and as he interacts with the locals. Malin finds it difficult because he has been burying the guilt for his brother and father's death for years. This is why it is difficult for him to face the island and the memories of Stormhaven.

Malin is not motivated by greed. He needs closure for the deaths of his father and Johnny since it was his idea to go to Ragged Island the day Johnny was killed. He plans to put his share of the treasure into a foundation bearing his brother's name. When he learns about the bubonic plague, he wants the project stopped due to safety reasons, but Neidelman refuses.

Malin learns he can't rekindle his affair with Claire. This allows him to move on to the future. He closes the door on the past when he sells the family house and leaves Stormhaven with Isobel. He finds the closure he needs when he learns how his brother died.

Captain Gerard Neidelman

Neidelman is in his mid-forties when he first meets Malin Hatch. He represents Thalassa Holding Ltd., which has formed the Ragged Island Reclamation Corporation. He had been in the Navy and then worked as a fisherman in Nantucket before becoming interested in salvaging operations. Neidelman is knowledgeable about his work and careful to hire people who are specialists in their field.

Neidelman had been married and had a son who was killed in a diving accident. He is more or less obsessed with Ragged Island and its treasure and will stop at nothing to obtain it. His contract with Malin gives Malin the rights to stop the project for safety reasons, and when Malin tries to exercise this right, Neidelman refuses. Neidelman is motivated by greed.

Neidelman is quite irrational at the end when he dies in the pit. He is so blinded by greed that he ignores the warnings about the radiation, believing that Hatch and others have conspired to deprive him of the treasure. When he learns of the booby trap in the



treasure vault, he accuses Hatch of planting explosives. He makes it clear that he plans to kill the others in order to keep the treasure.

Neidelman dies when he falls into the void with the sword after fighting with Clay.

Woody Clay

Woody Clay is the minister in Stormhaven, although he is not originally from Stormhaven. He gave up his inheritance when he became a minister. Clay views the Ragged Island project as a threat to the town and vows to do what he can to protect the town and its way of life. He is one of the few to mention the curse on the island. He also tells Malin that God punishes those whose motives are based on greed. Clay is married to Claire.

In the end, Clay gives his life to save Hatch and Bonterre. He pushes Neidelman and the sword into the void. He is exposed to a lethal dose of radiation.

Christopher St. John

Christopher St. John is the historian for the Ragged Island Project. He specializes in Elizabethan and Stuart history, codes and piracy. He provides the background historical information and works with Wopner to break the Macallan code. After Wopner's death, he breaks the code on his own. His research reveals Macallan's intelligence background. He was absent from the island at the end and plans to write professional papers about Macallan.

Lyle Streeter

Lyle Streeter is the team foreman for the project. He has known Neidelman since their days in Vietnam and is very loyal to him. He is motivated by greed and loyalty to Neidelman. Streeter, like Neidelman, is also irrational and tries to kill the group that he considers to be on the other side. He dies when he falls over the railing in the pit.

Isobel Bonterre

Isobel Bonterre is a diver and archaeologist. She grew up in the Caribbean where her father was a fisherman. Isobel is single and openly flirts with Malin, who tended to her wound when they first met. She is the one who finds Johnny's remains. Isobel is in the cave at the end and leaves Stormhaven with Hatch.



Simon Rutter

Simon Rutter was a Maine fisherman who harbored at Ragged Island during a storm. He explored the area and found a mysterious place with a strange depression. He returned with others to dig. As soon as a rock was moved, the area, which became known as the Water Pit, flooded with seawater. Rutter drowned.

Kerry Wopner

Kerry Wopner is a computer expert. He specializes in cryptanalysis and network design. Kerry is also a dungeon master for three online games. He is also a hacker who spent time in prison. Originally from Brooklyn, they have to show him how to eat lobster. Kerry is severely injured in an accident in the Water Pit and dies.

Professor Horn

Professor Horn was a teacher and friend of Malin's from his childhood days in Stormhaven. Even in his eighties, the man still likes to play scientific games with Malin. He has a sharp mind and Malin respects his opinion.

Sandra Magnusen

Sandra Magnusen is the chief engineer and remote sensing specialist for Thalassa. She is in the treasure vault with Neidelman when the floor collapses. She is killed when she falls into the void with the treasure.

