

Vixen 03 Study Guide

Vixen 03 by Clive Cussler

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Plot Summary

Vixen 03 by Clive Cussler is the third novel in the collection of Dirk Pitt novels. Vixen 03 is a military transport plane that disappeared more than thirty years ago. Pitt stumbles across the mystery of Vixen 03 while weekending with his lover, Congresswoman Loren Smith. After Pitt finds Vixen 03 in a man-made lake, he learns that Vixen 03 carried a top secret cargo that has the power to wipe out entire cities and leave the cities uninhabitable for hundreds of years. As Pitt scrambles to locate the entire cargo, he finds himself in a fight to save Washington, D.C. from South African radicals. Vixen 03 is Dirk Pitt at his most exciting, taking the reader on a ride they hope will never end.

Dirk Pitt is spending a weekend with Congresswoman Loren Smith at her family cabin in Colorado. Pitt goes into the garage of the cabin to find some fishing gear while Loren answers correspondence. Pitt finds the air tank and nose gear to an airplane that set him off on a hunt for the plane to which they belong. Pitt is able to establish through an investigator at the FAA that the nose gear belongs to a Stratocruiser, a large plane built by Boeing and used both in the military and as a passenger plane. This particular Stratocruiser is traced to a military plane. Pitt begins scouring the countryside, hoping to find the rest of the plane. When he does, Pitt not only finds the wreckage, but the body of a murder victim and another mystery.

Pitt wants to salvage the plane, which he now knows was called Vixen 03 on her final flight but cannot get government approval. Pitt is disappointed but is now focused on other things. However, when Pitt learns the identity of the officer who authorized the flight, he decides to pay him a visit. This officer informs Pitt that Vixen 03 was transporting a weapon that could potentially wipe out an entire city and leave it uninhabitable for hundreds of years. Pitt is urged to salvage the plane and destroy its cargo immediately.

At the same time there is a power struggle going on in South Africa between the white government and the black army of the AAR. The defense minister is desperately searching for a military strategy to give him a leg up on the AAR. The defense minister has stumbled across a strategy called Operation Wild Rose, which he shows to a retired Naval commander to learn if it could work. The commander tells him that it is near impossible. However, the Naval commander, Patrick Fawkes, changes his mind when he learns that the AAR has murdered Fawkes' entire family.

Pitt and his crew salvage Vixen 03 only to find the body Pitt saw in the cargo area has disappeared and eight of the bombs are gone. Pitt reviews the evidence and realizes that the kind neighbors to whom he went for information and to use the phone are the only people who knew about the plane salvage in time to move the body. Pitt confronts this elderly couple and learns that they were involved in the salvage of Vixen 03 with Loren Smith's father long before Pitt became aware of its existence. The neighbors began selling the bombs for several thousand dollars and decided they did not want to share the wealth with Loren's father. The couple killed Loren's father and hid his body in Vixen 03 until they learned Pitt had found the wreck.



Pitt begins tracking down the sold bombs. Four are still in storage at the weapons dealer the neighbors sold it to, but four were sold by mistake. Pitt tracks down two of these and recovers them, but learns the other two were sold to the AAR. At that moment, Patrick Fawkes is preparing to bombard Washington, D.C. with sixteen-inch guns, including the two bombs taken from Vixen 03. Pitt manages to sneak aboard Fawkes's ship and disarms one bomb. At the same time, Pitt convinces Fawkes that the other bomb must be located and disarmed. However, before they can find the last bomb, Fawkes and Pitt are attacked by a South African spy. Pitt is injured and thrown from the ship, and the bomb is accidentally released over Washington, D.C. Pitt's friends manage to snag the bomb onto their helicopter with its parachute and fly it over the ocean where Pitt releases it into the water below.



Oblivion

Oblivion Summary

Dirk Pitt is a retired USAF pilot who works for an agency known as NUMA. Pitt spends a great deal of his time searching out old shipwrecks. In fact, when this novel opens Pitt has just returned from raising the Titanic off the ocean bottom.

Colorado, January 1954. Major Vylander is preparing his aircraft for takeoff. Vylander has some reservations about this flight. The cargo Vylander is to fly is so heavy, he doubts whether his aircraft can make it into the air. Vylander is also concerned about the secretive nature of the cargo. Vylander does not like flying with the unknown. However, Vylander is a military officer and follows his order. Vylander and his crew begin their takeoff. The plane is heavy and resists takeoff, but finally, just before the end of the runway, the plane lifts off the ground. Everything appears to be fine, so Vylander takes a walk into the cargo bay to look at the cargo and make sure it is secure. When Vylander looks over the stainless steel canisters, he finds a small plate that has fallen off of one of the canisters. Vylander is shocked by what it says. However, before Vylander can fully comprehend his situation, the plane begins to fill with smoke. Vylander returns to the cockpit where he discovers that one of the engines has thrown a propeller. Vylander searches for a place to put the plane down, choosing what appears to be a valley in the mountains below him. However, it turns out it was not a valley, and after a perfect landing, the plane disappears.

