

# **State of Fear Study Guide**

**State of Fear by Michael Crichton**

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# Introduction

Before publishing *State of Fear* in 2004, Michael Crichton spent three years researching the novel. He pored over numerous texts dealing with the environment, pollution, global warming, and environmental policy. Though Crichton's novel is a work of fiction, it relies heavily on scientific data and research. He employs dozens of footnotes and graphs throughout the novel that go hand in hand with the fiction. In the novel's preface, he writes that "this is a work of fiction.... However, references to real people, institutions, and organizations that are documented in footnotes are accurate. Footnotes are real."

*State of Fear* couples Crichton's scientific research and data with a fast-paced plot in which a small group of individuals attempt to thwart the actions of an eco-terrorist group. The eco-terrorists are attempting to create a series of apparently natural disasters and fool the public into believing that the events are the result of the adverse effects of global warming. The terrorists plan a series of five disasters, including breaking off a huge chunk of Antarctica, causing a flash flood in Arizona, creating a large hurricane, and finally using explosives to cause a large tsunami.

Aside from the entertaining action in *State of Fear*, Crichton also introduces important social issues especially relevant to the twenty-first century, including the influence and role of both corporations and media outlets in scientific research and public opinion. The novel contains an "Author's Message," in which Crichton shares his point of view on the various issues addressed in the book. This includes an appendix entitled "Why Politicized Science is Dangerous," a short essay in which Crichton suggests fundamental changes in the way that environmental research and environmental policy is undertaken and understood, warning against the dangers of "politicized science."



## Author Biography

John Michael Crichton was born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 23, 1942, to John Henderson and Zula (Miller) Crichton. Crichton grew up in Roslyn, New York, and as an adolescent distinguished himself both inside and outside of the classroom. Crichton was six feet, seven inches tall by the time he was sixteen years old and was a valuable member of the Roslyn High School basketball team. Inside the classroom, Crichton's teachers marveled at his intelligence and his remarkable writing talent. At the age of fourteen, Crichton published his first piece, a travel article, in the *New York Times*.

Crichton's early success at writing led him initially to pursue a writing career, studying in the English department at Harvard University. Upset by a professor's lukewarm reactions to his writing, Crichton soon became disillusioned with the Harvard English department and switched his academic focus. He graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in anthropology in 1964.

In 1965, Crichton continued his education at Harvard Medical School, and to help pay his medical-school tuition expenses, he started writing novels under various pseudonyms. In 1966, he published his first novel, *Odds On*, earning him two thousand dollars. Crichton published four more books under a pseudonym in medical school before publishing *The Andromeda Strain*, his first runaway success, under his own name in 1969. The book became a bestseller and was released as a movie by Universal Studios in 1971.

After graduating from medical school and following the success of *The Andromeda Strain*, Crichton abandoned his pursuit of a medical career in favor of writing. After *The Andromeda Strain*, he continued to publish successful "techno-thriller" novels. Crichton is credited with inventing the "techno-thriller" genre, which combines technology (often bio-technology), suspense, and social commentary. In the 1970s and 1980s, Crichton produced a number of acclaimed and bestselling thrillers including *The Great Train Robbery*, *Eaters of the Dead*, *The Terminal Man*, *Congo*, and *Sphere*. In 1990, Crichton published *Jurassic Park*, which critics lauded as his best novel to date; he followed with a sequel, *The Lost World*, in 1995. Both novels were turned into blockbuster Hollywood movies, helping cement Crichton's stature as one of the most successful and recognized American writers of his time.

In 2004, Crichton again topped several best-seller lists with the publication of his novel *State of Fear*, a technological thriller dealing with the science and controversy concerning global warming. In addition to his numerous science fiction books, Crichton co-created the hit television show *ER* and has written a historical novel, film scripts, and works of nonfiction. Crichton has won numerous awards including an Academy Award, an Emmy, and a Peabody Award.



# Plot Summary

Published in 2004, *State of Fear* is the latest in a long series of techno-thrillers by Michael Crichton. The novel focuses on the issue of global warming and eco-extremists are plotting to affect the climate in severe ways that will support a media-driven campaign to amass large amounts of cash from wealthy donors. The donors are naively committed to a cause that is portrayed by the media as an imminent threat to mankind, but that is not supported by legitimate research. Near the end of the 500-plus-page novel, Kenner, sort of an atmospheric super-cop, explains in a soliloquy that governments maintain their power, and keep order among the masses by keeping people in a constant *State of Fear*. He cites the "military-industrial complex" that Eisenhower warned of during the Cold War as an example. He claims that after the demise of the Soviet Union - the boogiemanager for that era - a new threat emerged in the U.S. and Western Europe. He calls it the "Politico-Legal-Media" (PLM) complex, and cites the ecology movement as one of its greatest tools.

Crichton sets the stage with a summary of the "Vanutu Lawsuit." The lawsuit was filed after a global-warming conference by the National Environmental Research Fund (NERF) against the EPA on behalf of the people of Vanutu, a small atoll in the Pacific. The suit claims that the EPA was negligent in policing the environment and, as a result, the ice caps are melting, which will cause a rise in sea level and will flood Vanutu and displace the natives. George Morton, a retired super-billionaire, funds NERF, and is naively convinced of the truth of the claim. As are most of the lay advocates of the global-warming cause, George is portrayed as well meaning but dangerously uninformed. As the plot develops, George becomes suspicious of NERF when the hype doesn't reflect the facts he is learning from Kenner. In his or her own turn and time, other characters, such as Peter Evans, George's attorney, Sarah Jones, George's assistant, and Jennifer Haynes, assistant to the chief counsel on the Vanutu suit, also become convinced that the global-warming cause is bogus. Eventually, these four, augmented by Sajong Thopa, Kenner's Nepalese grad student, team up to do battle with and defeat the eco-terrorists.

Under Kenner's leadership, the group uncovers a plot by NERF, fronting for the real-life eco-terrorist group, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), to create a series of three or four deadly atmospheric catastrophes. The events are timed to coincide exactly with a NERF conference on "abrupt climate change," which is ostensibly caused by global warming.

What ensues is a frantic, action-bloated chase by Kenner and his intrepid troops to prevent the catastrophes. They manage to uncover and prevent a colossal caving of the largest iceberg in the history of Antarctica, a killer thunderstorm in Arizona, and a tsunami in the Solomon Islands that is aimed at the California coast. They also uncover an attempt to alter the course of a hurricane, which is abandoned by the eco-terrorists before the effort gets underway.

The novel climaxes in the Solomon Islands, where cannibals eat Ted Bradley, an obnoxious TV actor who hooks up with the group to spy on Evans. *State of Fear* ends



with the bad guy subdued, but the promise remains of a continuing battle between the forces of legitimate science and the evil forces of politicized, legal media hyperbole about the imaginary dangers of man's misuse of the environment. In one conversation with a do-gooder environmentalist, Kenner sums up the danger by saying that misinformed good intentions are a deadly combination. The book closes with George Morton promising to continue the fight with a new foundation dedicated to legitimate atmospheric research. He expects Sarah and Evans to help him and carry on his work after he dies.



# Introduction

## Introduction Summary

The author summarizes a lawsuit promised by the National Environmental Resource Fund (NERF) after a 2003 Sustainable Earth Summit Conference on behalf of the island-nation of Vanutu against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The suit claims that the U.S. is responsible for global warming that will cause a rise in sea level that will destroy Vanutu. Largely George Morton, an environmentally conscious retired billionaire, funds NERF. For some inexplicable reason the suit was ultimately dropped, and Crichton's ensuing tale purports to reveal the mysterious reasons behind that outcome.

## Introduction Analysis

The Vanutu lawsuit becomes the starting point for *State of Fear*. Ostensibly, the tale is an attempt to unravel the mystery behind the disappearance of the suit after the initial media hype. Indeed the novel does resolve that mystery, but it is much more as well; it is a critical analysis of how the law is used to excite the media to shape public opinion in the absence of fact.





# Part 1, Akamai

## Part 1, Akamai Summary

Jonathon Marshall, a graduate student studying wave mechanics and dynamics in a Vissy laboratory near Paris, has managed to lure exotic Marisa away from her lover, who is described as a big, American footballer type. Jonathon takes Marisa to the laboratory to impress her with the big wave machine there. Hot sex ensues, and the couple retires to Marisa's apartment near Notre Dame.

Jonathon goes to sleep in the living room while Marisa goes into her bedroom. Masked intruders disturb Jonathon's sleep. They hold him down but do not beat him. He feels a mild stinging sensation under his arm and then they let him go. Marisa argues with the intruders, explaining them away as friends of her boyfriend seeking retribution for the brush off. She asks him to stay, but Jonathon insists on going back to his own flat. She walks with him until they pause to rest by the Thames. Jonathon begins to feel strange. Gradually he grows numb, then almost paralytic. Marisa helps him up and then helps him into the river, where he drowns, and floats away downstream.

In Pahng, a Malaysian rainforest, Charles Ling, a manufacturer of hypersonic cavitation machines, is taking Allan Peterson, a prospective client, to see a demonstration. Peterson claims to be a petroleum engineer, but Ling doubts it. Nonetheless, Peterson is a potentially big sale. Ling and an employee demonstrate the cavitation machine, causing large sections of a cliff to dramatically peel off into a lake. Before the demo is finished, Peterson agrees to buy three machines. Ling is suspicious, but wants the sale. When Peterson leaves, Ling leaves his cell phone on the seat of Ling's car. Because of his suspicions about Peterson, Ling decides to investigate.

The action moves quickly to London, where Richard Mallory, who works at a graphics shop called Design/Quest, has been recruited by a radical ecologist group for low-level volunteer work as something of a lark and kind of fun and exciting. Mallory is sitting at his desk when an American man interrupts him with an expected shipment. A tough-looking, fatigue-clad woman with spiked hair is driving the van. The van is carrying the wires for 500 wire-guided missiles. The woman demands the American's cell phone. She grabs him by the neck and he feels a prick, and sees a drop of blood. The American feels numb, and then walks out into London traffic. The numbness turns to paralysis and the American walks in front of a double-decker bus. Mallory senses that he may be in over his head.

Nat Damon owns Canada Marine Research Technologies, renting small submarines to other companies for oil exploration, oilrig maintenance, etc. He leases a sub for \$380,000 to three men who want to place 200 lb. objects at a depth of 2,000 feet. Damon tries to discourage the suspicious-appearing men with exorbitant contract demands, but they insist. The men represent "Seismic Services," and Damon signs a contract and accepts a \$250,000 deposit. The men require Damon to sign an NDA



(Non-Disclosure-Agreement), a condition that Damon has never encountered before. Damon calls his banker with his unresolved suspicions about the men.

Enter the good guys Akira Hitomi, in Tokyo, is director of the International Data Environmental Consortium (IDEC). He is giving a presentation to a small, but international audience. He stresses that his data is up-to-the-minute. Hitomi reveals that the data-solutions company, Akamai Tree, is really a cover for collecting information on eco-terrorism. Essentially Akamai tracks hits back from Web sites to the original query site. Akamai sets elaborate data traps - called "honey nets" - that attract eco-extremists with information about such things as earthquakes, hurricanes, rain-forest issues, etc. Hitomi has been able to harvest recent information from the traps regarding wire-guided missiles and cavitation machines. He notes that, "They may already have killed a researcher in Paris, and that cell phone traffic is increasing." Hitomi knows there is a global conspiracy of some sort afoot, but he doesn't yet know what it is.

George Morton, the eco-minded millionaire mentioned in the introduction as the money behind NERF (National Environmental Resource Fund), climbs out of a Land Cruiser in central Iceland, bitching about the cold. With him is Nicholas Drake, retired lawyer and director of NERF, and Peter Evans, a 28-year-old attorney from the Los Angeles firm of Hassle and Black. Evans does most of the legal work for NERF, but is also Morton's favorite personal attorney. They are there to meet noted glaciologist, Dr. Einarsson.

Drake wants to meet with Einarsson alone, to discuss "delicate matters." Morton grumbles, but Drake prevails when he distracts Morton with a couple of busty blond Icelandic grad students. While this excluded group is getting acquainted, they hear angry voices coming from the tent that serves as Einarsson's research center. Drake is trying to get Einarsson to alter a paper he has written on glacial melting. The research shows the glaciers are actually increasing, but Drake wants to spin the paper's summary to suggest the opposite. Einarsson, more interested in science and peer review than publicity, isn't buying it. Meanwhile, back with the bimbos, Morton receives a call on his cell phone from his banker, that Friends of the Planet, based in San Jose, Costa Rica, have cashed a check on Morton's account for \$750,000 for the rental of a submarine. Evans tells Morton that he gave Drake \$250,000 recently to cover a shortfall for an organization named International Wilderness Preservation Society. Morton knows nothing about either organization, and this piques his suspicion. The incident is glibly explained away by NERF as an accounting oversight, but it sows the first seeds of doubt in Morton's mind.

Because of the unusual amount of attention the bogus transactions are receiving, Evans concludes that something has flagged an STR (Suspicious Transfer Report), which is used to alert law enforcement of suspected drug or terrorist financial dealings. The reader is reminded of the mysterious Tokyo group from a previous chapter.

On the way back to LA on Morton's Gulfstream Drake, Morton, and Evans interact over Greenland. Evans detects Morton's growing distrust of Drake. Drake and Evans have a conversation about Morton's excessive drinking, hoping he will not be an "embarrassment" when he accepts the "Concerned Citizen of the Year" award at an



upcoming NERF banquet in San Francisco. Morton summons Evans to the front of the plane. Morton asks Evans if he has ever heard of the Tokyo group NSIA (National Security Intelligence Agency) or John Kenner, a MIT professor of geoenvironmental engineering. Evans has heard of neither. Morton's research shows that this Kenner, who is on sabbatical from his MIT gig, is an Olympic-class skier and world-renowned mountain climber, and that he is brilliant with a PhD from Cal Tech and a JD from Harvard Law, and that he has been deeply involved with various government agencies. Kenner wants to set up a meeting with Morton.

Morton's mansion is in Hombly Hills, an exclusive area of Beverly Hills. Evans is with Morton when they are greeted there by Sarah Jones, beautiful, athletic and blond. Morton confirms his suspicion of Drake, and his own tendencies toward alcoholism, by complaining that Drake has become tiresome and morose because Drake "won't drink with me any more." John Kenner is waiting with his colleague, Sajong Thopa, a Nepalese graduate student at MIT. Kenner and Sajong insist on seeing Morton alone. Before they convene, Morton pulls Evans aside and tells him to delay NERF's next round of funding, some six million dollars.

A flirtatious relationship between Sarah and Evans develops, and she gives him a ride back to his apartment. During their conversation *en route*, he reveals that he keeps a spare key under his doormat. After his encounter with Sarah, Evans is a bit aroused and weighs the assets of the two women with whom he has ongoing relationships. Carol is great sex, nothing lasting though, usually one-nighters. Janis, however, is a bomb: perfect body, aerobics instructor, very athletic sex, but not "fulfilling." Evans runs out to grab a sandwich and returns to a voice mail message from Janis, and they decide to get together for the night. Evans awakens the next morning to a naked Janis exercising in the bedroom, spouting all sorts of trite ecology and fitness bromides. She asks if Evans suffered any damage from the 4.3-force earthquake that happened when he was in Iceland. He sees that that his TV apparently moved a couple of inches, because he sees the indentation in the carpet from its old position. He becomes suspicious because it is an older model TV and rather heavy.

Evans goes to work in his sparse, junior associate's office at Hassle and Black. He joined the firm because they have many ecology clients - especially Morton and NERF - and he is a true believer in the global-warming doctrine. While catching up on his work, he gets an e-mail from Herb Lowenstein, a senior partner, who wants to see him. In Herb's office, he chats up Herb's assistant, Lisa, who is the firm's queen bee, and the font of all office gossip and secrets. She informs Evans that NERF Director Nicholas Drake's accountants have been informed that George Morton wants an audit of NERF funds, and they have scheduled a "Big Meeting" for the following day. Once in the senior partner's office, Herb asks Evans how things are between Morton and Drake. Evans acknowledges there is some tension, and tells Lowenstein that Morton told him to delay NERF funding, but that Evans doesn't know why. Lowenstein says Drake is upset about Morton's involvement with Kenner because he thinks Kenner is a troublemaker. They discuss how Drake might have screwed up the \$250,000 deposit and Lowenstein defends the International Wilderness Preservation Society as a legitimate ecology organization. Back in his office, Evans gets a call from Morton, ordering him to drop in



unannounced and visit the litigation team for the Vanutu lawsuit. Evans drops in on the Vanutu Legal Team (VLT) in Culver City and guards frisk him before he can go in. Then, he is met by Ms. Jennifer Hayes, who ushers him into the highly secure facility. Graduate students in climate sciences, not the law students that Evans had expected, staff the enterprise. There are many direct uplinks at the facility to state-of-the-art research centers at major universities that can track both current and past weather around the globe. Evans meets John Balder, also known as the "Bald Eagle," a famous litigator, and leader of the Vanutu effort. Balder immediately takes command of the conversation, challenging Evans' presumptions about global warming. Evans accepts global warming as a fact, but Balder informs him that it is not an established fact by a wide margin. He informs Evans that global warming is a theory with absolutely no substantiating proof. Against Evans' protests, Balder assigns him to be a mock "jury of one," and submit to questioning from the climate-sciences graduate students.

Jennifer Haynes seats Evans, sits beside him, and introduces him to a panel of five grad-students who will grill him about his assumptions concerning global warming. They are studying the reactions of lay-people who might later be interviewed for jury duty. The students present a series of charts and graphs that show a warming trend from 1880 until 2000. The first chart shows a warming trend of 1 degree Celsius over 120 years, but an

anomalous dip that indicates cooling between 1940 and 1970. Another graph shows that the cooling trend increased during a period of intense industrialization, during which CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were high. Ergo, the defense will argue that there is no causal relationship between CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and temperature increases. Further evidence shows that the very best data available is from the period 1940 until 1970, when both the US and the USSR were intensely studying climatology in regard to various nuclear scenarios. The students point out that Evans' assumption that *all* scientists agree with the global warming theory is shortsighted. They reveal that many scientists do not agree with the theory. Evans is surprised, and becomes confused.

After the mock jury interview, John Balder calls Evans into his office to talk about the Vanutu case. He reveals that once you get past the hyperbole about global warming, there is little hard science to support the theory - and a great deal to contradict it. Explaining how the government is likely to defend the case against the EPA, Balder challenges Evans' tightly held "common knowledge" assumptions about global warming. Evans doesn't buy it, of course, because "everybody knows" that global warming is happening. Balder points out that EPA has hired legal superstar Barry Beckman, described as charming, brilliant, having a photographic memory and a brilliant sense of humor, as well as a former professor at Stanford Law. Balder explains that he intends to "bait and switch" from the theory of atmospheric warming to the rise in sea level from ice pack melt. This tactic is solely to confuse the defense. He admits that it has no real scientific standing. Thus, instead of relying on facts and evidence, he can appeal to the jury's emotions by painting a picture of poor Vanutus being drowned off their traditional island home. Vanutu is a Pacific atoll, whose highest elevation is 28 feet above sea level. Balder will claim that this human tragedy is being caused by rich and powerful industrialists warming the earth with their greed. Evans thinks sea-level research should



be simple - put a mark on a pier, then measure it next week - but Balder quickly dissuades him of that notion. Balder explains that sea-level research is extremely complex. He rattles off a bunch of techno-jargon to illustrate his point, such as *glacio-hydroisostatic modeling*, *eustatic and tectonic effects on shoreline dynamics*, *Holocene sedimentary sequences*, *carbon analysis of coastal paleoenvironments*, and *aminostratigraphy*.