Alfred Westgate Hatch, Sr.

Hatch was a wealthy financier who purchased Ragged Island in 1940. He moved his family to Stormhaven and began trying to recover the treasure. He declared bankruptcy two years later and soon died.

A.W. Hatch, Jr

A.W. Hatch, Jr. was the son of Alfred Westgate Hatch, Sr. He became the sole support of his family at the age of nineteen after his father's death.

Claire Clay

Claire is the wife of Woody Clay and former childhood sweetheart of Malin's. She plans to leave her husband for a job and new life in New York.

Johnny Hatch

Johnny Hatch is the older brother of Malin. Johnny disappears when the two children explore the Water Pit.



Objects/Places

Ragged Island

Ragged Island is an island near Maine.

The Water Pit

The Water Pit is the shaft on Ragged Island that flooded with sea water when a rock was moved.

Stormhaven

Stormhaven is a town on the coast of Maine where the Hatch family lives.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Cambridge is the location of Mount Auburn Hospital where Dr. Malin Hatch works as a medical researcher.

The Plain Jane

The Plain Jane is the rented boat that Malin uses during the project at Ragged Island.

The Griffin

The Griffin is Neidelman's command boat.

Cerberus

Cerberus is the research vessel that is part of Neidelman's fleet.

Burnt Head

Burnt Head is a promontory and wooded area near Stormhaven.

The Hatch Family House

The Hatch family house is located on the coast, on the outskirts of Stormhaven.

Treasure Vault

The treasure vault is located at the bottom of the pit. Located over a piercement dome, it is booby trapped to collapse if the sword is removed.



Themes

Good Versus Evil

One of the most dominant themes of the novel is good versus evil. Evil is manifest in the greed for the wealth of the treasure. This is what motivates many of the treasure hunters, especially Neidelman and Streeter. They are so blinded by greed that they become irrational by the end of the novel and ignore the dangers of the radiation and the booby-trapped treasure vault. Neidelman and Streeter are both willing to kill for the treasure and are called insane by Hatch and others. Streeter and Neidelman become so twisted by greed that they believe that Hatch and the others have conspired to sabotage the Ragged Island project to cut them out of their share of the treasure. Their greed eventually leads to their deaths.

Good is basically represented by Hatch and Clay. Hatch isn't interested in the money and states several times that he will use it to create a foundation bearing his brother's name. He wants the project halted due to the danger but can't stop Neidelman and Streeter. Clay wanted the project halted because of the effect it would have on the people of Stormhaven. Some would profit but the quality of life would be ruined in the town. In the end, Clay sacrifices his life by fighting Neidelman and throwing the radioactive sword into the void. This exposes him to a fatal dose of radiation but saves the lives of Hatch and Bonterre.

Malin's Need for Closure

Another recurring theme is Malin's need for closure. As a child Malin suggests that he and his brother explore the forbidden Ragged Island and find the treasure. Their father will be proud of them for finding it. The children's trip to the island results in the unexplained death of his brother, Johnny. His father also dies in the near future, obsessed with searching for Johnny. Malin and his mother eventually leave Stormhaven and never return.

Malin carries around the guilt for years. He understands how his father died, but not what happened to his brother, whose body was never found. Throughout the book, he keeps saying he allowed the project because of his family and will place his share of the treasure in a foundation named for his brother. Malin needs to know what happened to Johnny so he can experience closure.

Malin was ready to confront the past when Neidelman appeared. He wasn't before, which is why he wouldn't accept any of the previous offers to dig for the treasure. He insisted on being present with the Thalassa staff as an active part of the team. When he arrives in Stormhaven, he refuses to sell his house, but he does so as he leaves. He has found the closure he needed and closes the door on the past.

Curse of Ragged Island

The third theme of the novel surrounds the curse of Ragged Island and the efforts of the Thalassa group to debunk and explain the curse. The curse and myths resulted from previous attempts to extract the treasure. These attempts took place in a hundred year plus period and each attempt was met with disaster and ended in bankruptcy. People came down with strange illnesses and there were deaths and accidents. The lack of scientific knowledge and technology propagated the myth for many years. Every school child in Stormahven knew the stories surrounding the island.