Admiral Walter Bass heads up the search for Vixen 03, concentrating most of the search over the Pacific Ocean. No trace is ever found. Bass is frightened about what will happen if someone other than the military should find Vixen 03 and her cargo but knows there is nothing more to be done. The case is closed and all evidence of Vixen 03's cargo destroyed.

Oblivion Analysis

This section is a prologue to the entire book that presents the reader with the crash of Vixen 03. Because of the plane's name, the reader knows this crash is going to be important to the development of the plot, but it is not clear as to why at this point. Also presented in this chapter is the name of the man who authorized the flight, Admiral Walter Bass, suggesting he, too, will play a part in the development of the plot. Finally, this chapter introduces the cargo on board Vixen 03. This cargo is exceedingly heavy, top secret, and consists of something that causes the pilot some concern. All of this combines to alert the reader to the idea that this cargo could pose a danger, but to whom or why is not clear.



Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapters 1-5

Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapters 1-5 Summary

Dirk Pitt is spending the weekend in Colorado with his lover, Congresswoman Loren Smith. Pitt and Loren met at a party in Washington, D.C., after which Pitt took Loren on an uncharacteristically fast and dangerous ride in a hydrofoil racing boat. Now they spend the morning in bed. After lunch, Loren suggests Pitt go fishing while she takes care of some correspondence that has piled up on her desk. Pitt goes into the garage to find the fishing gear and instead stumbles across an aircraft oxygen tank and the nose gear to a large aircraft. Curious, Pitt decides to go speak to the neighbors rather than go fishing. The neighbors, Lee and Maxine Rafferty, have lived in the area since Lee retired from the Navy as a deep sea diver. Over lunch, Maxine and Lee tell Pitt that no aircraft has crashed in the area in many years and nothing large enough to match the nose gear Pitt found. They also discuss Loren's father, an amateur inventor and retired demolitions expert. Loren's father died three years ago in what Lee tells Pitt was an explosion possibly related to one of his inventions.

Pitt is bothered by the nose gear and oxygen tank because they were not removed from the plane with tools, but rather appear to have broken off due to stress and/or rust. Pitt is so bothered that he decides to take the artifacts into Denver and show them to an FAA investigator. The investigator, Harvey Dolan, cannot tell Pitt more than that the nose gear came from a large aircraft. However, he takes a picture and shows it to a colleague who is more knowledgeable about the different types of aircraft, both past and present. This colleague tells Pitt the nose gear came from a Stratocruiser, a large plane that is manufactured by Boeing and used both in the military and as passenger planes for commercial airlines. With this information, Dolan agrees to contact Boeing and find out if they can trace the serial number to a particular aircraft. While Dolan does this, Pitt charts a helicopter and begins scouring the countryside for evidence of a plane crash. After one such day, Loren tells Pitt that Dolan sent a forest ranger to tell him he has news. Pitt goes to the Rafferty's to borrow their phone to call Dolan. Dolan tells Pitt the plane that the nose gear came from was manufactured for the military. Dolan tells Pitt he has already contacted his military equivalent and Pitt should hear from a Colonel Steiger soon.

Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapters 1-5 Analysis

Dirk Pitt and Loren Smith are introduced in this chapter. Loren and Pitt appear to have a strong sexual relationship that is based more on entertainment value than commitment, as exemplified by Pitt's teasing of Loren, encouraging her to find a man who can take better care of her than Pitt can. While this couple is enjoying some time away from the stress of both their jobs, Pitt finds some interesting artifacts in Loren's garage. The cabin where they are staying belonged to Loren's father who passed away three years



before. Pitt assumes Loren's father found the artifacts somewhere in the area and is curious as to what they came from.

Pitt goes to speak to the neighbors to find out where the plane might have crashed. This introduces the Rafertys, an elderly couple who have retired in the mountains after Lee left his career as a deep sea diver for the Navy. They have little information for Pitt. However, the Rafertys do bring up Loren's father's death and talk about how he was killed in an explosion. Lee, however, insists that he does not believe Loren's father's death was as simple as the local police believe, suggesting to the reader that the death of Loren's father will become an issue as the plot continues to develop.