The scientific evidence for a rising sea level is sketchy and hotly disputed, but Balder plans to confuse the jury with techno-babble, and then win by appealing to emotions. Evans leaves thinking this case, which was originally described as a "slam dunk," actually might be in serious trouble. On the way out Jennifer Hayes, Balder's oh-so-sexy assistant, invites Evans to lunch at a Mexican restaurant. There is more discussion about sea levels; more evidence that it is not rising, that the whole global warming thing might be nothing but junk science. Potential romance buds, and Evans asks about a scar on Jennifer's arm. She reveals that she taught karate while in law school and that she killed a would-be rapist and abductor after one of her night classes. She got the scar from the car crash that ensued from her disarming and subduing him. She hit him once, but not hard enough. The second blow killed him. Evans is surprised that she is not more disturbed by killing a man. "I was stupid," she says, "I should have killed him the first time." As they are parting, Jennifer encourages him to call her for lunch again. She says her relationship with her current boyfriend isn't going to last. After Jennifer drops Evans off at his apartment, his landlord tells him that the "Cable Company" came by to fix his TV. He does not recall scheduling work with them.

In Vancouver, one of the men who rented the submarine returns to Nat Damon's office. He threatens him about talking to anyone about their transaction, and threatens to sue him because of the non-disclosure agreement. Danner had already been contacted by Kenner, so he knew he was dealing with terrorists. Danner leaves during a thunderstorm, taking a cell phone the visitor left with him. There is an explosion, and Danner thinks he has been struck by lightning. There is another explosion and Danner dies.

Morton has dropped off the radar since he took up with Kenner. Evans hasn't heard from him. After a week, Evans calls Sarah. Although she spoke to Morton a couple of days prior, she's in the dark about what he's up to. He was in North Dakota when she spoke to him, and Morton wanted Sarah to buy some special GPS equipment, and another classic Ferrari to add to his already impressive collection of the famous Italian motorcar. Evans tries Morton's cell phone, but gets no answer. He calls the Center for Risk Analysis at MIT. Kenner isn't in, but left word that Evans might call, and his assistant says Kenner is in Tokyo and gives Evans a cell number.

Heather, Evans' assistant, says she's going home early. Evans reflects that she does that all the time and misses a lot of days because of sickness. Rumor has it that she knows where all the bodies are buried in the firm or that she had an affair with one of the senior partners and has him over a barrel. Drake pops in to see Evans, expressing grave concern about the Kenner-Morton relationship. He tells Evans that he has discovered that Kenner has an extensive history in under-the-radar military and



industrial operations. Drake is convinced that Kenner is with Morton, and expresses concern about the upcoming "Concerned Citizen of the Year" ceremony in San Francisco. He believes that Kenner is brainwashing him against the NERF agenda, and is responsible for a recent order by Morton to audit NERF.

Morton is next seen breakfasting at an outdoor cafe, waiting for Sarah, when a couple sits down next to him. The man's description is similar to the "beefy American" who showed up at the wave laboratory in Paris. The woman appears to be the same woman who seduced, and then killed the graduate student there. The couple has a lover's quarrel over who's going to get up to get the lattes and some suspicions of infidelity. The American slaps the girl and Morton intervenes. Morton summons a cop and the beefy American beats feet. Marisha, the girl, thanks Morton, and he offers to buy her a latte, but before things can develop between Marisha and Morton, beautiful Sarah comes running up to the rescue in her tracksuit. Marisha flashes anger and Morton says to himself, "Something is wrong here." Sarah gives Morton three folders: (1) a record of to-date contributions to NERF; (2) an agreement for the last contribution (Morton wants to go over the language in the agreement); (3) A cashier's check for "...a big number." Morton does not tell Sarah what it is for.

Evans goes two weeks without hearing anything from Morton. Even the Gulfstream pilots cannot say where he is because Morton has rented a different plane. Evans gets a call from Sarah that George wants to see him right away at the NERF building in Beverly Hills. Although headquartered in New York, NERF maintains a Beverly Hills branch office for the convenience of the celebrities so crucial to fundraising for noble NERF causes. When he arrives at NERF, Evans sees Drake and Morton involved in an angry conversation in a glass-enclosed conference room. John Henley, the PR flack for NERF, is also there, as is an AV tech fiddling with the video system with which the room is apparently wired. Drake wants the techie to leave the room, but Morton wants him to stay. Ultimately, Drake prevails and the techie leaves. On his way out, the techie comments to Evans that there are a lot of network problems with the NERF system.

Morton exits the glass room and tells Evans that Drake and Henley *are* NERF - that they run the whole show and are lawyers, not scientists. Morton says that he won't be part of it anymore, and he's not going to give them the \$10 million they expect at the big banquet in San Francisco. He says he has not told Drake yet, and Evans should hold the information close to his chest. He also tells Evans that he will be gone for a week, and that Evans is to arrange to fly the staff and celebrities to the banquet in the Gulfstream. He instructs him to draw up the papers canceling the \$10 million gift. Morton says he will return to Southern California and fly up to Frisco with them. Drake calls Evans, very upset, and calls Morton "demented." He is sure Kenner is behind Morton's change of heart.

On the Gulfstream en route to San Francisco, Morton hosts several celebrities who support NERF. There are two rock stars, a comedian's wife, and Ted Bradley, the popular actor who plays the President of the United States on TV. Morton keeps to himself while the others wax wise on things environmental. George is drinking heavily - straight vodka. While the others are bashing America for its consumption of fossil fuels,



pontificating on how to restructure transportation systems, and lauding the advantages of electric cars, Morton signs the papers Evans has drawn up canceling the \$10 million gift. In the midst of the discussions by the others, Morton points out to Evans that the Gulfstream is consuming more fossil fuel on this single flight than the average American consumes in a year. He comments that, "If there's one thing I hate worse than a Limousine Liberal, it's a Gulfstream environmentalist." Acknowledging that he is one, he says "...and I wish it bothered me more." As the Gulfstream is descending into San Francisco International, Evans inquires about George's mysterious activities over the past few weeks. Morton replies that he has been "buying integrity, but not for me." When Evans asks what he got for his efforts and cash, Morton tells him he has purchased a list, implying that more will be revealed.

The setting for the NERF Concerned Citizen of the Year Awards Banquet is the ballroom of San Francisco's Mark Hopkins hotel. Drake is spouting environmental wisdom from the podium, preparatory to introducing George Morton. Morton and Evans are at the same table. Morton is drunk, and continues to drink heavily. After his intro, Morton stumbles on his way to the podium, righting himself, and standing for a moment without saying anything. When he does speak, he says, "We know more about the moon than we do about the Earth's oceans." He implies that the environmental movement is misguided, quoting 16th century theologian and essayist, Michel de Montaigne, who said, "*Nothing is so firmly believed as that which is not known.*" Morton then announces that he has been darkly depressed since the death of "...my darling wife Dorothy." Evans reflects that Morton has six ex-wives, but none named Dorothy. Morton says that Dorothy admonished him to spend his money wisely. He says there has not been nearly enough environmental research and that NERF is just a law firm, not a research agency. He claims the watchword at NERF has become, "*We don't sue enough...*" and that he is withdrawing his \$10 million pledge. The crowd is shocked, and Drake moves the drunken Morton off stage.

Evans leads Morton, drunken and singing, out through a media frenzy to his car. However, Morton shuns the limo in favor of the classic Ferrari Sarah bought for him while he was gallowing mysteriously about buying integrity. Evans tries to dissuade Morton from driving, but to no avail. Sarah and Evans hop in the limo with Harry, the driver, and set off in hot pursuit. They chase him through Golden Gate Park, down to the Golden Gate Bridge, and across it to Marin County. In the back seat of the chase limo, Evans brings Sarah up to date about the NERF papers. The trio follows Morton along the coast into a state park in the Marin headlands. They finally come upon the Ferrari, which had pulled well ahead of the limo, in a burning heap, upside down after apparently hitting a tree. Morton is not there, but they see his dress shoe at the bottom of the cliff on the edge of the surf. The police are called to the accident scene. They note that the shattered glass from the wreck has been disturbed, and surmise that it was probably disturbed by Evans when he looked for George in the car. A trooper asks Evans about the time of the accident, and acts surprised when Evans says it was five hours before. Before he leaves the scene, Evans sees Kenner talking to the cops. Sajong was driving Kenner's car.



On board the Gulfstream, *en route* back to La La Land, everyone seems to be at least superficially mourning poor George's demise. *The San Francisco Examiner* surmises that George committed suicide, quoting a famous psychiatrist. After perfunctory expressions of grief over the loss of his good friend, Drake threatens Evans by pointing to an ethical conflict of interest because Evans was working for both Morton *and* NERF. He says he won't charge him with malpractice, but hints that he will if Evans tries to enforce George's wish to eliminate NERF funding. Later, Evans fields a call from Jennifer of the Vanutu Legal Team, inviting him to lunch, and implying some urgency. When he hangs up, he gets a call from Margo Lane, George's long-time mistress. She is upset that no one told her about George's death until she read it in the paper. She demands that Evans come to her apartment right away.

Evans visits Margo in her apartment. She scolds him for not keeping her up to date. Sexy, as are all of the women so far in the book, she is wrapped in a towel and keeps flashing Evans with her feminine charms to distract and tempt him. Margo says George had been acting strange; that he thought he was being followed, and warned her that she might be in danger too. She states positively that George is not dead, but that he is hiding somewhere. On the way back to his apartment, Evans gets a call from Jennifer. He says he can't get to her today, but she insists it is very important. Then, he receives a call from Lisa, Lowenstein's secretary, corporate gatekeeper, and office busybody, saying that Drake wants to see him and that he sounds "pissed off." Evans agrees to call Drake, but Lisa says he should call Sarah first. When he reaches his apartment, it has been tossed. Books are scattered, and bookshelves are tipped over. He starts to call the police, but his cell phone rings first. It's Lisa, saying they were cut off, and that he should call Sarah at Morton's mansion right away, as it too has been broken into. He drives his Prius hybrid to Morton's, and notices another Prius following him.

Morton's property is crawling with security people. His house is not in great disorder, but someone who knew the combinations has opened six secret safes. The doors to the safes have been left open, as if the intruders wanted their presence to be known. Someone also obviously knew the code for the alarm system. It is clear that whoever broke in wanted them to know that they had this confidential information. Both Sarah and Evans say they have no idea what the thieves were looking for. Evans suspects it might be a list that Morton said he had paid a lot of money for during his mysterious period of disappearance. Evans urges Sarah to call the police, but Sarah resists. Evans says he will call them first about his break in and then receives an urgent text message telling him to get back to Drake's office. On the way out, he hugs Sarah. She says, "Don't ever do that again, Peter. I'm not hysterical. I'll see you when you get back." Then, she asks him if he has a gun. He says "no," and she hands him a 9mm Beretta. When he gets to Drake's office, he again sees the blue Prius that had been following him

Drake is throwing a tantrum in the NERF media room, upbraiding some graphic designers. He is upset about the collateral materials for the next big NERF event, a global conference on "Abrupt Climate Change," which is to be the next big fear and money generator. He is particularly miffed about the imprints on the coffee cups for the members of the media. The designers have used the tag line "Danger Ahead," Drake's





original choice, but now he wants "Catastrophe Ahead" to raise the fear level. He reviews the plans for the campaign, which will kick off in five days on Sunday. High school science teachers are reluctant to sign up for the program because there is no real scientific evidence supporting the notion of abrupt climate change resulting from global warming. In the midst of his tirade, Drake turns to see Peter Evans waiting for him. In Drake's office, Evans and he discuss paragraph 3a of the document pulling back the \$10 million Morton was going to give NERF. The offending language says that if Morton's soundness of mind is challenged, NERF is to receive \$50,000 per month to pay expenses until the \$10 million is paid. Drake orders Evans to find out who influenced George, then goes on a diatribe about the evils of industry and how everyone is in danger from these powerful forces.

*En route* to Morton's house to see Sarah, Evans grows suspicious of the security firm that NERF has hired. They were the ones swarming over NERF Headquarters and the ones who had been following him earlier. He reflects to himself how Drake seems to interpret everything as a crisis. He calls Lisa to ask her to call the police concerning the break-in at his apartment and Lisa reports that Margo's apartment has also been broken into. Margo fought with the intruders, got beat up, and is suffering from some sort of paralysis. Margo is recovering in the hospital and keeps talking about "the blue rings of death." At Morton's house, the security people are gone, but Sarah scans him with an electronic bug detector and finds two bugs. The security guards had found them on Sarah too. Sarah and Evans go on sort of a paper chase, trying to decipher the clues in a Buddhist saying that George told Evans to remember during the Gulfstream flight to San Francisco. After a few false starts, they find an envelope hidden under an antique statue of the Buddha. Suddenly the lights go off and two intruders, who want the envelope, attack them. Sarah fights with them, but suddenly Kenner rushes in to rescue them, felling the bad guys with a taser gun.

Kenner reveals to Evans that Sarah, Morton, and he have been working together all along. They find that the mysterious envelope contains only a bill for the stand that the statue sits on. With Kenner's powers of deduction, however, they discover a list hidden in the TV remote. As it turns out, there are actually two lists, one clearly a ploy to convince the finder that they had found the right one (sort of an enigma hidden within a mystery). The real list contains a series of locations around the globe: one group of four locations beginning with the label *Terror*, and ending with *Scorpion*; then three other groups of four labeled *Alt.* - but each list beginning and ending with *Terror* and *Scorpion*. Kenner and Sajong confer and agree they haven't much time. They inform Sarah and Evans that they must all go to the first location on the list, Mt. Terror in Antarctica.

## Part 1, Akamai Analysis

In these first six very short chapters, Crichton establishes several dynamics, objects, and mysteries that are central to the future development of plot and characters. In fewer than 50 pages, the reader visits Paris, Malaysia, London, Vancouver, California, Tokyo, and Iceland, establishing a rapid-fire pace. The author maintains this pace - and indeed accelerates it in the final chapters - throughout the novel. Crichton introduces a



mysterious paralysis, which reoccurs throughout the book, the source of which is resolved only in the final pages. This device enhances the suspense. High-tech equipment, communications, and instrumentation, a hallmark of Crichton's work, also make their debuts in this flurry of high-action chapters.

The Tokyo center and Akira Hitomi establish that the forces of good also have a handle on the high-tech, and that the strategic weapons of this conflict are to be such technical phenomena as the Internet, cellular communication, and satellite imagery. There is, however, to be plenty of mud, blood, and beer at the tactical level, as the reader has seen in previous chapters. As the action continues to accelerate around the globe, the Tokyo operation becomes a shadowy ally of Kenner and Sajong, feeding them up-to-the-minute information that keeps them one jump ahead of the unfolding conspiracy of eco-terrorists.

There is a lot of forward motion in the Iceland chapters that shape the rest of the tale. Pure science begins to make its case against media hyperbole in the persona of Dr. Einarsson. Central characters Morton, Drake, and Evans are introduced, and the first hint of mishandled funds emerges.

The first hint of a riff between Drake and Morton emerges aboard the Gulfstream on the flight back to Los Angeles from Iceland, when Evans plays the go-between. Drake's concern about Morton's drinking foreshadows part of Drake's future strategy to discredit Morton and Morton first expresses his suspicions of Drake. John Kenner is introduced, in *abstentia*, but his role as a major player is yet to be established. Kenner and Sajong Thopa make their first appearance in the flesh, although they remain shrouded in mystery, at Morton's mansion. Sajong's Nepalese ethnicity adds an exotic element. Sarah Jones, another central character, makes her first appearance here as well. The first hint of Evan's passion for Sarah comes to the surface, and Evans establishes himself as a romantic, but Crichton doesn't do romance very well - at least as a writer. He seems to find these human passions irrelevant to whatever theme he is trying to develop, but necessary for formulaic (read marketing) purposes. He's not prudish by any means, but he appears to want to get the mushy stuff out of the way as quickly as possible. Crichton grew up in the 40's and 50's, when weekly entertainment for many boys consisted of weekly Grade B black and white cowboy movies. The lament of many a lad of that day was that the movies always contained too much singing and "kissing 'n stuff" that interfered with the action. Perhaps that early exposure helped shape the way he deals with romance in his novels.

Over the years, Crichton's writing has become increasingly cinematic, almost as if the screenplay is written first and the novel cobbled together after the fact. Indeed, this is a growing trend in Hollywood. Literary purists might argue that this tendency does violence to the quality of Crichton's prose, but, on the other hand, it's hard to get too stuck up in the presence of the many millions Crichton has made by taking his yarns to the big screen.

We gain many insights into Evans in this first flurry of chapters. He is clearly a true believer in environmental matters. He is surprised by the unusually high degree of



security at the Vanutu law firm, not really mapping in the clandestine nature of the environmental movement. Expecting to see lawyers - since this business is, after all, a lawsuit - Evans finds graduate students in atmospheric sciences. This is a foreshadowing of the PLM (Politico-Legal-Media) complex theme that Kenner introduces later.

Playing devil's advocate, the five grad-students inundate Evans with evidence that his ideas, which are all popularly held, are not supported by scientific evidence. He is startled to discover that not all scientists endorse the global warming theory. In spite of the evidence, Evans does not waver in his beliefs; he is convinced it is all a trick by the evil interests of industry to brainwash people in to doubting obvious truth. In this role, Evans represents a microcosm of popular western culture, which has accepted as Gospel, environmental myths spawned by academes and promulgated by the media. The most notable character development throughout the novel is the gradual tearing down of almost religious environmental beliefs in a number of characters by the presentation of citable scientific research.

Clearly, Crichton is on a crusade to inject reason into what he sees as irrelevant, emotional, passionate, and destructive beliefs and actions of the environmental movement.

The foot notes he offers to substantiate his claims are real and, while the spell of the novel as art may be broken as readers run to the Internet to learn how badly they've been duped, he does a credible job of pitting media myth against objective science. The lawsuit chapters go to the big question raised in the Introduction to *State of Fear*: "What happened to the Vanutu lawsuit?" Balder tells Evans that he is going to bait and switch, moving from scientific evidence to pity and pathos for the poor Vanutuans. He concedes that, what has been portrayed as a slam-dunk in the media may in fact be un-winable. This begs the question, "Well, if the suit's un-winnable, what happens to all the money George Morton and others have sunk into the effort?"

The episode resulting in the death of the submarine owner serves a couple of purposes: (1) it underscores the ruthlessness of the enemy. The author could have chosen other, less lethal ways to deal with the suspicions arising out of the mishandled check. (2) More importantly, perhaps, it introduces the notion of attracting lightning to "attack" an individual. Since lightning is a powerful and potentially destructive dynamic of the atmosphere, it is reasonable to suspect that the eco-terrorists will use this weapon again.

Deep collusion between Morton and Kenner is established when they disappear together. It is a relationship that will ultimately dominate the story. The "Concerned Citizen Award" is introduced, and George identified as the recipient. Drake is getting squirrely about Morton's involvement with Kenner - as well he should. Heather, Evans assistant, appears to be significant to the plot, and her chronic absences from work seem to be ominous foreshadowing. She could be a spy for the bad guys, but as it turns out, she is either just local color, or a *bona fide* red herring. The footballer and the exotic Marisha are back for a cameo after their debut in the first chapters in Paris. They are



clearly planning to take George out, as they did the poor schlep with the wave machine, but the intrepid Sarah hinders the caper. Sarah hands over the two NERF-related folders, foreshadowing further action against an abiding distrust of Mr. Drake. The big-number cashier's check adds another element of mystery. Is it the NERF contribution? Is it to finance George's secret activities? The riff between Drake and Morton is out in the open now, on near-public display, and Morton's instruction to Evans to cancel the \$10 million demonstrates the severity of the breakup. Clearly, the AV techie is relevant. The fact that Morton argues for him to stay in the room suggests that, whatever he's up to, he's on the side of the good guys. One might assume that he is bugging Drake's office.

On the flight to San Francisco, Morton underscores his alcoholism by drinking straight vodka, and reveals his increasing contempt for the do-gooder environmentalists who tilt at their windmills of choice with ignorant passion and little knowledge. With his "Gulfstream environmentalist" and "Limousine Liberal" comments, he expresses his deteriorating image of his own past activities. He is clearly experiencing an epiphany.