The historical and scientific knowledge and the modern equipment and technology allow the group to discover the secrets of Ragged Island and the Water Pit even though they also had their own series of accidents and problems. Research into the history and works of the Pit architect Macallan, reveal his vengeance and genius in designing the pit with a series of booby traps in such a way that the treasure could never be extracted. Even though all the mysteries of the curse are explained, at the end of the novel, there is still some doubt in the minds of Hatch, Clay and Bonterre.



Style

Point of View

The book is written from the third person point of view. The narrators are the authors who provide all the background information about the setting, equipment and history. Some of this is accomplished through the dialogue of the various characters in the novel. This is especially good when it comes to explaining some aspects of science, medicine and history, since each of the Thalassa staff is a specialist in his own area. In this way, the reader learns the necessary information that helps the reader understand what is happening.

Most of the book focuses on Hatch, but if it was written from the first person perspective, the knowledge of the reader would be limited to the knowledge of the storyteller. This would be very limiting for the reader who would have to rely on the story teller for information. The reader would not be privy to scenes that occur outside the presence of the storyteller. The third person works well for this novel with the reader obtaining all of the information he needs.

Setting

There are several settings for the action of the novel, and with the exception of Cambridge, Massachusetts, all are in Maine. Cambridge is the home of Malin Hatch. He lives there and works in a hospital affiliated with Harvard University. This is where he returns at the end of the novel.

The remainder of the settings are on the coast of Maine. Stormhaven is the coastal town where Malin Hatch was born and where his family house is located. There are various settings around town such as restaurants, the supermarket, the post office, the real estate office, and the field where the lobster bake was held, where the characters meet and interact.

The Hatch family owns Ragged Island, which is supposed to be the site where the vast wealth of pirate Red Ned Ockham is buried, as they dig in the fabled Water Pit. They are looking for the treasure vault, where the climax of the novel occurs.

There are also scenes on the various boats used by the Thalassa staff, Hatch, and others.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel, for the most part, is easy to read and designed for fast reading, which is what is desirable in a suspense novel. The reader does not want to be slowed down much when waiting to see what happens next in the action. However,



there are some foreign language terms and technical jargon. The foreign language terms are not always translated, but most are not pertinent to the action of the novel. There are some technical jargon terms and equipment terms that are used. Not all of these are explained, but most of the necessary terms are explained.

There are some passages that are not clear, such as the journal encryption and some passages from sixteenth-century works, but these innuendos and passages are what the novel is all about and add to the suspense. Most of the novel has the main characters searching for the meanings of these passages.

Structure

The structure of the novel is quite simple and accommodates the suspense of the novel. There is a Prologue that provides the historical background of Ragged Island and the fate of previous treasure hunters. The remainder of the book is divided into sixty-three chapters. With the exception of chapters one and two, they are all untitled. The chapter one title gives the reader the date of Johnny's death and the chapter two title gives the reader the date and place of the opening of the novel. There is no index or table of contents and no need for either. There are some maps and illustrations at the beginning that help orientate the reader to Ragged Island.

Most of the story is chronological. There are some flashbacks to previous points in time that are informational for the reader and do not interfere with the action of the novel. The structure chosen by the authors works well for the novel.



Quotes

"Hatch was bracing himself on the wheel, riding out the memory. Horror washed over him like seasickness as the drizzle splattered the pilothouse windows and the bell buoy tolled mournfully in the mists. But mingled with the horror was something else, something new: the realization that there was a vast treasure down there - that his grandfather had not been a complete fool who destroyed three generations of his family for nothing. In a moment, he knew what his decision had to be: the final answer that was owed to his grandfather, his father, and his brother." (Chapter 3, pg. 44)

"He gestured in the direction of the island. 'Here - a mere hundred yards away - lies one of those great riddles, perhaps the greatest still left in North America. Look at it. It looks like nothing, a hold in a patch of dirt and rock.. And yet this hole - this Water Pit - has sucked the living marrow from the bones of everyone who tried to plumb its secrets. Many millions of dollars have been spent. Lives have been ruined and even lost. There are those among us today that have felt firsthand just how sharp the teeth of the Water Pit can be.'" (Chapter 7, pg. 63)