Pitt learns that the plane artifacts he found belong to a Stratocruiser, a large plane that is used both as a passenger plane and a cargo plane for the military. Pitt also learns that this specific plane was a military plane. Of importance for the reader to note at this point is that when Pitt learned that the plane was a military craft, he was in the home of Loren's neighbors, Maxine and Lee Raferty.



Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapters 6-10

Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapters 6-10 Summary

Loren has to return to Washington, D.C., but Pitt decides to stay behind and continue looking for the plane crash. A few days after Loren leaves, Colonel Abe Steiger arrives at the cabin. Steiger is on his way through Colorado to a speech he is scheduled to give in Illinois, so he thought he would stop by and see what Pitt has found. Pitt invites Steiger to stay with him. The following day, Pitt and Steiger go their own ways. Pitt searches a nearby valley while Steiger pans for gold at Table Lake. Pitt joins Steiger when his search fails to yield anything. At the lake, however, Pitt realizes he has overlooked the fact that the plane could be in the lake. Pitt calls his friend Al Giordino who brings with him some video equipment that will help them search the lake. Pitt, Giordino, and Steiger spend most of the day on the lake, searching the lake bottom with a special camera, but do not find anything. However, after speaking to a local fisherman, Pitt insists on trying another location. Finally they discover the plane on the video camera. The next day, Pitt dives to the wreck and finds the entire crew still strapped in their seats. Pitt takes the flight plan and a small metal plaque he found next to the pilot.

On his way out of the plane, Pitt sees another body in the cargo area. Pitt stops to take a look but becomes so cold from the freezing water he is forced to surface. However, Pitt manages to surface with the flight plan and the metal plate. Pitt, Giordino, and Steiger take this evidence back to Loren's cabin where they dry out the paper and attempt to read it. Most of the ink has washed away, but they are able to read the name of the pilot, Vylander, the code name of the flight, Vixen 03, and part of the name of the officer who authorized the flight. Even with all this evidence, however, Steiger continues to wonder how Vixen 03 ended up in Colorado. Before arriving at the cabin, Steiger researched the flight and discovered that it was scheduled to fly from California to Hawaii. Not only this, but the flight was not heavily investigated as it should have been if it had gone so clearly off course. Pitt also discusses the possibility that the fifth body he found on the plane is a murder victim placed there by someone who found the plane before them. Pitt believes the body belongs to Loren's father. Finally, Giordino has cleaned up the metal plate and discovered that it is etched with the symbol for radioactivity.

Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Pitt continues his search for the airplane that belongs to the artifacts he found in Loren's garage despite the fact that she has gone home. This shows Pitt's tenaciousness. Pitt is joined in his search by the military equivalent to a FAA investigator, Abe Steiger. Steiger does not believe Pitt will find the plane in Colorado because the flight in question disappeared over the Pacific Ocean, according to military records. However, Pitt is able

to prove Steiger wrong when it occurs to him to look in the lake. Pitt calls in his friend, Al Giordino and they are able to find the plane in Table Lake.

Pitt finds a fifth body in the plane that he did not expect to find. Pitt studies this body and discovers that it is different from the other four belonging to the crew. Pitt thinks it is possible that the fifth body is the result of a murder, suggesting that someone else has found the plane. This suggests to the reader that not only is there going to be an investigation into the plane itself based on Steiger's insistence that it should not be in Colorado, but also into the murder of the man found on the plane. Pitt believes this man is Loren's father, the owner of the artifacts found in the garage. This suggests that not only did Loren's father find the plane first, but that he had partners who did not want his involvement any longer.



Part 2, Operation Wild Rose: Chapters 11-25

Part 2, Operation Wild Rose: Chapters 11-25 Summary

A young AAR soldier is running reconnaissance on the Fawkes' farm under orders from his supervisors within the AAR. While doing this reconnaissance, the soldier sees someone else in AAR uniform also watching the farm. At the same time, the patriarch of the Fawkes family, Patrick Fawkes, has been called away to visit with the South African defense minister, Peiter De Vaal to consult on a military operation. Fawkes is an Aberdeen sea captain who came to Natal with his family after he retired. On the way to meet with the defense minister, Fawkes is delayed when a couple of black teenagers attempt to run him off the road. Fawkes is forced to kill these young men. When Fawkes meets with De Vaal, he reads the military strategy De Vaal is interested in, Operation Wild Rose, and announces it impossible to carry out. De Vaal agrees and has his assistant put the file away.