With his comments about "buying integrity," and by signing the papers that cancel the NERF contribution, he declares his transformation complete. He appears to be a hopeless old drunk, yet his actions regarding NERF seem purposeful and deliberate, not the actions of a demented old man. There is an underlying feeling that he is very much in control of the situation. He quotes an old Buddhist proverb, which he tells Evans to remember. It is not clear what the saying means, or how it fits in, but it is a clear foreshadowing of events to come. The cop's suspicion at the Ferrari crash scene, the disturbed glass, and Kenner's presence, are all not-to-subtle foreshadowing of George's ultimate resurrection. The celebrities and Gulfstream ecologists underscore their shallowness and pettiness, damning George Morton with feint praise and minimal grief on the flight back to Los Angeles in the luxury of his Gulfstream. Drake's true colors reach full plumage when, in the midst of his grief at the loss of his long-time friend, he threatens to disbar Evans if he doesn't help him circumvent his friend's dying wishes.

The plot thickens when the bad guys break into Evans apartment and Morton's mansion. What are they looking for? Is it the mysterious list George referred to on the way to San Francisco? Is that what the big check was for - the one George used to "buy integrity?" The pressures increase and Drake begins to unravel. He attempts to add credibility to the abrupt climate change notion by pumping up the hyperbole and rhetoric, but even high school science teachers aren't buying it, for it's lack of real scientific data. Clearly, Morton stole a day's march on Drake by anticipating that Drake would challenge his state of mind after his "suicide." As long as NERF is receiving the gift in a determined payout scheme, Drake has no case to go for the whole sum. The maintenance payouts of \$50,000 per month are not enough to finance the big media plays Drake apparently has in mind. His diatribe on the evils of industry suggests that he is beginning to believe his own hyperbole - a deadly mistake for a con man, and the bad guys are accelerating their attacks to uncover Morton's list, presumably on Drake's behalf. The mysterious paralysis strikes again, this time upon Margo, Morton's mistress. Moreover, what are the mysterious "blue rings of death?" Kenner reenters the scenario in his rescue of Evans and Sarah, underscoring the intensifying tempo of the chase.

In anticipation of Part 2, the reader is given a new mystery to ponder. What is the meaning of the list and its curious terms, such as *Scorpion* and *Terror*? Kenner and Sajong obviously know more than they are telling. And what's up with Antarctica?



## Part 2, Terror

### Part 2, Terror Summary

On the flight south, Kenner and Sajong endeavor to educate Sarah and Evans on the realities of environmental terrorism. They discuss ELF, The Environmental Liberation Front, whose members burn down buildings, deface SUVs, and perform other acts of terrorism and vandalism, ostensibly to underscore environmental concerns. Members of other groups, says Kenner, groups such as the Sierra Club, also fund environmental terrorism, although they may not be aware of where their contributions are going.

Morton had hired a private investigation firm to investigate NERF when he became suspicious of Drake. The Vanutu lawsuit is doomed, Morton learned, because real scientific data shows that sea level is not, in fact, rising. Kenner also reveals that terrorists have been buying up technology, such as cavitation machines and high-tech precision explosives. They know that terrorists have been planning a series of four big destructive events to occur within a matter of days. Law enforcement has detected that ELF has been buying high-tech gear in Vancouver, London, Osaka, Helsinki, and Seoul.

Evans clings to the urban myths surrounding global warming. Morton's new position is that there simply is not enough data to know anything about future climates, let alone the catastrophic events upon which the environmental extremists feed. As the Gulfstream wings its way toward the South Pole, Kenner points out that science can't even tell if there would be more or fewer clouds in a global-warming scenario. Some scientists say more, because there will be more vapor in the air, while others say fewer, because the higher temperature will mean slower condensation. He also reveals that Antarctica is actually growing colder, but Evans won't buy it. Further, George points out that there is *absolutely no evidence* that sea level is actually rising, and that the Vanutu lawsuit will never go to trial. Evans is not convinced.

On the way to Mt. Terror, Kenner and Sajong team up to try to convince Evans that the global warming theory is just a myth, unsupported by comprehensive scientific data. They print out nine separate references to articles in scientific journals by well-known and respected scientists, but Evans refuses to believe. His defense is that "Everybody knows it's true," and that some of the studies are probably funded by evil industry. Kenner points out that environmentalists, who have their own agenda, fund Evans himself. This pisses Evans off, and he continues to deny the scientific data. "Now you know how legitimate scientists feel when their integrity is impugned by slimy characterizations such as you just made about them," Kenner says. He points out that the references he and Sajong just gave him are peer-reviewed by other scientists who have nothing to do with the ones who wrote them. Evans response, Kenner points out, was an *ad hominem* attack, without answering the actual data or providing counter evidence. "You just smeared it with innuendo," Kenner says. Sarah asks Kenner if he had the same conversation with George Morton before he died. He replies that George was more accepting because he was already suspicious.



Evan is grumpy while trudging from the airstrip to the buildings of Weddell Station, a scientific outpost and clearinghouse for all Antarctic research. He is irritated with Kenner, still refusing to believe the scientific data that challenges the assumptions and beliefs in which he has invested so much energy, identity, and time. He says to Sarah, "I'll bet those references he gave me are fakes." The party meets McGregor, the head of Weddell Station, described as "a Santa Claus in a Patagonia vest," and Evans goes to the computer room to check out the references Kenner gave him. The citations are legitimate, but most of the scientists still say they "believe in" global warming in spite of the evidence to the contrary. The comment brings to mind the incident in Iceland, when Drake wanted to change the summary - the part the press and public were likely to read - of the scientific report that showed the glaciers *were not* melting.

Kenner reveals that the target of their involvement in Antarctica is a researcher named Brewster from the University of Michigan. Only, it's not *really* Brewster, because he is still in Ann Arbor awaiting the birth of his child. While planning their trip to the alleged Brewster's field camp, Kenner points out that they will have to cross the "Sheer Zone," an area where the ice is subject to lateral motion, which creates many crevasses. Led by Jimmy Bolden, one of Mac Gregor's guys, Kenner, Sarah, and Evans set out for Brewster's field camp. Sarah and Evans are in one Snow Track, a tracked vehicle for Antarctic travel, with Jimmy Bolden leading in his and Kenner bringing up the rear. Jimmy points out the GPS transponder in each Track, which will allow searchers to find them if they get lost. He also shows them where emergency and climbing gear are stowed, should they get lost or trapped in a crevasse. When they arrive at the bogus Brewster's last known campsite, they find that it has been moved. Kenner and Evans continue their global warming argument, but Evans is still refusing to give up his assumptions in the face of legitimate scientific evidence.

Ostensibly, Brewster is supposed to be planting GPS sensors along a 100-mile strip of the ice flow to measure movement of the ice. Amidst their discussion, the group comes across the new location of Brewster's camp, which consists of two dome tents. Brewster is not there, and his Snow Track is gone. Bolden notes that the weather is deteriorating and that they should hustle. Evans and Kenner find cartons in one of Brewster's tents that are filled with black cones. Kenner identifies them as shipping containers for PTBs (Precision Timed Blasts) a type of ordinance with which many charges detonate within milliseconds of one another. Kenner surmises that Brewster is setting up a "standing wave" in the ice flow, a phenomenon that creates a highly distinctive resonance in surrounding material when two forces of identical frequency and magnitude emit simultaneously toward one another. Against Bolden's advice, Kenner sets out along Brewster's line of explosives, supposedly looking for the bogus researcher, but he is actually disrupting the potential standing wave by disabling some of the explosives. Sarah and Evans head off back to the Shear Zone, following Bolden in his Snow Track. Halfway into the two-hour trip, Bolden stops and tells them he is going to lead them on a secret shortcut across the Shear Zone to beat the deteriorating weather. Sarah is having trouble with the radio - getting only static - and Bolden tells her the GPS transponder sometimes interferes with the signal. He takes the transponder back to his vehicle. A little while later, Bolden stops, blocking the path with his Snow Track. He stands in front of his vehicle, signaling to Sarah. Just as the ice breaks, Sarah and



Evans plunge into a crevasse in their Snow Track, and Sarah realizes Bolden is waving goodbye.

Sarah comes to in the Snow Track trapped in the crevasse. The downside door is open and Evans is gone. The Track is wedged 30-40 feet down from the opening in the crevasse. She opens the survival gear locker, but it is empty. Then, she hears Evans yelling from below. Evans tells Sarah he saw the climbing rope stowed under the seat, not with the rest of the emergency gear. She manages to pull Evans up to the Track, and they struggle to climb out of the crevasse. They set off on foot across the ice. Trekking aimlessly across the ice flow, Sarah and Evans succumb to the cold. During the trek, Evans shouts to Sarah that he has fallen in love with her. Just as Sarah is passing out, a wandering NASA robot, used to randomly check conditions on the ice flow, happens along, but Sarah lacks the energy to explore it further and lies down to die of hypothermia. Back at the station, Sarah comes to after being revived by the medical staff there. The staff reveals that Evans - thus far a wimp in Sarah's athletic eyes - saved her life by triggering a signal in the vagabond NASA robot. Peter Evans comes to and gets dressed. He is feeling good about himself, less wimp-like, because he mustered the strength and wit to trigger a rescue operation via the NASA robot.

Kenner tells Evans that Brewster's sidekick knocked out the real Jimmy Bolden before they left Weddell Station, and it was he, not Jimmy, who was leading the expedition. They have identified the phony Brewster as a man named Kane, one of Brewster's graduate students. Kenner shows Evans some photos from Brewster (Kane's) tent. The captions match some of the names on the Morton list - specifically *Terror* and *Scorpion* - and show a line in the ice flow. This is where Brewster and his associate were hoping to calve the biggest iceberg in the history of the planet to coincide with the NERF Abrupt Climate Change Conference in California. They also discover some "soft rubber pads" in the lining of Kane's suitcase, but Kenner has no clue what they are for. Sajong, in the meantime, is debugging the Weddell Station computer system, uncovering a bunch of data traps set by the bogus Brewster.

Once on board the Gulfstream, having misled any eavesdropping ears at Weddell that they are headed for Finland, Kenner reveals they are actually headed back to Los Angeles. Kenner reveals that some Brewster photos they had first interpreted as ice floes were actually cloud formations, and what appeared as black rock were actually white clouds, because they were looking at a negative image. Kenner says they are going to LA because that's where the NERF Abrupt Climate Change shindig is being held. He suspects there will be a big media event to call attention to the conference, and recalls that this is a common tactic of environmentalists. He cites the 1998 announcement that introduced the concept of global warming, and a last-minute change to a UN report where bureaucrats and politicians reversed scientists' conclusions that it was impossible to connect global warning to a "discernable human influence on the climate." Further, Kenner says, that when Dr. Hansen announced global warming in 1988, he predicted a .35 degree Celsius rise in temperature over the next decade. He was 350 percent higher than what actually occurred. As a result, the professor himself concluded that climate change was so poorly understood that long-term predictions were impossible. Kenner points out that the scientific community would discard any





other prediction that missed the boat by such a huge margin, but that other interests, with agendas other than scientific truth, kept this one alive.

While the others are discussing the foibles and motives of junk science, Sajong is working on the Internet. He keeps losing his uplink, but has located the site of the cloud photos: Resolution Bay in the Solomon Islands. He and Kenner have a discussion about "resolution time," being 12 or 13 hours. Evans, sleeping fitfully, hears snippets of the conversation, including something about him (Evans) being, "...in the center of everything." Evans confronts them, but they say he misheard, that they said "interrogation" time because they hoped to apprehend the bogus Brewster people.

Kenner declares that they are in the middle of a "netwar," and that they are losing. He concludes that the only way to fight a network is with another network, which is what's going on at the Tokyo installation. Kenner declares ELF as the enemy in the netwar, noting that only one member of the eco-terrorist group had ever been apprehended. He had been wearing sophisticated image-altering devices that reshaped the appearance of his ears and skull, thus fooling the most sophisticated detection software that looks beyond common disguise techniques, such as beards, hair color, eye color, etc. According to Kenner, ELF propagates the myth that it is a loosely affiliated group of cells, made up of bright, young, clean-cut, and concerned citizens that have no contact with one another, when, in fact, it is a ruthless, sophisticated, and centrally controlled network of zealous eco-terrorists.

Evans inquires what the important thing is that Kenner wants him to do, and Kenner cryptically replies, "just one simple thing." When Evans presses the issue, Kenner just smiles cryptically.

## Part 2, Terror Analysis

Curiously, in Crichton's novels, which now seem to be written with the idea of a movie in mind, he spends a great deal of time explaining complex techno-social issues. By the time they reach the screen, however, only a smidgen of the intellectual part remains, and the movie becomes all action and special effects. In *Jurassic Park* and its sequel, *The Lost World*, for example, the crux of the message was Chaos Theory, but one had to be very alert to pick up that message amidst all of the visual images and amplified sounds of dinosaurs in the movies. In *Fear*, the intellectual message is the juxtaposition of environmental science and urban myth. Crichton is obviously a very bright man, who is passionate about some of his messages. Perhaps this is his way of trying to truly educate people to the issues about which he feels strongly, while still raking in the big bucks from the big screen. The result, however, tends to be flashy, entertaining action films, but rather pedantic literature. Crichton dares the reader to challenge his references to scientific literature, by sending Evans into the computer room to do just that.

At the beginning of this section, Kenner zeroes in on the logical fallacies the environmental zealots use to support their untenable positions, but with the introduction



of the Brewster imposter, the plot moves to a new phase. The heroes are no longer dealing with the three-piece-suit money guys, pseudo-scientists, and hippiesque longhairs in hiking boots, but are getting ready to get down in the mud, the blood, and the beer with thuggish foot soldiers. With the not-so-shadowy foreshadowing of the *shear zone*, the reader knows for sure that somebody is going to end up falling into a crevasse. This is further indicated with the mention of the GPS and the survival gear. In addition, in spite of all the evidence, Evans continues to deny the legitimacy of the data debunking environmental myths. This is a clear illustration to the reader of how our thinking can become convoluted and dangerous by condemning something (in this case of Man's use of fossil fuels) without prior investigation. Crichton once again reveals his fascination with things technical, as well as his gift for explaining them, with a metaphorical explanation of a standing wave.

In a scene reminiscent of Snidely Whiplash tying the damsel to the railroad tracks, all of the Antarctic foreshadowing is fulfilled when Sarah and Evans fall into the crevasse. This section is replete with more token romance and Sarah is reestablished as the strong, athletic (not to mention beautiful) young woman and Evans is presented as even more of a milquetoast, as their relationship deepens. How could this unlikely pair ever get together? In addition, how spectacular could an Antarctic Snow Track crash and rescue be, filmed in the trackless wastes of that mysterious continent? One can easily envision the would-be lovers trekking to their presumed deaths across the endless expanse of frozen wasteland. Not surprisingly, Evans and Sarah survive

Up until now, the bad guys have out gunned and out manned the forces of the good and the just. However, with Sajong's latest discoveries, they are beginning to hack into the environmentalists' network, which suggests the tide is about to turn. The good guys have deduced the nature of the first cataclysmic environmental event - the calving of the biggest iceberg in the history of the planet - and, presumably, Kenner was out disrupting it while Evans and Sarah were taking the scenic route home from the Shear Zone. Reluctantly, Evans is being recruited into Kenner's plans, as his ideas are being converted to Kenner's way of thinking. The evidence that the environmental movement thrives on media hype and conspiracy between powerful elements, indicting even the UN, is becoming harder for Evans to resist. Crichton, in the persona of Kenner, attacks ELF, one of the better-known environmental terrorist groups head on. He challenges the notion that the organization is made up of middle and upper class youngsters, passionately fighting to preserve the planet. Rather, he contends, it is a highly sophisticated conspiracy with a deadly agenda.



## Part 3, Angel

### Part 3, Angel Summary

Evans expresses qualms about something illegal that Kenner wants him to do. Kenner reminds him that he is a law enforcement agent, so it's okay. Kenner gives Evans a cell phone rigged with an AV bug that records for four hours, then transmits the data in a two-second burst to avoid detection. Sajong reveals an enhancement of Morton's list, in which he has been able to substitute actual geographic locations for the numbers that followed the labels (*Terror*, *Scorpion*, et. al.) on the original list. From this, they conclude that the second "Abrupt Climate Change" media event being planned by the eco-terrorists will take place in Arizona, New Mexico, or Utah. The third event will be in the Caribbean.

When Evans goes to his apartment he encounters a private investigator lurking outside, who claims Morgan has sent him. He is the same guy who was dressed as an AV techie when Evans witnessed the argument between Morton and Drake in the glass-walled conference room. The PI tells Evans that he has something for him, but that people have been watching the apartment for Evans to return, and that they will follow Evans when he leaves. The PI tells Evans to leave his apartment unlocked so he can leave the package for him while Evans and his pursuers are gone. As he is leaving his apartment, Evans hears the co-anchors on the TV news talking about how global warming is changing the rotation of the planet and actually shortening the length of a day. As a result, they say, the Greenland ice cap is going to melt clean away. Evans shudders at the enormity of the prospect, and concludes that Kenner would just deny it. Evans leaves his apartment for his office, more or less forgetting about the private investigator. At the office, Evans encounters Lowenstein who is seriously pissed off because Evans has been out of touch so long. He says Drake is angry about the \$10 million, and the \$50,000 per month payout scheme. Lowenstein tries to talk Evans into breaking the agreement, but Evans cites ethical constraints and refuses to meddle with it. Lowenstein warns Evans, "This is not how you advance in this firm, Peter."

Kenner and Sarah visit the Army Surplus store where someone purchased 500 wire-guided rockets. Sarah is packing an AV camera in her gym bag. Kenner goes in the back to talk rockets with the storeowner, while Sarah chats up a sales guy up front who envisions romantic interludes with her. She shows him a photo of Kane, the bogus Brewster, and the guy says he's in the store as they speak. Kane bolts and Sarah chases. He leads her on a wild street chase until a blue pickup with Arizona license plates picks him up. Kenner quickly picks up Sarah, and they give chase. Sarah thinks she got Kane (Brewster) on the AV camera. They radio Sajong with the license plate number, and he tags it to the *Lazy-Bar Ranch* near Sedona. They follow the pickup to an industrial site, plastered with high voltage warning signs. An A & P 18-wheeler is parked outside. The driver of the pickup is the bogus Bolden from earlier adventures in Antarctica. The industrial building turns out to be a lightning generator for testing aircraft performance in thunderstorms. They end up hidden inside, watching a test from a



catwalk. Lightning emits from the walls, and is then attracted to a dome on the floor of the mammoth building. There is a lot of electrical violence and impending danger.

After the test, thinking they are alone in the building, Sarah and Kenner venture down to the test floor to snoop. However, alas, they are not alone. The bogus Brewster and Bolden return and lock them in the test bay. They wave goodbye, just as Bolden did at the Sheer Zone, and start up a new test.

### Part 3, Angel Analysis

It is clear that Morton is still playing a hand in this game and it would be a naive reader who assumed that he was doing it from the grave, and that the private investigator was all part of his pre-suicide preparations. The sense is urgent, not latent, and one can easily envision ol' George kicked back somewhere pulling strings and cackling in his straight Vodka. Not bad for a dead guy. Now, it seems, global warming is even going to affect the rotation of the planet, and Evans tries to hang on to his beliefs in spite of real evidence to the contrary, by supposing Kenner's inability to accept this new, more popular claim. This is a further example of the *ad hominem* technique that people often use to support unsubstantiated beliefs (i.e., *they attack the person with the beliefs with which they disagree, rather than the evidence or the validity of the argument*). Despite his reluctance, however, Evans is beginning to lose his grip on his assumptions and popular prejudices. The conversion (or corruption) of Evans into Kenner's camp continues when he is coerced into active participation against NERF, which even further complicates his ethical conflict of interest.



## Part 4, Flash

### Part 4, Flash Summary

Locked inside the artificial lightning chamber, Kenner and Sarah begin their ordeal of survival. For some mysterious technical reason that is not readily apparent, though one might suspect a cinematic motive, Kenner orders Sarah to take off her clothes. They have a harrowing experience until the lightning stops when they find their way out in their skivvies and find some workmen's coveralls to cover their semi-nudity.

Elsewhere, when Evans returns from his office to his apartment, the TV is blaring and the private detective he met outside earlier is sitting on his couch, arms spread out on the back of the couch, his fingers drumming. Evans realizes the guy is paralyzed. Evans calls 911, then plays guessing games with the PI, trying to locate the package from Morton by having the PI answer yes-no and hot-or-cold questions with finger signals as Evans scurries about the apartment looking in different places. He is unsuccessful when the medics and cops arrive. The police, in the persona of Detective Ron Pary, are suspicious about all of the cases of paralysis popping up at County Hospital. When the cops leave, unsatisfied with Evans explanations, Evans returns to his search. He finds a CD in the cushion the PI was setting on.