"'Basically,' said St. John, 'the decrypted section of the journal covers Macallan's being taken prisoner, agreeing on pain of death to design the Water Pit, and finding the right island. Unfortunately, Macallan switches to a new code just when they began actual construction. We believe the rest of the journal consists of a description of the design and construction of the Pit itself. And, of course, the secret for getting to the treasure chamber.'" (Chapter 11, pg. 104)

"Hatch stared at the snow on the screen with a macabre sense of déjà vu. It was as if she had disappeared, vanished, just as suddenly as...." (Chapter 15, pg. 135)

"Dr. Horn shook his head. 'Malin, for almost a century I've seen them come and go. Everyone had the latest equipment. Everyone had gobs of money. Everyone had some crucial piece of information, some brilliant insight, It was always going to be different. And they all ended up the same. Bankruptcy, misery, even death.' He glanced at Hatch. 'Have you found any treasure yet?'" (Chapter 17, pg. 153)

"'You can't tell me it's not possible. I mean, you say it happen. You just don't know why yet.'

'Oh, I know why. The frigging Ragged Island curse.'

Hatch laughed, then saw Wopner was not smiling.

The programmer unwrapped the ice cream and took a massive bite. 'Yeah, yeah, I know. Tell me another reason, and I'll buy into it. But everyone who's come to this god damn place has had things go wrong. Unexplainable things. When you get right down to it, we're no different from the rest. We just have newer toys.'" (Chapter 24, pg. 203)

"Hatch mumbled his thanks as he slipped the coin into his pocket, feeling unaccountably awkward as he walked back up the steps and took a seat at the table. Somehow, he felt an inversion to taking the doubloon off the island, as if it would be bad luck to do so



before the rest of the treasure had been found. Am I growing superstitious, too? he wondered half-seriously, making a mental note to lock the coin up in the medical hut." (Chapter 26, pg. 215)

"So you see,' St John began again. 'It appears the key to the Water Pit is that there is no key. It must have been Macallan's ultimate revenge against the pirate who kidnapped him: to bury his treasure in such a way that it could never be retrieved. Not by Ockham. Not by anyone.'" (Chapter 29, pg. 246)

"Hatch paused. 'Is it that obvious?' he laughed quietly. 'Despite everything that's happened, I guess there are times when I still feel a little ambivalent about the whole project. Gold, or the lure of gold, does strange things to people. I'm no exception. I keep telling myself this is all about finding out what happened to Johnny. I'd planned to put my share into a foundation in his memory. But every now and then I catch myself thinking about what I could do with all that money.'" (Chapter 34, pg. 294)

"It's not about the gold, he thought to himself, it's about not letting this damned island defeat us." (Chapter 35, pg. 306)

"And yet, returning to Stormhaven a quarter century later - and especially now, after the discovery of his brother's body - Hatch sensed himself turning a corner. There was pain, but there was also an end to pain. His brother's bones had been found. Perhaps - if he could decide on a fitting memorial - they would be removed from the earth where they had lain for so long. Perhaps there would also be time to understand the fiendish mechanism that caused his death. But even that was less important now. He could close the chapter and move on." (Chapter 38, pg. 318)

"I don't think we're through with him,' he began again in a low voice, as if his thoughts had never left Hatch. 'I've underestimated him all along and I may be underestimating him now. Once he gets home, he's going to start thinking. He'll realize it might take days, even weeks, to get a legal injunction against us. And possession is nine tenths of the law. He could cry clause nineteen until he's blue in the face. But by that point, everything would be academic.'" (Chapter 41, pg. 343)

"Streeter had deliberately tried to kill them. Why? True, he'd hated Hatch from the beginning. But Bonterre couldn't believe that was enough provocation. Streeter didn't seem the type to act rashly." (Chapter 50, pg. 395)



Topics for Discussion

What is the Water Pit?

Why does Malin decide to authorize the Ragged Island project?

What is the Ragged Island Curse?

What is the secret revealed from Macallan's journal?

What is the reason for the split between Hatch and Neidelman?

What is the secret of the Water Pit?

What is the cause of the illnesses of the crews working on the Ragged Island project?

What sacrifice does Woody Clay make and why?