He puts the CD in the TV and a menu of dates pops up. He clicks one at random, and a scene unfolds in Drake's NERF glass conference room. Drake and Hendy, the PR flack, are in a heated discussion. Drake is whining that global warming is not a moneymaker anymore, because everyone forgets about it during the winter when it's cold. Hendy, clearly the alpha-dog who tells Drake what's what and what's not, chides him to think bigger. Hendy insists that abrupt climate change, as a result of global warming, has plenty of juice. Drake also slips in a snivel about all of the celebrities who support the cause, but don't give up much cash. "They feel they just have to show up and not give any money," Drake laments. When the segment on the CD is over, Evans just stares at the screen, trying to rationalize his assumptions about global warming with the cynical scene he has just viewed. He realizes it's time to go see Drake.

Evans meets Drake at the West-Coast NERF Headquarters building, and Drake tries to convince Evans that sea level is rising, in spite of the scientific evidence to the contrary. Drake claims that scientific information is actually disinformation, disseminated by evil industry. When asked by Evans, however, Drake cannot recall if the data he is using has undergone peer review by other, disinterested, scientists. Drake characterizes researchers who disagree with him as, "those Neanderthals...groups financed by right-wing radicals and brain-dead fundamentalists." Downstairs from Drake's conference room, preparation for the big "Acute Climate Change" conference is underway. Evans wangles some tickets, but experiences some difficulty because his name is not "on the list." The workers are complaining that all sorts of concessions in the preparations are being made to accommodate the press at the expense of the regular attendees. Away from the building, Evans calls Sarah to let her know that he left the bugged cell phone in



Drake's office. Sarah turns the phone over to Kenner who orders Evans to go home, change into new clothes, and leave everything he's wearing behind.

Before leaving his apartment, Evans reboots the CD and clicks on another entry on the menu. The new sequence seems to be the same location with the same players. Drake is complaining that, in the past, Hendy's advice has not worked. Hendy gives Drake a lesson on the structure of information and how it functions, illustrating that by changing the focus from rising sea level as a result of global warming to the imminent fear of abrupt climate change, they can create a completely new moneymaking crisis and related cause. Sajong interrupts Evans by pounding on his door, insisting they must leave immediately.

## Part 4, Flash Analysis

These chapters prolong gratuitous action, with a little cheesecake thrown in. For some reason, the author chose to stop Evans and Sarah from disrobing when they get down to their underwear. Stripping down to one's panties and bra in a novel is not particularly titillating, but in the flesh of the big screen it can be quite sexy. It can also be the difference between an R, and a more lucrative PG rating.

In view of the cynical discussions Evans is witnessing between Drake and Henley on the CD, Evans is becoming more and more convinced that Kenner's way of thinking might be right. His suspicions about Drake build, as he discovers that he is not on the list of approved attendees for the Abrupt Climate Change Conference, and has to wangle some tickets.



## Part 5, Snake

### Part 5, Snake Summary

Part 5 opens with Evans, Kenner, Sarah, and Sajong in a helicopter over the Arizona desert. Their network, in battle with the eco-terrorist network, has picked up interesting stuff regarding the Southwest Parks Management Association. A phony shell organization has bought up all of the camping reservations for the Monday that coincides with the Acute Climate Conference. They have, in turn, passed these on without charge to many non-profit groups to use for picnics for their members. Kenner surmises they want to lure as many potential victims to the area as possible for whatever the second event is they are planning for the conference. Although he doesn't know all of the details, Kenner has discovered by satellite imagery a number of "spider web-like" networks in various clearings in the surrounding woods. The nexus' in the webs are rockets, while the webs themselves are wires. Evans calculates that each rocket has about 1,000 feet of wire, but doesn't yet know why.

The group is gathered in a funky Arizona cafe with Kenner explaining that the enemy can, in fact, manipulate the weather. Kenner assumes the rocket arrays are to cause or exacerbate storms by causing "...exchange in the electrical potentials of infra-cumulous clouds." Later, in their motel, they watch two more CD scenarios. Henley points out to Drake that he must structure his campaign in such a way that, no matter what the weather does, he can blame climatic tragedy on global warming - every flood, every hurricane, etc. should become an acute climate change event. Global warming, of course, causes acute climate change. Henley insists the idea will be easy to sell because most people already believe in global warming, i.e., since people already believe in the premise of global warming - despite the real scientific evidence - it won't be hard to shift their focus to one of its consequences. Since they believe the premise, they will assume the truth of the conclusion, without testing the truth of the premise, or the validity of the deductive process. Drake points out that it's not logical to tell people about global warming when it's cold outside. "What's logic got to do with it?" Henley asks. He points out that almost everyone in the country believes crime is increasing when, in fact, the numbers have been improving for years. Henley notes that it took only five days to create a crisis mentality around the concept of a nuclear winter. Clearly, he says, it's not about facts, but media. There are some more discussions - with examples - about how to create media crises. After viewing the CD, Kenner and crowd establish that the recording was made two weeks previous, so George had been bugging Drake for at least that long. The group sets off in a helicopter again, equipped with night vision equipment, to locate the three rocket networks spotted by the satellite.

On a sunny morning, kids and parents of Lincoln Middle School are enjoying their free picnic in the park, compliments of the shell charity set up by the eco-terrorists. The highlight of the park is a waterfall. Kids are playing in the river below it. Off to the side, Kenner points out to his companions that, "when the river overflows, it will take out the whole park and everyone in it." He describes the power of rushing water, and notes that



a car can float off in only a couple of feet of water. Kenner asks Evans if he has a gun. (There is no mention of the Beretta he acquired earlier from Sarah.) He says he does not have a gun and doesn't want one. Reluctantly, however, Evans accepts a revolver. Sarah says she already has a gun and knows how to use it. Kenner, obviously a law officer with extraordinary authority, posts a state patrolman at the park, and explains to Evans that the rocket webs will shoot up into the clouds to attract more lightning, which will increase the severity of the storm. When they leave the park on a quest to disrupt the rocket nets, it is beginning to cloud up.

Sarah and Evans are paired up again, this time in an SUV, while Kenner and Sajong each set out in their own vehicles, each to find and disrupt one of the three rocket nets. Shortly, Sarah and Evans notice they are being followed by the ubiquitous blue pickup with Arizona license plates, the same one they encountered after the incident at the Army surplus store, which led to the lightning chamber. The truck bumps them a couple of times, then backs off and follows them. Suddenly the A & P semi they first spotted outside the lightning chamber is in front of them. They are trapped between the two vehicles. When they stop, lightning bolts in big numbers start striking all around them. The lightning seems to be targeting them. They take off in the SUV, but the lightning bolts pursue them. They surmise that the pickup attached some sort of lightning-attraction device to their SUV when it bumped them. They race through the woods, the lightning beating up the SUV. They blow a tire, and then run on foot to an old deserted mining town. They go to hide in an old building, but lightning sets it on fire. They run to another building, but this one is filled with old metal mining equipment and the lightning gets worse. Sarah is hit and Evans pronounces her dead.

Kenner is trying to raise Sarah on the radio but there is no response. Finally, Evans answers and tells Kenner that Sarah is dead. Kenner tells him to do mouth to mouth, but in his panic, Evans is holding down the transmit button so he doesn't get the message. Kenner and Sajong figure out that the lightning attraction devices are hidden in the radios - not in a device attached to the other SUV - and assume that both Sarah and Evans are dead. Kenner goes after his rocket net, hoping that, if Sajong gets his, two will be enough to mediate the effects on the storm. Trooper Miguel Rodriguez, in the meantime, watches the picnic while waiting for word from Kenner to evacuate everyone. He wants to evacuate now, but Kenner ordered him to wait for him to tell him when. Back in the ghost town, Evans feels a tingling coming from the radio, and figures out that is where the lightning attraction device is hidden and gets rid of it. This building, however, is also on fire. Evans starts to give Sarah mouth to mouth, and pulls her out of the building just as it collapses. Sarah comes to. Just before Sajong gets to his rocket site, he sees the first one - Sarah and Evans' - go off, and when he gets to his assigned array, the bad guys with rifles greet him. A battle ensues. The bad guys die and Sajong wins. Kenner has a similar experience at the site of his rocket net, dueling it out to the end with a member of ELF, whom he tries to capture but ultimately kills.

Evans changes the tire on his and Sarah's SUV, and resumes their escape from the violence of the storm. Rodriguez nervously watches the water rise, waiting for Kenner's call. He sees a TV film crew setting up above the falls, wonders about it, and then refocuses on the dangers at the park. Meanwhile, Sarah and Evans, pursued once





again by the blue pickup, race toward the park in the intense rain. Evans is driving. They come to a culvert that Evans is hesitant to cross because of the earlier warning from Kenner about cars and rushing water. Sarah urges him to go for it, but still something of a milquetoast, Evans remains timid. Finally, he risks the culvert, making it halfway through before he again encounters the ubiquitous A&P 18-wheeler blocking his way. He turns 90 degrees, heading downstream in the river toward the top of the waterfall. They are no longer driving now, but floating, fulfilling Kenner's earlier foreshadowing about the effect of floodwaters on cars. Sarah wants to bolt, but Evans says stay put. The electronics in the SUV are fried, and only one back window will open as an escape hatch. Sajong sees the SUV floating down the river, and heads for the bridge that crosses the river above the falls. The SUV is caught up in the detritus of the flood - many branches, trees, and even an old refrigerator - so Evans and Sarah abandon the vehicle. Sajong has reached the bridge by now, and pulls them up to safety. The SUV plunges over the waterfall, much to the delight of a crowd assembled on the bridge. Armed with a bullhorn, Trooper Rodriguez gets everyone into their cars and headed out of the park. Suddenly the trooper is summoned by radio to go investigate a drunken shooting between hunters out in the forest. (Clearly the men Sajong and Evans shot.)

In Phoenix, Sarah goes to the hospital, where she protests the tests the doctor insists on putting her through because of the lightning hit she took. She doesn't remember anything about it. She also learns that, for a second time, Evans has saved her life. Later on the plane, Kenner reveals to Evans that the hunters who were shot were actually the harvest of Sajong's and his shooting sprees. He points out that the reason the eco-terrorists want to kill people is to create a media crisis that will bring the horrors of global warming to the public in a personal, emotional way that their junk science will not. Clearly, Evans has been changed by the encounters with people trying to kill him, and the change is fundamental and permanent. Unlike his reaction when he learned that Sarah had killed a man after being abducted, he does not feel the remorse he thinks he should feel about the men who have been killed. His attitude is much less forgiving. "Screw 'em," he says to Sajong and Kenner. Sarah also sees the change in him, a new maturity, and begins to develop some feelings for him, but she is inexplicably angry with him for saving her life again. She cannot identify the source of the seemingly incompatible emotions.

On the way back to Lion, the Gulfstream, the characters view a video of the flood at the park, shot by a local news station. Sajong reveals that the eco-terrorists had called the station anonymously from Calgary, Canada. The news report they are watching segues into discussion among the newscasters about the abrupt climate changes caused by global warming. Sajong hands Evans a hard copy of a NERF press release, and Evans realizes the news anchor is reading directly from the release without editing or fact checking. The press talks about the notion of the Greenland icecap melting - that, just a few days ago, was introduced as a remote possibility that would take 1,000 years - as if it is an imminent threat.

After landing, Evans discovers a ton of messages on his cell voice mail:

Jennifer Hayes - We want you at Balder's office at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow.



Margo - I am out of the hospital.

Ron Perry (Beverly Hills cop) - You missed your appointment. I may issue a warrant.

Herb Lowenstein - Angry, threatens to fire Evans.

Janis - Horny and wants to get together.

Many of the messages are repeated with increasing angst, aggression, and frustration. He returns the messages he can, and leaves messages where he cannot.

When Evans arrives at the headquarters for the Vanutu Legal Team, he finds four camera crews and the staff all gussied up for a press conference. There are 3-D props of Vanutu and photos of the happy, smiling natives that adorn the warehouse where the team has been set up. Evans demurs about being part of the press conference, but Drake insists. Evans surmises that his presence at the press conference will be taken as tacit agreement with Drake's plan to circumvent Morton's instructions about the \$10 million. Jennifer stages another "focus group" with Evans, so the film crews can get some B-reel (background video footage) to play behind the talking heads. Playing devil's advocate, Jennifer presents extensive evidence, using charts of temperature history in major cities to prove that urbanization, with its addition of concrete, asphalt, and other heat-retaining materials, and modern heat-generators, such as air conditioning, have contributed to global warming. Later, she shows that if the temperature history, which was measured only from the 1930s in the first charts, is projected backward to the 1820s when the U.S. began keeping records, then no "global" trend is discernable. Then she illustrates that, although there has been a very slight rise in global CO<sub>2</sub>, the temperature changes from place to place are not consistent; some are higher, some are lower. If local temperatures were being affected by a *global* condition, she reasons, the temperature trends would be similar all over the earth. Jennifer cites numerous studies that illustrate that even objective scientists will unconsciously misinterpret data, if they are given an expected outcome. Evans acknowledges that he is having serious doubts about popular environmental myths and mantras. Jennifer agrees and they are now kindred spirits in their doubts.

Jennifer and Evans retire to their favorite Mexican restaurant for lunch, and to continue their discussion without the constraints of whoever might overhear them. Under the pretense of anticipating what the government will present from the defense's perspective, Jennifer uses the metaphor of a football field. She says the defense will show that the football field is 100 yards long. On that scale, if the field were the atmosphere, nitrogen would take you to the 78-yard line. Nonetheless, nitrogen is 78 percent of the atmosphere. Oxygen would then take the chains to the 99-yard line of this mythical sports field, with most of the remaining one yard being argon, which leaves only three-and-one-half inches to the goal line. Of the remaining inches, only one inch is CO<sub>2</sub>. In the past 50 years, CO<sub>2</sub> has increased only 3/8 inch, barely enough to be noticeable, and hardly enough to create catastrophes.



By the end of lunch, Jennifer and Evans have concluded that it will be impossible to win the Vanutu lawsuit. Back at lawsuit headquarters, John Balder begins the press conference. There is much rhetoric about the impoverished people of Vanutu and the certainty of the catastrophe that is sure to result from global warming. Evans notes that Drake has transformed abrupt climate change from a possibility to a certainty in only one week. When the reporters begin questioning Balder, Evans and Sarah make their escape. Back in the hanger where everything had been set up for the press conference, the lawsuit team has been breaking everything down, closing up shop. Jennifer reveals that they are closing down because they do not intend to pursue the case. The legal team will file for injunctive relief, with the near-certain expectation that the motion will be upheld by the ultra-liberal Ninth Circuit Court. That will kick the motion up to the Supreme Court, which will overturn the Ninth Circuit. The team has served its purpose. The case is not winnable, but it has generated the intended media frenzy, which will all be forgotten by the time the case gets to the Supreme Court and the media is focused on abrupt climate change. And, of course, the lawyers will get paid. Jennifer shows Evans more charts from places other than the U.S. They support the evidence that temperature changes are the result of local conditions (i.e. urbanization), instead of global warming.

Evans gets word that George Morton's body has been found, washed up on Pismo Beach. Drake orders Evans to go identify the body. He wants to take Sarah, but Drake has assigned Ted Bradley (the environmentally conscious actor who plays the President on TV) to spy on Evans, so he insists that Bradley accompany Evans. Evans checks in with Lisa, Lowenstein's assistant, queen bee, and the wellspring of office gossip. She informs Evans that there has been a lot of conversation between Drake and Lowenstein about Evans. His job is at risk and Morton's plane is being used by Kenner, so Jennifer and Evans lease another corporate jet. They are instructed to land and pick up Bradley at Sequoia National Park. When they get there, Bradley is hamming it up for school kids, indoctrinating them with unfounded ecobabble. "These glorious trees," he says, "are your birthright. They have been standing for thousands of years, long before you were born, before your parents or your grandparents, or your great-grandparents were born; some of them before Columbus, before the Indians - before anything." He calls the trees the oldest living things on the planet. He says the trees have survived fire, logging, soil erosion, and acid rain, but now face the greatest threat of all - global warming. He says the trees have a message for them about conserving the wilderness.

After a photo-op with the kids, the plane lifts off to fly over the forest. Bradley hits on Jennifer and gets shot down with an attitude. He starts bragging about his pitch to the kids, and she calls it "bullshit," then proceeds to tell him why. In his pitch, Ted said the trees had a message for mankind. Jennifer agrees. She says the message is, "We're trees - big trees;" and that they have about as much of a message for mankind as an eggplant. She points out that redwoods don't survive fires, but depend on them to germinate their seeds. Fires are absolutely essential to the survival of a redwood forest. Jennifer points out that the forest is not hundreds of thousands of years old, but that man was here many thousands of years before the trees. Twenty thousand years ago, Jennifer explains, Ice Age glaciers receded out of California, gouging out such terrain features as Yosemite Valley. The glaciers left zero vegetation in their wake; the land was



barren, but a few thousand years later, the land became arctic tundra, supporting only grasses and small rodents. Humans had arrived by then and hunted the small animals. Then lodgepole pine took root in the new soil, created by the decaying grasses. Later, spruce, hemlock, and alder established themselves. That period of *primary forest* lasted about four thousand years. Then the climate changed, got warmer, and the glaciers melted. The climate became drier, and the primary forest burned. Then, six thousand years ago, the climate changed again, became wetter. Douglas fir, hemlock, and clear cedar moved in, creating a closed-canopy forest that stole the sunlight needed by other plant species. Jennifer tells Ted that all forests are in a constant state of change.

Then, she says, came the American Indians. These interlopers managed the forest by starting fires to burn down some of the closed-canopy growth so that game would flourish. The Indians made sure there were only *islands* of closed growth in seas of meadows and veldt. The Indians were already managing the American forests the Europeans first saw. Unmoved by Jennifer's superior knowledge, Ted still insists that the forests are threatened by global warming. Jennifer's words also give Evans food for thought as the plane descends to San Francisco. The group travels to the County Morgue. The body of George Morton is badly decomposed, but Bradley identifies it as George, while Evans isn't sure. He sees an indentation on the wrist where a watch had been, however, and when the coroner shows him George's watch, which he took off the corpse, Evans identifies him too. During this encounter, one of the cops recognizes Ted from his TV show and asks him if he is the actor who plays the Secretary of State. Indignant, Ted responds, "I am the President." Law officers take the group to an Oakland warehouse where wrecked cars are stored. The Ferrari George Morton was driving is there. They ask Evans many questions about the car, most of which he can't answer. It is clear the cops are suspicious of him. They point out that the car was a "death trap," that someone had tampered with it to kill Morton - so much for the suicide theory.

Elsewhere, while waiting for Evans out in the limo, Ted Bradley is grilling Jennifer about her comments on the plane. He says he was speaking directly from NERF talking points and felt that Jennifer, as an employee, should have agreed with him. He asks Jennifer why she has the attitude she has. She responds: "You're one of those television stars who thinks everyone wants to touch your dick. Well, guess what, Oh Big Swinging One, I don't. I think you're just an actor." He responds that he thinks she is a plant, a corporate spy, but the conflict is turning Ted on. He is used to getting whatever women he wants. Jennifer's indifference to his fame drives him nuts. He grabs her face and kisses her. To prove his dominance he thrusts his tongue into her mouth, and ends up sitting on the limo floor, in pain with a severely wounded tongue, gushing blood all over his custom-made shirt. When he looks up, Jennifer uncrosses her legs to give him a peek up her skirt. He grumbles and threatens to sue, but backs off when she threatens him with a judo chop. Back in the warehouse, the cops are still grilling Evans. He confirms that George was drinking the night of the accident, and the cops say they have witnesses who saw Evans encouraging him to drink more. They produce a receipt from a shop in Monterey where the Ferrari was worked on. The receipt is in Evans' name. When he returns to the limo and sees Bradley all bloody, he asked what happened. "He slipped," Jennifer says, "and hurt himself."



On the flight back, Sarah begins to have feelings of jealousy for Evans and his new relationship with Jennifer. Kenner grills Bradley about his global-warming beliefs. Bradley claims warming will result in crop failures, spreading deserts, new disease, species extinction, melting glaciers, yada, yada, yada. Kenner asks him if he can back his claims with references to scientific literature. He can't, and Kenner proceeds to provide a litany of footnoted references to scientific journals that blow Ted's beliefs out of the water. (These are genuine citations, and the references are footnoted for the reader to check if he or she wishes.) Ted claims Kenner doesn't care about the environment. Kenner counters that he does, but that global warming is bogus. Ted says if Kenner truly believed in protecting the environment, he would believe in global warming. Kenner points out that Ted opposes the death penalty, yet still believes criminals should be punished. Likewise, he says, he can believe in environmental controls without endorsing global warming.

The group says their goodbyes at the airport, and Evans heads home. As soon as he gets there, he gets a call from Janis, the horny exercise instructor. She has broken up with her other boyfriend and wants to come over for obvious reasons. Evans is tired, but she insists. He goes to take a shower, but when he gets to the hallway, someone knocks him out. He comes to and sees his three assailants, hooded and masked. They hold him down and Evans sees a baggie with what he first thinks are someone's testicles. They turn out to be small octopi. One of the men pushes an octopus against the inner part of Evan's arm, it radiates blue rings - the blue rings of death - and Evans feels a mild sting. He starts to go numb, paralyzed like the other victims. He tries to get to a phone, but fails, and falls over, unable to move.

## Part 5, Snake Analysis

The solution to the rockets-and-wire mystery begins to resolve itself, and with the incident in the lightning test chamber, the astute reader may surmise that event No. 2 has something to do with thunderstorms. The callous deception and total lack of concern for the truth that Evans continues to witness in the cynical excerpts from the CD have his commitment to his environmental ideas teetering on the brink of disillusionment. With that now resolved the heroes arm themselves and set out after the bad guys. Kenner's status is enhanced when he demonstrates his authority by posting and instructing a state trooper. The pace of the action picks up with a wild chase scene through the wilderness in a killer lightning storm that was aimed directly at the characters. The wild chase, the attacking lightning, the ominous A & P truck, the foot chase, the burning buildings, and the killer strike that fells Sarah will all translate well onto the big screen. The appearance of lightening-attracting devices in the radios fulfills the foreshadowing created when the submarine dealer died while driving through a storm with his visitor's cell phone.

This section of the novel serves to pique excitement and string out some bold action in contrast to some of the dry technical information the author uses to set the stage and build the foundation for the plot. The constant switching from action in the woods to the increasing danger in the park heightens suspense by reminding the reader of the tragic



consequences if all of the conflict in the woods should come to naught, a clear and common cinematic technique. The episode in the hospital and the conversations on the way back to Los Angeles concludes the team's involvement in the second event planned by the eco-terrorists. Events three, and possibly four, are sure to present themselves quickly. Evans' transition from weenie to hero is almost complete. He has saved Sarah's life a second time, and he's beginning to get pissed off at the people who keep trying to kill him. Sarah's mixed emotions of attraction and jealousy are a clear signal that she's starting to fall for this Evans guy.

The broadcast from the Arizona news channel of the flood - without the intended huge loss of life - underscores the eco-terrorists' manipulation of the media, and the media's willingness - perhaps eagerness - to be manipulated. The origin of the media tip - Calgary Canada - resonates with the vastness of an international conspiracy. Crichton deftly uses voice mail as a convenient device for updating the reader on all of the little twists and turns the plot has been taking while the characters were off chasing thunderstorms in Arizona. Evans is further disillusioned as he realizes the Vanutu lawsuit was a scam from the beginning. With the appearance of the body at Pismo Beach, it appears that George really is dead.

Ted Bradley, who bears a striking resemblance to a real-life actor in a real-life TV drama, emerges as a jerk's jerk, worthy of a nasty demise, and clearly no match for Jennifer. The reader, as well as Bradley, is treated to some fascinating facts about the origins and evolution of redwood forests. This is where Crichton really shines; boiling down lots of complex, interconnected technical information into an intriguing, easy to comprehend read. When they reach San Francisco, Ted Bradley is eager to identify George's body, suggesting a NERF agenda, but Evans is reluctant. Eventually, the appearance of George's wristwatch, which Evans knew well, convinces him that his friend is dead. Still, however, the astute reader will sense that he is somewhat doubtful because it took a piece of forensic evidence, rather than clear recognition, to convince him. Evans' interview with the cops is really more of a vehicle to provide information about Morton's wreck, and to further establish the global nature of the eco-terrorists, than a serious suspicion about Evans' involvement in vehicular murder. Because of the superficial manner in which this and other law-enforcement interviews, the reader never really becomes concerned that Evans is about to be arrested. Evans' alibis and proximity are too solid. The juiciest part of this chapter is when Jennifer bites Ted's tongue, further establishing his sliminess and her dominance - a fitting follow-up to the lesson she gave him on redwood forests. Sarah's feelings for Evans intensify, with this new element of jealousy generated by Jennifer's presence in his life

Kenner continues to educate the reader, via Ted Bradley, on the fallacies of global warming. His analogy between ecology and the death penalty illustrates the polarity that is endemic to environmental issues. Either you are for it, or you are against it. The rational approach is to support sound ecological measures, while rejecting those not supported by scientific evidence. Why the bad guys use such a cumbersome instrument as a poisonous octopus to disable and kill their victims, rather than something simple - say gas or an injection - is never explained. One might suspect, however, that the slimy blue rings of death will play well on the big screen.



## Part 6, Blue

### Part 6, Blue Summary

Janis shows up at Evans' apartment for the promised frolic and finds him in a state of paralysis. She freaks out, and after a few air-headed false starts trying to communicate with him, she gets her wits together enough to call 911. Meanwhile, Nicholas Drake reflects that he feels secure in his west coast dwelling, because it's 2.9 miles from the beach. He has a Georgetown town house as well, but he justifies the Brentwood digs because of all the celebrities he has to entertain to get NERF contributions. Drake has a videoconference over the Internet with Ted Bradley. Ted is his spy, and he reports that Evans has gone over to the enemy, and that Jennifer is clearly an industry spy. He establishes that Evans and Kenner are well acquainted. Drake orders Bradley to stay with Evans and keep reporting to him.

Kenner identifies the species of octopus (*Hapalochlaena fasciata*) that the eco-terrorists have been using to paralyze folks. Evans is recovering in the E-room at UCLA Hospital, still unable to communicate, when Kenner reveals this to him. Sajong discovers that the terrorists had planned to try to control the path of a hurricane by dumping AOB (Ammonia Oxidizing Bacteria) out of a C-47 in the storm's track, but that they have apparently called the project off. The Abrupt Climate Change conference is due to begin in a few hours, and Sajong shows Evans copies of leading magazines, such as *Time* and the *Economist*, that are now reporting climate change as an imminent threat. Drake is opening the Abrupt Climate Change Conference when there is a disturbance with a perennial protester at such gatherings, a Professor Norman Hoffman, author of *The Ecology of Thought*, who is extremely critical of ecological hyperbole. When the professor tells the guards who are restraining him that George Morton invited him personally, Evans goes over to the scene of the disturbance. The TV crews are drawn to the scene, and the professor plays to them, calling Drake an "immoral fraud." He rants on about starving children in Asia, and calls NERF a travesty on the poor of the world. Once the professor is ejected, Jennifer fills Evans in on the nutty professor. He teaches sociology at USC, and studies the effect of the media on people by using a strict statistical methodology. Drake dispatches Evans to baby sit the professor so he won't cause further disruptions.

Professor Hoffman fills Evans in on his theory. He says that human ideas are constantly arising, then disappearing, just as various dynamics in nature. Some ideas fade too quickly, and some hang on long after their time. He points out that 3,000 years ago the Greeks believed in a perfect balance of nature, and that the so-called ecologists have now resurrected this false belief, long after it's being discredited. Nature is never balanced, says the professor, but is *always* in a constant state of change. The professor notes that his research shows that, beginning in the fall of 1989, the major media started using such terms as crisis, catastrophe, plague, and disaster with greatly increased frequency. His theory goes to the notion that governments must control their populations to maintain order, and that fear is the most effective dynamic for this



purpose. For the 50 years prior to 1989, the Cold War kept western society - and much of the rest of the world - in a constant terror of nuclear war. With the end of the Cold War, however, governments had to find a new fear factor (hence the title of the book, *State of Fear*) to maintain civil order. The environmental scare helps fill the fear gap until something more pressing (perhaps terrorism?) takes its place.

Professor Hoffman claims that the military-industrial complex, of which Eisenhower warned at the end of his second term, has now been replaced by the PLM, the Politico-Legal-Media complex. The PLM now orchestrates the fear that brings order to western society. The professor goes on to condemn the condition of education in western society. He says professors have abrogated their teaching duties to ignorant graduate students, many of whom speak English poorly. The result is an academic environment that, rather than being a bastion of free thought and experimentation, has become the most restrictive and politically correct segment of our society. Ted Bradley interrupts Evans and the professor with the breathless news that Sarah has been trying to reach him, and that they must leave town right away - with their passports.

At the conference, a speaker is discussing ice core samples as supporting the global warming theory. The speaker is a Russian scientist who arrived late. He starts to say something about the biggest iceberg in history, which has just calved in Antarctica, when Drake rushes up to the podium to stop him. The Russian apologizes and says he was using an earlier, outdated copy of his remarks (which included a reference to the iceberg that never happened, because Kenner stopped it). Sarah is talking with her friend, Ann Garner, wife of a big NERF contributor at the time the Russian makes his *gaffe*. When the Russian stumbles, Sarah rushes to the press table where she cons a reporter, who is attracted to her, into looking at his media monitor. She sees the corrected text on the screen, as well as the lined-out reference to the non-existent iceberg. The old copy is quickly erased by whoever is feeding the text to the reporters, obviously by NERF's direction. Oblivious, Ann continues to prattle on about the conspiracy of industry to silence ecology groups. In the parking lot, Sajong is monitoring the NERF activities on his laptop. He believes he captured a copy of the changing text, but is more interested in locating the mini-sub, the *Scorpion*, and its tender ship in the Solomon Islands at a place called Bougainville. The tender ship is missing, apparently hidden. It had sailed first to Vancouver, where it took on 30 tons of industrial equipment, which Canadian customs had labeled as "diesel generators." Security guards interrupt Sajong, and he realizes that someone has detected him hacking into the NERF system.

When Sarah tries to break away from her friend, Ann insists on coming with her. She has been assigned by Drake to spy on Sarah, just as Ted Bradley has been assigned to spy on Evans. Drake watches their exit, and speculates on things to come. He acknowledges that Kenner has managed to disrupt the first two planned events - the iceberg and the thunderstorm - but is sure he'll not stop the third. He calls Ted Bradley, who says he is "about to deliver the news to V." Kenner, accompanied by two FBI agents, watches Henley, the NERF PR flack, arrive at his destination in his red Porsche. It is the palatial residence of V. Allen Willy, aka "V." Kenner tells the FBI stakeout not to worry about anyone entering the lavish beachside house that Bradley just entered, but





to note the precise time and name of anyone *leaving*. Kenner gets a text message on his cell phone: "*They found AV Scorpio.*" And excuses himself.

Evans and Ted Bradley are in the limo, arguing about whether Bradley should come on this latest adventure. Evans says no. Bradley, under orders from Drake, says yes. Bradley wins. When the limo arrives at the airport, Herb Lowenstein is standing at the doorway of the Gulfstream with eight security guards, denying Evans admission. Herb says that, since his body has now been identified, George's estate is in probate and the plane is being sealed. Kenner shows up and bluffs Lowenstein about the autopsy documentation on George, saying that since he does not have a copy of the paperwork, and that no one at Hassle and Black can fax it to him, he can't prevent them from taking the plane. They are following George's wishes, claims Kenner, as expressed before his death.

Sarah shows up with her spy (Ann Garner) in tow. Ann expresses her contempt for Kenner, then reveals under his questioning that she has no scientific basis for her environmental assumptions. Lowenstein gets on the phone with Drake, also a Hassle and Black client, and Drake tells him to ignore Kenner and seal the plane. Lowenstein reminds Drake of Kenner's Harvard law degree, and refuses, saying he's not going to lose his license for Drake. In the plane, Kenner passes out liability release forms saying no one will hold him responsible for serious injury or death. He says where they are going is a dangerous place. Ann and Bradley hesitate when Kenner says he can't tell them where they're headed until the plane is in the air, but they eventually sign. As the plane is taking off, Kenner reveals that they are going to an island off the coast of New Guinea, but will give no more specifics than that.

In the air, Ann is running on about the Kyoto Accords and how Kenner is an agent of misinformation working for evil industry. Kenner points out that even if the U.S. had signed the accords, it would mediate the global temperature only .04 degrees Celsius by the year 2100. Ann and Bradley refuse to accept Kenner's facts and cited evidence. The argument segues into a discussion of personal commitment, which reveals that both Ann and Bradley are energy-wasters. Ann argues that man's arrogance is trying to change the planet to suit his needs. Kenner answers with examples from nature, e.g. termites and beavers, which alter their environments to suit their survival needs. Sarah defends Ann, saying she is well intentioned. Kenner agrees that she has good intentions, but that she is misinformed, a condition he describes as a "prescription for disaster." Bradley attacks Kenner for being mean to Ann, says he is uncaring. Kenner replies that caring is irrelevant to the issue. Bradley insists that man is capable of effectively "managing" the environment. Kenner says no, using Yellowstone Park as an example, that mankind is totally incapable of managing nature.

Kenner says that Yellowstone was the first attempt to "preserve" wilderness. After ten years, the teeming game in Yellowstone was drastically reduced because of man attempting to "manage" it. For example, the "managers" believed elk were about to become extinct, so they eliminated predators. They shot and poisoned all of the wolves in the park, and prohibited Indians from hunting on their traditional grounds. The elk ate the trees the beavers used to make dams; when the beavers disappeared, the



meadows dried up, the trout and otter vanished, soil erosion increased, and the park's ecology was changed forever. Kenner uses this argument to support his contention that well-meaning ignorance is a prescription for disaster. He points to other "management" attempts that have also proved to do more harm than good, such as banning CFCs and DDT, both of which had disastrous effects on third-world countries. DDT, which after the ban was proven not to be carcinogenic, led to devastated crops and famine. Banning CFCs increased the cost of refrigeration so sharply that many more poor people than normal in warm climates died from food poisoning. As the plane is descending to land in Honolulu, Sajong interrupts the argument with news appearing on his computer screen. Satellite images show signs of architecture, equipment, and human activity on a tropical island in their destination area. Sajong has done some ground reconnaissance there, and discovered that the heavy equipment consists of three cavitation machines and the diesel generators to power them. The plane lands in Honolulu.

While refueling in Hawaii, a customs official comes on board checking passports. He takes a poke at Bradley by referring to him as "Mr. President." There is a discussion between Kenner and the customs officer about rebel activity at their destination. When the conversation turns to head hunting and cannibalism, Ann bolts, and leaves the group. Bradley swallows hard but stays with the plane. Back in the air, Evans compliments Kenner on the cannibal story that got Ann off the plane. Kenner says he wasn't joking, and as the flight progresses, Evans and Sarah continue speculating about one another in their own heads and Sajong shows a computer image of Gareda, their island destination. Resolution Bay is on the other side of the island from the airstrip, and represents a dangerous trek through rebel-held territory. Kenner says they have to take down the buildings at their target site and dismantle the equipment (cavitation machines). There is also the submarine that they have to take care of. Kenner explains that this area is geologically active, and that there is a deep ocean trench. They have surmised that the bad guys are planning to create a huge undersea landslide that will generate a killer tsunami that will hit the California coast on the last day of the Abrupt Climate Change Conference. Ted wakes up with a hangover during the tsunami discussion, and asks for a drink.

Bradley waxes artistic about the joys of simple cultures living close to nature. He comments on the pristine appearance of the island, Gareda, where they are landing. He asks Kenner if he doesn't agree that the biggest problem is that we have gotten too far away from nature. Kenner replies that, no, he thinks the biggest problem is no roads through rebel country to the other side of the island where their mission will take them.

Bradley claims he knows best how people should live, because of his education and sensitivity, and that the local natives should be kept preserved from white man's civilization. He believes that civilized man has a duty to keep native people living in the bliss that comes with being ignorant and close to nature, without regard to their own inclinations to enjoy the same modern benefits he enjoys every day. Kenner says he has a problem with people deciding for other people how they should live. Sajong expresses concern that he doesn't see a helicopter on the island. Bradley says he doesn't believe that cannibalism has ever been real; that it's all myth made up by white



men to denigrate people of color. Sajong, dispelling the silent Asian stereotype, calls him a fool.

## Part 6, Blue Analysis

When Evans is attacked with the octopus, he is pretty much taken off the cops' suspicion list. There will be no more interrogations, such as the one at his apartment and the one in the building where the wrecked Ferrari was. Ted becomes an almost comical fool in his reluctance to allow his smug beliefs to be challenged by real scientific data. He is all image and ambiance, a cardboard cutout, a TV actor with delusions of significance. The fool becomes a foil for Kenner's knowledge in Crichton's continuing education of the reader in things ecological, and the more Kenner debases Ted, the more loathsome Ted becomes. This treatment by the author sets Ted up as a sacrificial lamb in adventures yet to come, when the reader - or viewer - might very well cheer if he meets an untimely demise. The hurricane provides a fascinating insight into the author's motive for the very fact that it never happens. So why include this non-event? It may be that Crichton originally planned four eco-terror events, and then had to cull one out when he perceived that he might be running long. Still, how one might control the path of a hurricane is interesting stuff, so the author included the fruits of his research purely for educational purposes, without really developing it as an action scene. This does little to further the story, and nothing to develop the characters, but it's fun stuff to learn.

Professor Norman Hoffman, whom Drake calls a kook, was a good friend of George Morton and, as a *Fear* character, gives voice to Crichton's thesis statement for this work. When, after all, has human kind *not* perceived that it was facing imminent death and destruction from one quarter or another? From the barbarians at the gate, to Armageddon - which has seemed to be on the brink since the First Century AD - to the rise of the Third Reich, and the resultant Cold War, man always seems to perceive himself living on the eve of destruction. Often, these fears are real, but frequently they are no more than the creations of governments, churches, advocacy groups, and other organizations seeking power. The Spanish Inquisition and Y2K come to mind. Are there not, in fact, always governments and other powerful institutions that keep human kind in a constant *State of Fear*?"

The bumbling Russian professor at the podium at the Abrupt Climate Change Conference is Crichton's second vehicle for weaving the media aspect into the Politico-Legal-Media (PLM) complex notion and, coming on the heels of Professor Hoffman, bolsters his *State of Fear* theory. In Arizona, the newscaster was reading directly from a NERF press release as he was bemoaning the tragedy of melting ice caps, and the planet spinning out of control, blissfully unaware that his camera crew had been lured out to witness an attempted man-made catastrophe by the very same organization. At the conference, the Russian professor has to change his speech because Kenner and his crowd thwarted NERF's planned catastrophe. This incident increases the image even further of NERF as a powerful and ubiquitous force in the world and the minds of its people. With the introduction of V. Allen Willy, though he is only mentioned a couple



of times in the entire novel, the reader gets a glimpse of the huge-money specter behind the NERF media game. So what's up with Kenner wanting to know only when someone *leaves* Willy's house, not when they enter?

Sajong finds Scorpion, and everybody grabs a passport. Ann and Ted, the spies, attach themselves to Sarah and Evans respectively. The scene at the airport erodes Drake's power over Lowenstein and the stage is set for the next adventure. Liability release forms intensify the anticipation of danger. New Guinea is the destination; the settings are getting more and more remote, isolated, and exotic as the novel begins to wind up. Ann, a throwaway character who makes only this brief appearance, is a stylized portrait of the well-meaning environmentalist. She is absolutely committed to the *cause*, takes at face value whatever supporting evidence she is fed through the media, and writes off any conflicting notions, not by evaluating the evidence, but by condemning the source. Crichton makes no bones about the fact that such people are not simply misguided fools but, as his character Kenner says, are "a prescription for disaster." When talk of headhunters scares off Ann, Crichton's foreshadowing is once again done with a bulldozer, rather than an airbrush. One just knows that someone will *absolutely* end up on the cannibals' menu before we're done, and it doesn't take a rocket surgeon to figure out whom that might be.

In case we hadn't already guessed, we are now informed that the third eco-prank - or fourth if you count the hurricane - will be a tsunami, designed to inundate California just as the conference on climate change is wrapping up. (It may be of interest to note that *State of Fear* hit bookstores just a couple of weeks before the massive tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Certainly, a coincidence, but a cynical, conspiratorial mind could run with something like that.)



# Part 7, Resolution

## Part 7, Resolution Summary

It is intensely hot at Kotak Field where the Gulfstream lands. A young man named Henry shows up, speaking Pidgin English with Kenner. Bradley is condescending, assuming the dialect denotes ignorance, insisting Henry is better off never knowing the benefits of civilization. He lectures him on how fortunate he is to be living next to nature, uncorrupted by all of the modern influence that are a part of Ted's life. When Henry replies in perfect English that he has a degree from Melbourne University, Bradley gets hugely ticked off, grumbling all the way to a hidden helicopter, which Henry indicates he will pilot to the bay on the other side of the island. Bradley is appalled to learn that the best jobs on the island are working in the copper mines, not sitting around the village next to nature being primitive, pristine, and native like. Henry tells them that people literally kill each other to get jobs in the mines - that it happens several times a year.

They are trying to skirt rebel territory when Henry makes a wrong turn and flies over a stronghold. Henry says the rebels want the helicopter and will radio ahead to others who will intercept them when they land. Kenner realizes that the rebels have been bought off by ELF to protect their operation on the island. On the way to landing, the group recalculates remaining time, and determines that they have only eight hours before the ELF launches their man-made tsunami. The killer wave is calculated to arrive on the California coast just as NERF is wrapping up the Abrupt Climate Change Conference. Kenner, realizing now that Henry has also been bought off, instructs the native pilot to land the helicopter on a lava outcrop. Henry is reluctant to get out of the aircraft, but Kenner pushes him out and takes over the controls. As they lift off, rebels waiting in ambush come out, shooting at the helicopter. They take a few hits but remain airborne. In the back, Sajong discovers that the guns, which are supposed to be stowed there, are not. Kenner lands the helicopter, and the team starts out on foot across rebel territory. They hear the terrorists tuning up the cavitation machines. They peek over a ridge and see a dozen men at a bad-guys camp. They hear a noise - like a cough - and freeze. The cough keeps repeating itself. They assume it is an animal and move on. Later they learn that the cough was George Morton trying to warn them. A few yards farther they find a path. Shortly, they hear a gun being cocked. Bands of boys - teenaged and even younger - emerge from the bush and take the unarmed hikers prisoner. They say some things in Pidgin. Evans deciphers some of it, including *taiis gut*, which means, "taste good." Evans notices that Sajong somehow managed to escape during the capture. The boys hand cuff them and load them into jeeps, setting off down a muddy track.

The team is taken to a huge ceremonial lodge, surrounded by a catwalk. From a balcony or mezzanine overlooking a dirt-floored ceremonial arena, Sambuca, the rebel leader, reigns over all. Kenner, Bradley, and Evans are taken off to one room, while Jennifer and Sarah are taken to another, with the distinct impression that the boys have been given permission to gang rape them. Sambuca, apparently, prefers boys. The



women are handcuffed, with their hands behind their backs, to individual tall stakes in the room where they are being held. The stakes are too tall for them to lift their cuffed hands over the tops. Evans is still having trouble losing his old ideas and presumptions. Kenner points out that civilization doesn't separate us from nature, but *protects* us from it. Bradley finally figures out that these kids are going to kill him. He asks Kenner if Sajong will come to rescue them. Kenner says no, that Sajong will go on to the target and try to prevent the Tsunami. Bradley whimpers and cries. Two boys come into the holding room and tie ropes to Bradley's wrists, then leave him. Meanwhile, Jennifer has Sarah watch the door while Jennifer uses some super moves to shinny backward up her pole and lift her cuffs over the top. She then sits back up against the pole as if she's still connected to it. Outside, Sambuca is warming up the crowd for the delights to come. Two men come in and take Bradley out into the lodge to much chanting and singing. The crowd roars.

Back in the girls' room, Jennifer catches the eye of one of the boys and makes seductive moves toward him. When he comes in to follow up, she lays some serious martial arts on him, taking his gun, and leaving him dead in the corner. Then she helps Sarah get loose, but they still don't have the keys to the cuffs. In the lodge, the crowd is cheering Bradley, and ham that he is, he's eating it up. All is well now. They have recognized him for who he is - his fame is global - and he thinks they are honoring his magnificent self. As he walks down a gauntlet of cheering old women, however, they start beating the crap out of him with sticks and pipes. With him barely conscious, they lead Ted up to the chief, who coolly slices off a piece of his cheek and starts munching it, much to his and everyone else's delight. The glittering aura that Ted perceives as surrounding him begins to fade somewhat with only one cheek. Then, suddenly, someone is tearing out his eyes - going for the tastiest parts first - then the rest of his audience systematically devours his other parts. *Exeunt* Ted.

Jennifer kung fu's another kid and gets his gun too, but the damsels still don't have the keys to the cuffs. Sarah did, however, spot the keys on a bench across the hall. Evans has now been prepared to become the second course. He is trembling with the blood-soaked ropes tied to his wrists. He hears the same strange coughing he heard on the trail, now coming from outside the thatch hut. Kenner says "in here," and a machete cuts through the thatch. A bearded face appears and Kenner chides George Morton for taking so long. Evans goes through the hole in the wall with Morton, and steps out into the jungle. Kenner goes to save the girls. Two rebels discover them, but Kenner takes care of one, while Jennifer knifes the other. Everybody runs and the rebels spread the alarm. The chase through the jungle is on. There is some gunplay, but the brave little rebel kids don't have a lot of staying power in a scenario where the prey shoots back. The women catch up to Morton and Evans, and they continue their flight. Kenner, who stayed behind on the trail to give the women a head start, gets lost and starts to backtrack.

There is only an hour left to stop the tsunami. The truncated team, minus Kenner and Sajong, plan their moves. In the jungle, Kenner hears a dog bark; at the tsunami site Morton hears it too. He tells Jennifer that it is not a dog, but a crocodile that has learned to mimic a dog to lure other dogs to him for food. They hear the cavitation machines



start up. Sajong is hidden, hanging out in a tree near the submarine. He slips down, onto the sub tender and sees the mini-sub hanging above him.

After considering and discarding various options - as well as the notion that they are seriously outnumbered - the team decides to take the cavitation machines on with a direct frontal attack. They have guns, but only six rounds of ammo between them. Meanwhile, Kenner is splashing downstream, looking for where Morton left the riverbed. Morton has been on the island for some time, and knows his way around better than Kenner. Evans, Jennifer, Sarah, and Morton watch the bad guys practicing an exit drill from the tent where the cavitation machines are parked. Morton explains that, when they set off the tsunami, it will travel in both directions, and they will have only 24 seconds to get to high ground. They hear the cavitation machines rev up.

Sajong sneaks into the control room to find the control panel for the mini-sub hoist. He pushes the down arrow and the sub begins to lower toward the water. The others hear the alarm as the sub starts to lower, as do the guards at the cavitation machine. The bad guys on the beach are unsettled by the alarm, and then hear a burst of machine gun fire from behind them. Having just been discussing the possibility of creating a diversion that would allow them to get to the various tents where the cavitation machines are housed, the team seizes the moment and pounces, with Jennifer in the lead. The machine gun fire that flushed the bad guys, it turns out, came from Kenner. He was not shooting at the bad guys, but was fending off an attack by the barking croc (and *crock* may be the operant term for the whole scene). The bullets didn't phase the croc, however, so Kenner heads downstream with quickly, while being chased by a canine amphibian.

Jennifer takes a round in the leg while sprinting toward the cavitation tent, but nails the guard with one of her few precious rounds before she hits the ground. The men on the sub tender halt the descent of the sub, and Sajong capitalizes on the distraction by finding the control room for the timed explosions. There is a technician there making adjustments. Pan to the beach where Sarah and Morton are sprinting along, headed for the tent that houses the second cavitation machine. The guard is firing at them but missing. Sarah stops, takes aim with the pistol, and spends two rounds dropping the guard with a shot to the shoulder. In the third tent, Evans is engaging the bogus Bolden from Antarctica in close combat, a new exercise of Evans' budding manhood. They wrestle around, swapping blows with fists and gun butts. The cavitation machine is running, a constant and potentially deadly backdrop for the brawl. After a few minutes of violent footage, the camera zooms in to catch Evans pushing Bolden under the cavitation machine, which reduces him to vapor. Antarctica is avenged. Jennifer rips her blouse off with her teeth to get material for a tourniquet and Kenner rescues her. Sajong fires at the glass in front of the control deck for the explosives, but the glass is bulletproof. The technician is startled and reaches for the controls. By then, Sajong is through the door and nails the technician. Sajong also fires at the control panel, but just a second too late to prevent the explosion. A claxon sounds, and the bad guys panic. The tsunami is coming. It is now only a matter of seconds until it catches them.



Evans steals a jeep and picks up Kenner and Jennifer. Morton and Sarah are in a different jeep. They surmise that Sajong is dead, because they are unaware of his activities on the sub tender. Morton is also wounded, and Sarah tries to keep him upright as she drives. It sounds like his lung has been punctured. Sajong exits the ship and scrambles for higher ground. He doesn't think he'll make it. Sarah and Evans continue their own race for higher ground in their respective jeeps. Terrorists in another jeep chase the vehicle Evans is driving, firing at them as they race uphill. Kenner is firing back and he knocks out the tires, and the bad guys flip, crash, and are doomed as tsunami victims. The first big wave of the tsunami set is now visible, chasing them. They watch it with major trepidation, but it dies just before it swallows them. Kenner reassures them that the next wave is coming - and it will be bigger.

The sea is quiet between waves. Jennifer is badly wounded, and Evans tries to help her. Kenner restrains him, saying, "she'll make it or she won't." He then reveals that Jennifer is his daughter, and the reader is left with the feeling that they have been working together for a long time. They have a few minutes before the next - bigger - wave. As they reach the end of the road, the second wave breaks, dying once again just before it reaches them. When the wave recedes, there is no trace of the terrorists or their wrecked jeep. There is no more road, so they gather up Jennifer and begin to climb on foot. The team - minus Sajong - is reunited now on foot. For the next five minutes, they scramble up the hillside before the third wave, of an expected five, reaches them. When the next wave comes and recedes, the jeeps they left below them are gone. They continue their climb in advance of wave four. They hear someone shouting, and look across the bay to the other hillside to see Sajong waving. They all head for the helicopter.

Tsunami detection devices in the Pacific Ocean record a somewhat elevated wave pattern, but nothing to write home about. A few surfers on the California coast might find it cool and a bit gnarly. The team was successful in mediating - though not preventing - the effects of the tsunami. Kenner is notified that the occupant of Willy's mansion, which the FBI was monitoring, left abruptly at 2:00 a.m., well in advance of the expected tsunami. Kenner instructs the agents to issue a warrant for his arrest. After a bunch of formalities, complicated by the absence of the cannibal's appetizer, Ted Bradley, the team was allowed to leave the island. Kenner and Morton explain how they faked the auto accident that "killed" Morton: there were two Ferraris, and Morton just kept on driving past the wrecked one. Everybody but the bad guys - and poor Ted Bradley - live. Morton and Jennifer stabilize and are on the way to recovery.

The closing chapter contains a statement by Kenner summarizing his notion of atmospheric management. It concludes with the comment, *"The nasty little apes that call themselves human beings can do nothing but run and hide. For these same apes to imagine they can stabilize this atmosphere is arrogant beyond belief. They can't control the climate.*

*The reality is, they run from the storms."*





Following Kenner's summation, Morton announces that he is forming a new foundation, dedicated to atmospheric research, rather than hyperbole, and that he expects Evans and Sarah to carry on his work after he dies.

## Part 7, Resolution Analysis

Crichton clearly defines two dangerous entities as he brings the book to a close. One is the character Ted Bradley, and the other is the real-world Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Although Bradley is purely fictional, he is a composite of environmentalist traits, especially an all-knowing arrogance based entirely in ignorance. Bradley establishes himself as such a complete ass that many readers are by now probably cheering for his demise. He is making himself imminently killable. And, by this time, ELF and NERF are becoming all but indistinguishable. Perhaps the author's intent is to transfer the reader's hatred for the fictional NERF to the real-life ELF. ELF's treachery is established - again - by the way they bought off Kenner's presumed friend, Henry.

As the group reaches Resolution Bay and encounter the cannibals, the scenario begins to resemble a 1930s jungle movie. It worked well on the smaller black and white screen, just imagine the experience with giant screen and surround sound. The tension, once rendered in film, will reach an almost unbearable, nail-biting pitch, as the natives chant, while Ann Darrow - but in this case whomever plays Ted Bradley - is chained inside the pavilion as a sacrifice to the big monkey. Oops, wrong movie. However, what the hey, if it worked in 1933... It may very well be that Crichton is blatantly stealing the old scene from *King Kong* for use in *State of Fear*. He is not bashful about using things that have worked in the past, nor should he be. He presents old - almost trite - stuff in such a delightful, modern dressing that originality becomes a moot issue. The twist is that in *King Kong*, the audience was rooting for Ann Darrow, while in *Fear* they'll likely be on the side of the cannibals. And who, pray tell, could be more deserving of such a delicious fate than the smarmy Ted Bradley?

Evans, perhaps because he has gradually come over to Kenner's (read Crichton's) way of thinking, is rescued before the second course is served. And behold! The immortal Morton, whom everyone already knew wasn't *really* dead, is resurrected from the consequences of his drunken suicide. Little analysis is needed from here on. Everything in the rest of the novel is eye candy, and eminently predictable - which is not to say it is not a hoot. The revelation that Jennifer is Kenner's daughter seems to serve little purpose, other than to underscore Kenner's toughness and dedication, and is just somewhat left hanging out there for the reader to deal with in her own mind.

It does not take a particularly subtle imagination to picture Kenner, sprinting down a streambed, chased by a bulletproof crocodile that barks like a dog, (Wasn't there something like that in a Peter Pan movie, but with croc who'd swallowed an alarm clock?). Cleverly, Crichton is able to save the California coast - thus redeeming the good guys - but still have all the great visuals and audios of a tsunami by moving the action to the flip side at Resolution Bay. Therefore, in the predictable end, Morton,

Sarah, Evans, Jennifer Kenner, and Sajong are left to carry on should sales of *State of Fear* suggest a sequel.



# Characters

## Richard Kenner

Kenner is a 39-year-old professor of geothermal engineering at MIT. He has a PhD in civil engineering from Caltech, graduating at the age of 20, and did his thesis on soil erosion in Nepal. He is a renowned climber who attempted an assault on K2, but was driven back by bad weather. He was also a contender for the U.S. Olympic Ski Team, but didn't make the final cut. He is the director of the MIT Center for Risk Assessment, and acts as a consultant to the EPA, Department of Defense, and Department of the Interior in that capacity. Kenner holds a JD from Harvard Law and is well connected with powerful global interests in both business and various governments. He is an on-going consultant to the government of Nepal. Although his academic accolades are all legitimate, Kenner is actually something of a romantic, environmental super cop, an anti-ecoterrorist working under an academic cover. His law enforcement credentials are near supreme. His badge, from an agency so secret it is never revealed, gives him the authority to assign state troopers and even FBI agents, and assume command in any situation without regard to rank or jurisdictional lines. His Nepalese grad-student assistant shares many of his athletic and educational attributes, and the two work in tandem as a well-practiced team.

## Peter Evans

At 28, Peter Evans is George Morton's youngest and favorite attorney. Drake works for Hassle and Black, the law firm that represents NERF. Peter is passionate about environmental issues in general and global warming in particular. However, he is naive. He accepts popular opinion as spun by the popular press, without examining the validity of the information he uses to form his sternly held positions. The author uses Peter, and his relationship with Kenner, as a vehicle for educating the reader about the dynamics of opinion manipulation by the PLM (Politico-Legal-Media complex). Peter Evans is a sexually alert man, involved in two unfulfilling relationships, only one of which makes an appearance in *State of Fear*. He is romantically intrigued by both Sarah Jones and Jennifer Haynes, and something of a love triangle develops there. Crichton is not big on romance, however, so nothing ever comes of it. In terms of character development, Evans' is the most dramatic. When he is first introduced, he is full of pomp and certainty about environmental issues, and all sorts of urban myths. He is obstinate, and argues from ignorance against every piece of legitimate scientific evidence that Ted Kenner presents to counter his fiercely held beliefs. As the tale unfolds, however, Peter eventually comes around to Kenner's notion that much more atmospheric research is needed before anyone can make sound predictions about the climate and atmosphere. This change accompanies a general toughening of Evans' character as his life is threatened in a series of adventures in Antarctica, Arizona, Southern California, and the Solomon Islands. As he toughens, he also becomes more attractive to the athletic and daring Sarah Jones.



## Sarah Jones

Sarah is Morton's athletic, gorgeous, blond personal assistant who teaches martial arts on the side. Like Evans, she is a true believer when it comes to environmental issues, accepting as fact the myths that are spun and sold by junk scientists and the media. Sarah is not quite as hardheaded as Evans is, however, and is a little more open to genuine scientific data. Sarah is a sucker for flashy good looks in men, and actually played around a bit at one time with Ted Bradley, the smarmy actor who plays the President on a TV series. She's involved in an on-again off-again relationship with another actor, but neither he nor she seems particularly committed to the other. In fact, he never even makes an appearance in the novel.

Initially, Sarah is totally put off by Peter Evans, who comes across as a weenie. In one scene, Evans hugs Sarah after an unpleasant incident, and she warns him to "never do those again," clearly expressing her independence as a strong female. Later in the book, however, Evans and Sarah keep being paired up for the various adventures that abound all around the globe. Twice, Evans saves her life - once, lost in the Antarctic wilderness, and again in an Arizona thunderstorm - and Sarah begins to develop a fondness for Peter. She develops confused feelings of mixed anger and gratitude toward him for saving her life, which are further complicated by jealousy when Jennifer Haynes enters the picture.

## Jennifer Haynes

Jennifer is John Balder's (the Bald Eagle) assistant. Balder is the chief counsel for the ill-fated Vanutu lawsuit. It is revealed later that Jennifer is Kenner's daughter, who has apparently been working undercover in his behalf. Like Sarah, Jennifer is athletic, but is more of an outdoorsy type, and more combative. While in college, she taught night classes in martial arts to supplement her income. One night after class, a man abducted her in her own car, and drove off with rape clearly on his mind. Jennifer attacked him once, which caused the car to crash, but the man came back with a gun. She disarmed him and killed him in a single move. Her remorse was limited to the comment, "I should have killed him the first time. Evans is taken aback when he hears this story, but as he is exposed to danger and murderous intent, he begins to harden, ultimately feeling nothing when the bad guys die.

## George Morton

George is the millionaire philanthropist who funds NERF (the National Environmental Research Fund, a law-based ecology organization, to the tune of \$10 million. Although respectable on the outside, NERF is actually a covert clearinghouse for eco-terrorism carried out by the real-life Environmental Liberation Front (ELF). The organization also generates large sums of money, in the form of donations from do-gooder rich people and celebrities, to finance dramatic man-made and man-enhanced ecological disasters. George, however, is a true believer, and is genuinely concerned about the environment.



He made his fortune as a brilliant lawyer, but in retirement projects himself as an old, skirt-chasing drunk. That image is half-true and half make-believe, but NERF buys it as real, writes this truly shrewd old man off as a dufus, and gets careless. George first stumbles onto NERF's scam when some mishandled funds - large amounts - trigger a call from his banker. Shortly thereafter, George meets Kenner and is obviously impressed by the MIT professor. The two disappear for a time, and George ends up faking his death in a spectacular Ferrari crash, to help ensnare NERF and ELF.



## Objects/Places

The many exotic locations in which *State of Fear* unfolds are a central component of the novel, underscoring the global nature of the threat. Much of the dialogue takes place in Southern California, and on George Morton's *Gulfstream*, as the characters rush from one trouble spot to the next. Exotic locations include a Pacific atoll, Antarctica, Solomon Islands, Tokyo, San Francisco and the Marin Headlands, Paris, London, the Indian Ocean, Arizona, and Hawaii. Significant objects include an array of cutting-edge, high-tech products, such as cavitation machines, precision explosives, a small submarine, and chemicals to seed a hurricane.



# Themes

## Fear as a Means of Social Control

Crichton takes the title of his novel from this global theme. He develops the notion of the PLM (Politico-Legal-Media) Complex to illustrate his belief that powerful organizations (i.e., governments, churches, ruling families, etc.) must generate fear in the populace - even if no real threat exists - to maintain civility and social order. When people are always looking over their shoulder, waiting for the impending crisis, they have little time for revolt and other mischief. He makes his case with historical examples, such as the Military-Industrial Complex Eisenhower warned us about, and the Y2K scare. The Military-Industrial Complex may indeed have been a genuine threat - one that powerful forces ultimately excised from Eisenhower's speech; while the Y2K scare may have been pure fraud, similar to global warming as Crichton sees it.

## Condemnation Without Investigation

People are quick to accept what they hear and see in the media - in this case, about global warming and other ecological issues - without checking their sources of information and validating their ideas with genuine, in-depth research. They condemn all industry and development, often to the detriment of others, especially those less fortunate than themselves, such as people living in third-world countries. This condition, says Crichton *via* his character John Kenner, "...is a prescription for disaster." He underscores this theme when Morton quotes Michel de Montaigne at the Concerned Citizen of the Year Award in San Francisco. Montaigne said, "*Nothing is so firmly believed as that which is not known.*"

## Media Manipulation of Public Consciousness

In considerable detail and with acuity, Crichton reveals many of the dynamics the media employ to shape and control public thought.

## Function of Fear

As the title of Crichton's novel suggests, a major theme in the novel is fear and societal reactions and behaviors associated with fear. Toward the end of the novel, Dr. Norman Hoffman says to Evans, "I study the ecology of thought ... [a]nd how it has led to a State of Fear." Crichton explores the condition of modern society, a geographic and psychological State of Fear. One of the central ideas of the novel is that environmental crises are largely overstated and sensationalized, if not entirely fictional. Collective societal fears about pollution, global warming, severe weather patterns, and the threat of natural disaster result not so much from a true understanding of the scientific



research and findings of the last century, but from largely irrational and emotional fears fed by a media that profits from sensational and fear-inducing reporting.

Dr. Hoffman argues that the central fear that occupied Americans before 1989 was the threat of "The Communist menace. The Iron Curtain. The Evil Empire," but the toppling of the Berlin Wall created a kind of fear vacuum that was soon filled by widespread but largely unfounded fears about the state of the environment. Hoffman questions both Evans and the reader:

Has it ever occurred to you how astonishing the culture of Western society really is?... Yet modern people live in abject fear. They are afraid of strangers, of disease, of crime, of the environment ... they are convinced that the environment of the entire planet is being destroyed around them. Remarkable! Like the belief in witchcraft, it's an extraordinary delusion—a global fantasy worthy of the Middle Ages. Everything is going to hell, and we must all live in fear.

Although it would be a mistake to equate the views of the character of Dr. Hoffman with those of the author Crichton, both Crichton and Hoffman clearly share a profound concern about the deluding effects of fear, especially as propagated by the mass media. For example, John Kenner, clearly a likeable and level-headed character in the novel, at one point addresses the misleading function of fear:

Remember African killer bees? There was talk of them for years. They're here now, and apparently there's no problem. Remember Y2K? Everything you read back then said disaster was imminent. Went on for months. But in the end, it just wasn't true.

In *State of Fear*, Crichton does not advocate that readers should remove fear completely from society and media reports, as he sees fear as something inherent in the functioning of every society. What he does argue for is a greater awareness of how fear functions, especially through the media and the academic realms, in the hopes of a more informed and better educated public. At the end of the novel, in a section labeled "Author's Message," Crichton writes of respect for "the corrosive influence of bias, systematic distortions of thought, the power of rationalizations, the guises of self-interest, and the inevitability of unintended consequences." Though Crichton claims that modern society currently lives in a rather bleak state of perpetual and unfounded fears, he holds out hope of a better society through education, unbiased information and research, and the willingness to change.

## The Limits of Knowledge

Apart from the function of fear, perhaps the next most pervasive theme in the novel involves the limits of human knowledge. Crichton opens his "Author's Message" with the assertion that "[w]e know astonishingly little about every aspect of the environment, from its past history, to its present state, to how to conserve and protect it." In this single sentence, Crichton sums up much of the environmental debate that pervades the novel. Characters from John Kenner to Sanjong Thapa to Jennifer Haynes catalog the mixed





and contradictory findings of the past years of scientific research, and the assumptions about the environment held by the public and reported in the news. Although various "experts" claim to have various solutions to the environmental problems, phenomena such as global warming and scarcity of natural resources may not actually exist. Likewise, the track record of environmental preservation has been a dismal one, filled with blunder after blunder. In the end, Crichton advocates a renewed focus on improved research and caution, always taking into account modern society's very limited knowledge of the complexity of the environment. He writes:

We haven't the foggiest notion how to preserve what we term "wilderness," and we had better study it in the field and learn how to do so. I see no evidence that we are conducting such research in a humble, rational, and systematic way.

## Doubt

As a facet of both fear and the limits of knowledge, doubt plays a large role in the novel, beginning with Crichton himself, who doubts popularly-held world views on global warming. From his initial doubt and rejection of conventional science on the subject of ecology and global warming, he writes a novel in which several main characters express their own doubt about the same issues. The most notable doubter is Dr. Hoffman, who expresses his doubt over the "State of Fear" in which the world lives. His doubt over the dire state of the environment leads him to create a philosophy in which he determines that fear is the motivating factor in most political and ideological decisions: "social control is best managed through fear."

Crichton is not suggesting that readers abandon their beliefs in existing issues, or even change their stances on them. Doubt is actually a good thing when it comes to politics and policies. It is through doubt, he suggests, that individuals come to see the issues in a new light. After Evans's conversation with Dr. Hoffman, he too becomes skeptical of the idea of global warming. While he does not thoroughly reject it like Hoffman, he views it with a new skepticism.



# Style

## Point of view

*State of Fear* is written in the third person from the omniscient perspective, and except for dialogue, is told in the omniscient voice.

## Setting

*State of Fear* is a techno-thriller, and is thus set in the present, or perhaps slightly in the future. The author supports his suppositions and speculations with up-to-the-minute, legitimate scientific research, creating a futuristic ambiance.

## Language and Meaning

Crichton uses straightforward prose, neither eloquent nor overly colloquial. He relies on content more than nuances of language to tell his story, and in this is an excellent communicator. In a romantic novel, this style would come off rather bland, but it serves the science fiction and techno-thriller genres well, where the development of concepts trumps the development of characters. The only unusual language is some laborious - and largely unpronounceable - technical terms, sprinkled in for effect.

## Structure

*State of Fear* is divided into seven parts of unequal length. Each section is divided into many very small sub-sections, or *mini-chapters*, which are designated by a time line revealing day, clock time, and location (e.g., *SHEAR ZONE WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 5:02 P.M.*). This makes for a choppy read, but infuses a sense of urgency.

## Episodic Form

*State of Fear* consists of a number of short sections or episodes, often only a few pages in length. Episodes are scenes in a narrative that function independently, yet must be connected to other episodes in order to create the larger story. In structure they function similarly to episodes of a television program.

This style can present a challenge to the reader; though the sections proceed chronologically, they frequently jump from one location to the next. Thus, the reader is forced to piece together a series of initially disconnected narratives and characters. This technique contributes to the sense of several events happening at once, and adds suspense as the reader pieces together the different stories and threads. At times, the connections are obvious; at other times, they are very subtle, and the reader must use



his or her power of deduction, picking up on clues to put the large puzzle of the narrative completely together. For example, the characters of Jimmy and Marisa seem to disappear from the novel altogether after their brief appearances in the first pages of the story. However, they reappear in the middle of the novel, at first glance as random, unnamed characters in a cafe. By picking up on small clues such as physical descriptions and behaviors, however, a reader can discern that Jimmy and Marisa have returned and are trying to trap Morton in the same way that they fooled John Marshall at the beginning of the book.

## Humor

Another distinctive feature of Crichton's writing style in *State of Fear* is his use of subtle and, at times, dark humor. He uses humor to lighten the subject matter, which in some places can be heavy and dense with information. In his "Author's Message" Crichton writes, "we need more scientists and many fewer lawyers." In fact, throughout the novel Crichton makes a number of jibes at lawyers. For example, when Evans and Jones are riding in an SUV and Jones is feeling insecure about Evans's abilities in a dangerous situation, he reluctantly admits that his physical activities and hobbies are of no use in their situation: "I don't shoot guns ... I'm a lawyer, for Christ's sake."

In another, darker example of Crichton's humor, Ted Bradley, in the plane en route to the Solomon Islands, states: "I mean, all that talk about cannibalism. Everybody knows it is not true. I read a book by some professor. There never were any cannibals, anywhere in the world. It's all a big myth." After landing on the island and extolling the beauty and virtues of "village life," Bradley is eaten alive in a massive cannibalistic ceremony. Crichton's use of humor here juxtaposes, or compares, the rejection of a theory—in this case, cannibalism—and the theory's reality. In this way, he is perhaps poking fun at his own rejection of commonly held social beliefs.

## Suspense

Crichton's use of an episodic plot is just one way in which he builds suspense in *State of Fear*. Suspense is the rising tension and drama in a novel, which creates uncertainty in the reader as to what will happen next. Suspense is an integral part of many of Crichton's works, and is the primary tool for turning a book about global warming into a page-turning thriller.

For example, when Morton's Ferrari is found smashed in an accident, only a shred of his clothing is left. Without a body to confirm his death, readers may suspect that he is not dead at all. Authorities assume that he was swept away by the ocean. When his body is supposedly found and Evans must identify it, he struggles to find any physical characteristics that would definitively identify the corpse as Morton. Once again, Crichton builds the reader's suspense by leaving open the possibility of doubt. This thread of suspense lasts until the end of the novel, when Morton rescues Evans and Jones from the rebels in the Solomon Islands and reveals that he faked his own death.



Crichton often withholds information from the reader to create suspense. For instance, when Nat Damon meets with ELF/NERF leaders about leasing a submarine, he does not know their true identity. Though he is suspicious of their plans and their inability to give specific information about their need for a submarine, he does not speak up and assumes that his suspicion is unfounded. However, his questioning of the men raises doubt for the reader, and builds suspense as to who the men are and what their plans for the submarine could truly be. These answers can only be found by continuing to read the novel.

# Historical Context

## Political Climate

Crichton's novel takes place in the relatively short historical span of five months, from May through October of 2004. Although Crichton sets his novel in 2004, the most important historical event that concerns the novel occurred three years before with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. On Tuesday, September 11th, 2001, nineteen men who were operatives of the militant Islamic group al-Qaeda hijacked four American airliners. Two planes were crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. The third plane was crashed into the Pentagon, and the fourth crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Many commentators and historians have noted that the hijackings of September 11 mark the most lethal terrorist acts ever carried out on United States soil.

While there is minimal mention of the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, Crichton's novel clearly takes place in a very specific "post 9/11" historical and cultural environment. Central to the novel's action are descriptions of a complex network of data gathering agents and international intelligence agencies. For example, in Part 1, Akira Hitomi, the head of IDEC, informs John Kenner and Sanjong Thapa that "cellular traffic is accelerating. E-mail is heavily encrypted. STF rate is up. It is clear there is a project underway—global in scope, immensely complicated, extremely expensive." After September 11, the media reported extensively on how intelligence agencies gather data and assess the risk and threat of terrorist activities, often by picking up on increased cellular and electronic "chatter" exactly as described in the above passage from the book. This likewise equates the ELF/NERF group in the book with terrorists.

## The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is an amendment to an international treaty aimed at reducing emissions of the greenhouse gases that may contribute to global warming. The original treaty was drafted in 1992. The Kyoto Protocol came about in 1997 as an attempt to set specific goals and deadlines for achieving a reduction in greenhouse gases.

This agreement officially went into effect on February 16, 2005, with 141 countries having ratified its conditions. As of 2005, only a handful of countries had signed the protocol but not yet ratified it, the two largest being the United States and Australia. If a country does not ratify the protocol, it cannot be held accountable by other signatory nations. Since the United States is the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases, the international community considers it imperative that the country agree to the protocol's terms.

At the time the Kyoto Protocol went into effect, President George W. Bush made it clear that he would not ratify the amendment because he believed it would have a negative



impact on the United States economy. President Bush has also cited uncertainty regarding the science in support of global warming, undoubtedly referring to the same skeptics Crichton mentions in his footnotes and bibliography.

## Environmental Overview

The year 2004 was marked by significant and highly publicized natural disasters. Seventeen earthquakes with magnitudes of 7.0 or above on the Richter Scale produced varying degrees of devastation and destruction. Even more notably, the deadliest tsunami in recorded history occurred on December 26, 2004. Waves from the tsunami caused massive damage and loss of life in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, the Maldives, and along the east coast of Africa. As of 2005, many communities are struggling with rebuilding their homes and lives amid water and food shortages and slow government response.

*State of Fear* eerily brings to mind this catastrophic event as "eco-terrorists" attempt to artificially create a deadly and much-publicized tsunami that coincides with Nicholas Drake's conference on global warming.



## Critical Overview

Of all the novels that Crichton has published in his long career, none have met with as much controversy as *State of Fear*. A number of critics, both literary and environmental, attacked Crichton about the theories posited in his novel. Ronald Bailey, writing in *Reason*, calls it "*The Da Vinci Code* with real facts, violent storms, and a different faith altogether." Many reviews indicate that Crichton has a clear agenda in the novel. Chris Mooney writes in the *Skeptical Inquirer* that the book is "a novel in name only." Instead, he writes, it is a "thinly disguised political commentary, in which a wildly implausible plot ... serves as an excuse for a string of ... dialogues about climate science." In his review in the *New American*, Dennis Behreandt writes that the book is solely a vehicle for "Crichton's concerns about global warming alarmism." Despite this, he says, because of Crichton's popularity, "it will almost certainly lead a vast number of readers to question, finally, the lies and myths perpetuated by the global warming cartel."

Noted environmentalist and activist Bill McKibben, in "Stranger than Fiction," reflects a commonly held critical view of the novel. He notes that the novel is part cliché, part scientific treaty, "directing readers to journals like *Nature* and *The Lancet*, along with the same small set of studies the climate skeptics have been promoting for years." He calls Crichton's idea of a manmade tsunami "laughable." The novel was also condemned for its pulp structure and questionable science by critics in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and a host of environmental and science magazines. Despite the considerable negative press the novel received after publication, it was a bestseller and was popular among Crichton's fans.

# Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5





# Critical Essay #1

*In the following essay, pop-culture writer Wilson discusses Crichton's use of classic elements of espionage fiction in State of Fear.*

Michael Crichton's *State of Fear* has been described by the publisher as an "eco-thriller," implying a new breed of suspense fiction hitherto unknown to the reading public. In truth, Crichton's novel recycles many familiar (and clichéd) conventions from Cold War spy fiction and simply places them into a modern setting, despite the fact that many of the conventions lose their original intent in the transition.

The first chapter of the novel takes place in France. It is a short vignette that ends with the viewpoint character's death. Never again does the story return to France, and the other characters introduced in this first chapter make only brief, insignificant appearances elsewhere in the book. Crichton continues this trend in the next five chapters, which take place in five more widely scattered locations: Malaysia, England, Japan, Canada, and Iceland. None of these locations figures heavily in the rest of the book. This is a classic technique in espionage fiction, meant to show that the events of the story take place on a global scale and, therefore, have global significance. It also provides a sense of exoticism and worldliness often associated with popular spy fiction, most likely due to the mainstream success of Ian Fleming's James Bond books.

It is not until the sixth chapter that the main protagonist, Peter Evans, is introduced. The first five chapters give the reader a sense of the sweeping conspiracy that Evans and company will face in coming chapters. Conspiracy is, of course, a standard ingredient in espionage fiction. In the Cold War era, the fictional conspirators were often high-level members of foreign governments. This is the primary way in which Crichton abstains from convention, since his conspirators are scientists and environmentalists (though they are heavily involved in politics). At its heart, the conspiracy is much like countless other tales of spy fiction: the villains attempt to create global catastrophe for their own benefit. To stop this impending disaster, the protagonists must journey across the globe to places like the Solomon Islands and Antarctica—again recalling the romanticized popular view of Cold War espionage.

One of the most colorful (and absurd) genre conventions Crichton employs is the villains' use of unique methods of assassination. In the first chapter—and several more times throughout the book—Crichton's villains place a blue-ringed octopus on a victim and coax it into biting him or her. The toxin in the blue-ringed octopus's saliva causes paralysis, which can ultimately lead to cardiac arrest. (The deadly blue-ringed octopus also appears in the James Bond film *Octopussy*. Although the film is loosely based on several of Fleming's short stories, Crichton seems to be borrowing at least some of his genre elements from secondhand sources.) Unfortunately, death by octopus proves to be only mildly successful at best. Evans survives an attack, and two others are hospitalized with fates unknown.



Another unique assassination method attempted by the eco-terrorists involves targeting lightning at a specific source. This culminates in Sarah Jones, the lead female protagonist, being struck by lightning but surviving. While the idea of environmentalists using the natural world as a weapon is intriguing, the notion of undetectable assassination is an ill fit. In the context of political espionage, it makes sense to disguise a single murder so that it might go unsuspected. In *State of Fear*, at least three landlocked people are stung by a blue-ringed octopus in the Los Angeles area in the same week. This hardly seems an effective tactic for avoiding suspicion.

The literary use of a dying declaration—a revelatory message from someone just before death—has been common in mystery stories ever since Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's tales of Sherlock Holmes. In Cold War spy fiction, where the most valuable item in a story is often information, the use of dying declarations achieves a new significance. Crichton uses this technique frequently in *State of Fear*. After being attacked by villains, Margo Lane speaks of a "blue ring of death" before succumbing to complete paralysis. Millionaire George Morton utters a cryptic statement that is nevertheless rich in information ("All that matters is not remote from where the Buddha sits") just before his car is found demolished on a desolate mountain highway. The main problem with this technique as adopted by Crichton, is that the people making these declarations generally do not die. This leaves the reader wondering if perhaps there was not a more sensible way to convey the information.

Like the dying declaration, the use of coded messages goes back to the earliest mystery stories of the nineteenth century. Also like the dying declaration, the coded message becomes even more significant in the context of espionage. When trafficking in sensitive information, the true meaning of the information must be kept secret by being disguised in some way. The aforementioned cryptic message by George Morton, which sounds to most like the ramblings of an insane man, is meant to lead Evans to a secret location. In that location, Evans discovers yet another coded message composed of long strings of symbols, letters, and numbers. This code is immediately recognized by Professor John Kenner as a list of coordinates for six geographic locations. Later, Evans discovers aerial photographs that appear, at least to an untrained eye, coded. They are negatives of actual images, so that the ocean appears white as snow and clouds look like dark rock outcroppings. Crichton, knowing that this particular bit of visual trickery would lose its impact through mere description, embeds reproductions of the aerial images in his text. In two of the three instances above, however, the messages are coded only insofar as the reader must possess a certain level of available knowledge to understand them. In the same way, any message written in a foreign language is coded to people who cannot read the language. This dilutes the traditional notion of a secret code, which is meant to be truly inaccessible to all but the sender and the receiver.

The use of impersonation is a standard element in espionage fiction, to the point that it has become cliché in literature (although it is still encountered frequently in films and television shows). Crichton uses this technique when his characters visit Weddell Station in Antarctica. Unbeknownst to them, one of the station's researchers has been replaced with an impostor who aims to blow off a chunk of the Antarctic ice shelf. Crichton's use of this genre convention is a better fit than his use of most of the others;



still, one has to wonder if Crichton could have devised a way other than impersonation for his villains to go undetected. Assuming the eco-terrorists were aiming to keep their actions secret, an easily detected impersonation seems like a poor choice.

The familiar ploy of a staged death is also used by Crichton, though the justification seems shaky here as well. Millionaire George Morton appears to die in a car wreck early in the book, only to return in the final few chapters to help defeat the villains. As he told Evans, Morton's rationale for faking his own death was "to get me free ... and find out what [the villains] were doing." Before his "death," however, Morton appears to have no trouble avoiding both his lawyer and the villains for weeks at a time as he accompanies Kenner across the globe. In traditional espionage fiction, a staged death represents a chance at new life. It is used by those who *must* abandon their identities in order to survive—an agent whose cover has been blown, for instance, or a would-be defector seeking freedom. In *State of Fear*, staged death is merely a parlor game for a rich man who wishes to not be bothered for a while.

One of the defining elements of espionage fiction that Crichton avoids is implicit nationalism. By its very nature, spy fiction—especially that written during the Cold War—is based on the notion that spies and government officials for one country are good, while those of another country are bad. Since the novel mainly depicts a conflict between professional ideologies (politicized science vs. pure science), Crichton does not fall victim to nationalism. In fact, he seems to favor the notion of international cooperation in a manner seldom encountered in traditional espionage fiction. Despite his global idealism, all but one of the book's main characters are white Americans. The single foreigner, Kenner's assistant Sanjong Thapa, is less a character and more a mouthpiece for conveying scientific information.

The fictional elements discussed here are not representative of the finest examples of espionage fiction. Like many genre conventions, they are motifs encountered only occasionally in the body of literature. However, these conventions have captured the attention of mainstream readers and serve as low-level descriptors of work that can be distinctively identified as espionage fiction. Some of these genre conventions seem somewhat implausible, even within the context of the Cold War. In fact, taken out of the context of the Cold War, many of these elements do not even make sense. Assassins carrying around delicate octopuses as (not very) deadly weapons? Environmentalists wreaking havoc with the environment they seek to protect, just so they can say "I told you so" to the minority that doubts them? The result is machination without purpose—a replica weapon prop from a spy movie that looks the part but fires only blanks when the trigger is pulled.

**Source:** Greg Wilson, Critical Essay on *State of Fear*, in *Literary Newsmakers for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

## Critical Essay #2

*In the following excerpt, Stone argues that Crichton's State of Fear is much more than casual reading, and includes important messages about global warming and the environment.*

*State of Fear ... is not merely a good airport bookshop thriller, but also—and indeed more importantly—a tract conveying some serious messages for our media-driven times. To render the themes of that tract even clearer, Crichton includes ... an Author's Message so that the reader may know "where, exactly, the author stands on these issues". Space precludes its reproduction, but a few points from it may illustrate his broad conclusions:*

- "We know astonishingly little about every aspect of the environment ..."
- "Atmospheric carbon dioxide is increasing, and human activity is the probable cause". [This, I may interpolate, is probably the only statement about which the global warming zealots and their critics agree; and even then, note that penultimate word "probable". The question of whether an increasing level of carbon dioxide poses any threat whatsoever to mankind is of course an entirely separate matter.]
- "We are also in the midst of a natural warming trend that began about 1850, as we emerged from a 400 year cold spell ..."
- "Nobody knows how much of the present warming trend might be a natural phenomenon."
- "We have not the foggiest notion how to preserve what we term 'wilderness'..."
- "I am certain there is too much certainty in the world".

Let me note a good example of the kind of thing Crichton is getting at. Among the many reference works cited in the 21-page bibliography is Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), one of the most influential books to have been published in the 20th Century, and one which perfectly illustrates his point about the dangers of pursuing seemingly good environmental causes without thinking through the costs (in the broadest sense of that term) of doing so. In retrospect, it is now possible to say quite unequivocally that Carson's book has been responsible for killing more people than *Mein Kampf*. It is true that, unlike Adolf Hitler, Carson did not set out to kill people. Nevertheless, the road to the malarial Hell which was paved with her doubtless good intentions in demanding the banning of the use of D.D.T. (previously widely and effectively used for control of the malarial mosquito) has been just as deadly for the two million people—more than half of them children—who these days die from malaria each year in her name....

As one whose first venture into academia was an Honours degree in Mathematical Physics, I have always retained an interest in scientific debates even though it is over fifty years since I last laboured in that vineyard. The feature therefore of the global warming controversy which I have long considered most important is well summed up in the final component of those thirty-six additional pages of Crichton's book, namely his



Appendix entitled *Why Politicized Science is so Dangerous*. He is right. It is: and for that Appendix alone, *State of Fear* is worth reading.

**Source:** John Stone, "Michael Crichton on 'Global Warming'," in *National Observer*, Vol. 64, Autumn 2005, pp. 31-34.



## Critical Essay #3

*In the following excerpt, Sandalow suggests that Crichton's State of Fear is an accessible tool for readers and the public to learn about the possible effects of global warming, and could possibly have a broad impact on the public's understanding of the issue.*

How do people learn about global warming?

That—more than the merits of any scientific argument—is the most interesting question posed by Michael Crichton's *State of Fear*.

The plot of Crichton's 14th novel is notable mainly for its nuttiness—an MIT professor fights a well-funded network of eco-terrorists trying to kill thousands by creating spectacular "natural" disasters. But Crichton uses his book as a vehicle for making two substantive arguments. In light of Crichton's high profile and ability to command media attention, these arguments deserve scrutiny.

First, Crichton argues, the scientific evidence for global warming is weak. Crichton rejects many of the conclusions reached by the National Academy of Sciences and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—for example, he does not believe that global temperature increases in recent decades are most likely the result of human activities. In challenging the scientific consensus, Crichton rehashes points familiar to those who follow such issues. These points are unpersuasive, as explained below.

Second, Crichton argues that concern about global warming is best understood as a fad. In particular, he argues that many people concerned about global warming follow a herd mentality, failing critically to examine the data. Crichton is especially harsh in his portrayal of other members of the Hollywood elite, though his critique extends more broadly to the news media, intelligentsia and general public. This argument is more interesting and provocative, though ultimately unpersuasive as well.



## Critical Essay #4

Crichton makes several attempts to cast doubt on scientific evidence regarding global warming. First, he highlights the "urban heat island effect." Crichton explains that cities are often warmer than the surrounding countryside and implies that observed temperature increases during the past century are the result of urban growth, not rising greenhouse gas concentrations.

This issue has been examined extensively in the peer-reviewed scientific literature and dismissed by the vast majority of earth scientists as an inadequate explanation of observed temperature rise. Ocean temperatures have climbed steadily during the past century, for example—yet this data is not affected by "urban heat islands." Most land glaciers around the world are melting, far away from urban centers. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, using only peer-reviewed data, concluded that urban heat islands caused "at most" 0.05°C of the increase in global average temperatures during the period 1900–1990—roughly one-tenth of the increase during this period. In contrast, as one source reports, "there are no known scientific peer-reviewed papers" to support the view that "the heat island effect accounts for much or nearly all warming recorded by land-based thermometers."

Second, Crichton argues that global temperature declines from 1940–1970 disprove, or at least cast doubt on, scientific conclusions with respect to global warming. Since concentrations of greenhouse gases were rising during this period, says Crichton, the fact that global temperatures were falling calls into question the link between greenhouse gas concentrations and temperatures.

Crichton is correct that average temperatures declined, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, from 1940–1970. Temperature is the result of many factors, including the warming effects of greenhouse gases, the cooling effects of volcanic eruptions, changes in solar radiation and more. (Think of a game of tug-of-war, in which the number of players on each team changes frequently.) The fall in Northern Hemisphere temperatures from 1940–1970 reflects the relative weight of cooling factors during that period, not the absence of a warming effect from man-made greenhouse gases.

Should we at least be encouraged, recalling the decades from 1940–1970 in the hope that cooling factors will outweigh greenhouse warming in the decades ahead? Hardly. Greenhouse gas concentrations are now well outside levels previously experienced in human history and climbing sharply. Unless we change course, the relatively minor warming caused by man-made greenhouse gases in the last century will be dwarfed by much greater warming from such gases in the next century. There is no basis for believing that cooling factors such as those that dominated the temperature record from 1940–1970 will be sufficient to counteract greenhouse warming in the decades ahead.

Third, Crichton offers graph after graph showing temperature declines during the past century in places such as Puenta Arenas (Chile), Greenville (South Carolina), Ann Arbor (Michigan), Syracuse (New York) and Navacerrada (Spain). But global warming is an



increase in global average temperatures. Nothing about specific local temperature declines is inconsistent with the conclusion that the planet as a whole has warmed during the past century, or that it will warm more in the next century if greenhouse gas concentrations continue to climb.

Crichton makes other arguments, but a point-by-point rebuttal is beyond the scope of this paper. (A thoughtful rebuttal of that kind can be found at [www.realclimate.org](http://www.realclimate.org).) Climate change science is a complex topic, not easily reduced to short summaries. But a useful contrast with Crichton's science-argument-within-an-action-novel is the sober prose of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. The opening paragraph of a 2001 National Academy report responding to a request from the Bush White House read:

Greenhouse gases are accumulating in Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise. Temperatures are, in fact, rising. The changes observed over the last several decades are likely mostly due to human activities, but we cannot rule out that some significant part of these changes is also a reflection of natural variability. Human-induced warming and associated sea level rises are expected to continue through the 21st century. Secondary effects are suggested by computer model simulations and basic physical reasoning. These include increases in rainfall rates and increased susceptibility of semi-arid regions to drought. The impacts of these changes will be critically dependent on the magnitude of the warming and the rate with which it occurs.

Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions, National Academies Press (2001).

Time will tell whether this report or Crichton's novel will have a greater impact on public understanding of global warming.





## Critical Essay #5

This raises the second, more interesting argument in Crichton's novel. Crichton argues that concern about global warming has become a fad embraced by media elites, entertainment moguls, the scientific establishment and general public. In Crichton's view, many assertions are accepted as fact without critical analysis by the vast majority of those who have views on this issue.

On the last point, fair enough. There are indeed fewer people who have sorted through the minutiae of climate change science than have opinions on the topic. In this regard, global warming is like Social Security reform, health care finance, the military budget and many other complex public policy issues. As Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky once wrote, "Most people don't think about most issues most of the time." When forming opinions on such matters, we all apply certain predispositions or instincts and rely on others whose judgment or expertise we trust.

Of course this observation applies as well to the economics of climate change. The perception is widespread in many circles that reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be ruinously expensive. How many of those who hold this view have subjected their opinions to critical analysis? Crichton never musters outrage on this topic.

Crichton's complaints are particularly striking in light of the highly successful efforts to provide policymakers and the public with analytically rigorous, non-political advice on climate science. Since 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has convened thousands of scientists, economists, engineers and other experts to review and distill the peer-reviewed literature on the science on global warming. The IPCC has produced three reports and is now at work on the fourth. In addition, the National Academy of Sciences has provided advice to the U.S. government on this topic, including the report cited above.

Crichton's view that the American media provides a steady drumbeat of scary news on global warming is especially hard to fathom. Solid data are scarce, but one 1996 analysis found that the rock star Madonna was mentioned roughly 80 times more often than global warming in the Lexis-Nexis database. Certainly one could watch the evening news for weeks on end without ever seeing a global warming story.

Furthermore, the print media's "on the one hand, on the other hand" convention tilts many global warming stories strongly toward Crichton's point of view. As Crichton would concede, the vast majority of the world's scientists believe that global warming is happening as a result of human activities and that the consequences of rising greenhouse gas emissions could be very serious. Still, many news stories on global warming include not just this mainstream view but also the "contrarian" views of a very small minority of climate change skeptics, giving roughly equal weight to each. As a result, public perceptions of the controversy surrounding these issues may be greatly exaggerated.



Crichton's most serious charge is that "open and frank discussion of the data, and of the issues, is being suppressed" in the scientific community. As "proof," he offers the assertion that many critics of global warming are retired professors no longer seeking grants. Whether there is any basis for these assertions is unclear, but if so Crichton should back up his claims with more than mere assertions in the appendix to an action novel.

David B Sandalow, "Michael Crichton and Global Warming," in *Brookings Institution*, January 28, 2005, pp. 1-4.



## Quotes

" Let us remember where we live, Kenner was saying. We live on the third planet from a medium-sized sun. Our planet is five billion years old, and it has been changing constantly all during that time. The Earth is now on its third atmosphere...

Our atmosphere is as violent as the land beneath it. At any moment there are one thousand five hundred electrical storms across the planet. Eleven lightning bolts strike the earth each second. A tornado tears across the surface every six hours. And every four days, a giant cyclonic storm, hundreds of miles in diameter, spins over the ocean and wreaks havoc on the land.

The nasty little apes that call themselves human beings can do nothing except run and hide. For these same apes to imagine they can stabilize this atmosphere is arrogant beyond belief. They can't control the climate.

The reality is, they run from the storms."

Part 7, pp. 562, 563 (Kenner)

"The Indians were expert observers of the natural world, so they realized that old-growth forests sucked. Those forests may look impressive, but they're dead landscape for game. So the Indians set fires, making sure the forests burned down periodically. They made sure there were only islands of old-growth forest in the midst of planes and meadows. The forests that the first Europeans saw were hardly primeval. They were *cultivated*...there was less old-growth forest than there is today. The Indians were realists. Today, its all romantic mythology."

Section 5, p. 406 (Jennifer)

""If there's anything worse than a limousine liberal, " Morton said, "It's a Gulfstream environmentalist.""

Section 1, p. 124 (Morton)

"The atmosphere is a bigger mystery than anyone will admit. Simple example: No one can say for sure if global warming will result in more clouds or fewer clouds."

Section 2, p. 187 (Kenner)

"Now you know how legitimate scientists feel when their integrity is impugned by slimy characterizations such as the one you just made. Sajong and I gave you a careful, peer-reviewed interpretation of the data. (*sic*) Made by several groups of scientists from several different countries. And your response was first to ignore it, and then to make an *ad hominem* attack. You didn't answer the data. You didn't provide counter evidence. You just smeared with innuendo."



Section 2, p. 196

"NERF is a law firm. I don't know if you realized that. It was started by lawyers, and is run by lawyers, But I now believe money is better spent on research than litigation. And that is why I am withdrawing my funding from NERF, and why I am - "

Section 1, p. 129 (George Morton)

"Is changing the world to suit one's purposes unnatural?"

Of course, it is changing nature.

Ever see a termite mound? A beaver dam? Those creatures change the environment dramatically, affecting many other creatures. Are they interfering with nature?

The world is not in danger from termite mounds.

Arguably it is. The total weight of termites exceeds the total weight of all humans in the world. A thousand times greater, in fact. Do you know how much methane termites produce? And methane is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide."

Part 6, pp. 482-483 (Kenner & Ann)

"...The answer is well known. The effect of Kyoto would be to reduce warming by .04 degrees Celsius by the year 2100; that's four one hundredths of a degree...even if we (the US) did sign it."

Part 6, p. 478

"The biggest cause of environmental destruction is poverty. Starving people can't worry about pollution. They worry about food. Half a billion people are starving in the world right now. More than half a billion without clean water."

Part 7, p. 564 (Morton)

# Adaptations

- *State of Fear* (2004) is available in unabridged audio on both cassette and CD through Harper Collins Audio. The novel is narrated by George Wilson.

## What Do I Read Next?

- Michael Crichton's first novel, *The Andromeda Strain* (1969), is a science fiction novel about a deadly encounter with extraterrestrial organisms.
- Crichton's *Congo* (1980) is a thriller that opens with the gruesome murders of eight American geologists on an expedition in the African jungle. A trained gorilla named Amy is enlisted to head a new expedition into the mysterious Congo.
- Crichton's novel *Prey* (2002) is an exciting science-fiction thriller involving nanotechnology and tiny machines that become self-aware.
- In *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing* (2004), John Houghton presents in a single volume a look at the science and controversy surrounding one of the most familiar and debated environmental phenomena of recent years.
- In *Meltdown: The Predictable Distortion of Global Warming by Scientists, Politicians, and the Media* (2004), Patrick Michaels expounds upon a central premise of Crichton's *State of Fear*: the necessity for science free from bias and distortion.



## Topics for Discussion

In the character of John Kenner, Crichton draws an analogy between the PLM, or Politico-Legal-Media Complex and its involvement with the environmental movement, with the Military Industrial Complex and the Cold War. According to him, what is the common purpose of these two social phenomena, and how do they relate to civil order? Can you identify other, similar examples in human history?

What does Kenner mean when he tells Ann that well-meaning but misinformed persons are a prescription for disaster? What are some of the examples cited in *State of Fear*? Can you think of similar examples in history that are not mentioned in the novel?

What was the motive for filing the Vanutu lawsuit when the attorneys knew from the beginning that it was not supported by real science, and would never go to court? Can you think of any examples in real life that might have been similarly motivated?

Does the novel *State of Fear* alter or shed new light on the theory of the global warming, or does it take a reactionary, defensive position? Given Crichton's international readership, how might the *State of Fear* affect global environmental perceptions?

- A fundamental concern in Crichton's novel *State of Fear* involves the question of whether or not global warming is indeed taking place at all. Conduct research in order to formulate your own personal position on global warming. Is it an actual phenomenon or merely a scientific theory lacking any solid evidence? Present a five-minute oral presentation outlining your position and your reasons for it.
- After the actual novel ends, Crichton includes a section entitled "Why Politicized Science is Dangerous." Why does he include this section at the end of the novel, and what specifically does Crichton cite as dangerous about "politicized science?" Write a two-page paper detailing the negative consequences that could result from scientific research tied to politics and politicians.
- Perhaps one of the most interesting and memorable of Crichton's characters in *State of Fear* is Dr. Norman Hoffman. One might easily find disagreement about whether or not Hoffman is a likeable character. Create a character sketch of Hoffman, listing all of his beliefs about fear and global warming. In a three-paragraph essay, try to answer the question of whether or not he is meant to be a likeable character.
- Two characters in *State of Fear* undergo significant ideological changes between the beginning of the novel and the end: both Peter Evans and George Morton shift perspectives by the novel's end. Discuss exactly how the two change. Do their transformations in any way reflect your experience as a reader encountering the novel from beginning to end? Write a one-page essay examining both the characters' changes and your own.



## Further Study

Abbey, Edward, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2000.

This classic novel from environmental writer Edward Abbey presents a highly comic and entertaining story of a rag-tag group of environmental crusaders. The novel helped spawn a movement of disruptive eco-pranksters around the world.

Carson, Rachel, *Silent Spring*, Mariner Books, 2002.

Carson's book represents a landmark in writing about the environment. Perhaps no single book has been as influential and widely read in terms of environmental writing as *Silent Spring*, which first appeared in 1962.

Crichton, Michael, *Adventures*, Harper Collins, 2002.

In this autobiography, Crichton traces significant episodes in his development as a writer and thinker. Crichton describes his numerous adventures and experiences, including his days spent in Harvard Medical School and his extensive travels which have taken him all over the world.

Foreman, Dave, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, Three Rivers Press, 1993.

In this book, Foreman, founder of the controversial environmentalist group EarthFirst!, offers entertaining descriptions of some of the groups more extreme methods and offers Foreman's own views on the need to conserve and preserve the natural world.





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Behreandt, Dennis, "Facing Our Fears," in the *New American*, Vol. 21, No. 7, pp. 23-25.

Crichton, Michael, *State of Fear*, Harper Collins, 2004.

Leggett, Jeremy, "Dangerous Fiction," in *New Scientist*, Vol. 185, No. 2489, 2005, pp. 50-53.

McKibben, Bill, "Stranger Than Fiction," in *Mother Jones*, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 38.

Mooney, Chris, "Bad Science, Bad Fiction, and an Agenda," in *Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 53-55.



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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently



studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

### Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

### How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

### Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

### Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“Night.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

### We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: [ForStudentsEditors@gale.com](mailto:ForStudentsEditors@gale.com). Or write to the editor at:

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