While Fawkes is gone, his farm is attacked by soldiers dressed in AAR attire. Everyone is killed and the buildings are burned. However, not a single soldier is caught, even though the constable and his men arrive within thirteen minutes. The young AAR soldier is shot as he leaves to return to his headquarters, but survives long enough to tell Hiram Lusana, the founder and leader of AAR, everything he saw. Lusana is shocked by this attack because he did not order it, and a meeting with his military leaders assures him that they had nothing to do with it. The constable believes the AAR did commit the crime, however, and tells Patrick Fawkes this. The defense minister, too, believes the AAR is behind this crime even though one of his advisors questions this fact. After burying his family, Fawkes goes to see the defense minister again and tells him that he wants to lead Operation Wild Rose for him. It is the best way Fawkes can get back at the AAR.

An American congressman comes to meet with Lusana to discuss obtaining government funding for the AAR. This congressman, Frederick Daggat, does not believe Lusana is involved in the AAR for purely altruistic reasons and proves this to Lusana's lover by asking Lusana to give him the lover in exchange for his help. Lusana does so without hesitation. At the same time, one of Lusana's officers, Major Machita, is approached by his informant who gives him a sample of a military strategy he says the defense minister plans to use called Operation Wild Rose. The informant, Emma, offers to give Machita the rest of the strategy if AAR will pay two million dollars for it. Lusana's second in command, Jumana, is not happy about the information or the amount of money it will cost to get the whole strategy. Jumana advises Lusana to do nothing. However, Lusana wants the information, so he tells Machita to arrange a meeting. However, Lusana wants Machita to kill Emma rather than hand over the money. At Chesapeake Bay, Fawkes goes to a salvage yard where he takes possession of a ship in order to begin Operation Wild Rose.



Part 2, Operation Wild Rose: Chapters 11-25 Analysis

This set of chapters takes the reader from Colorado to South Africa where an unofficial war is being waged between the white government and the black insurgents, specifically the AAR. Touching on the theme of racial advancement, the AAR wants to replace the racially discriminatory white government with blacks. The AAR is different from other insurgents in that they are careful about the targets they choose, never harming blacks. Therefore, when the Fawkes farm is attacked, it is immediately clear to some that the AAR could not have done it because of the murders of the Fawkes' workers. However, the attack was carried out by people wearing AAR uniforms and they behaved much the same as the AAR in all other aspects of the attack, allowing many of the whites and some blacks to believe the AAR is behind the murders. This leads Patrick Fawkes, a retired Aberdeen sea captain, to seek revenge by agreeing to participate in a military strategy that could help bring the AAR down. The reader does not know at this point what all Operation Wild Rose includes except that it involves some sort of water mission due to the fact that Fawkes is a sea captain and he takes possession of a boat.

Many characters are introduced in this section. Besides Fawkes, the most important characters introduced in these chapters are Lusana, Daggat, and the defense minister, Peiter De Vaal. Hiram Lusana is American but is the leader of the AAR, organizing African blacks in the hopes of creating a black government in Africa rather than the oppressive white government that has ruled for many generations. Lusana is an important character because of his position as the leader of the AAR as well as the fact that Fawkes, who is currently planning a highly-secret military operation in America, blames him for the deaths of his family. Perhaps this relationship suggests some sort of terrorist act on American soil. Daggat is an American congressman who has pledged to help Lusana obtain financial aid from the American government. Finally, the defense minister is Lusana's direct enemy and the driving force behind Operation Wild Rose. One last character who is introduced in these chapters is Emma. Emma is an informant to the AAR who provides them with information on Operation Wild Rose. Emma is important not only for the information he sells, but also because he will appear again in the novel as the plot continues to develop.



Part 3, Salvage: Chapters 26-32

Part 3, Salvage: Chapters 26-32 Summary

Steiger is called to the Pentagon two months after submitting his report on the discovery of Vixen 03. Steiger is questioned closely about the discovery and then is told that he cannot salvage Vixen 03, not even for the recovery of the bodies. Steiger is disappointed, as is Pitt, but they both feel there is little they can do. The President is aware of the discovery of Vixen 03, and it is under his orders that the Pentagon puts a lid on it because President Eisenhower went to a lot of trouble to cover it up, so they feel they must follow suit. When Steiger and Pitt talk, Pitt promises to return to Colorado as soon as he can to recover one of the stainless steel canisters in hopes it will reignite interest in Vixen 03. In the meantime, Pitt is scheduled to go to Georgia to recover a Civil War era ship. That night, Pitt spends some time with Loren Smith. Loren tells Pitt that the White House press secretary, Phil Sawyer, is on the verge of proposing. Pitt wishes her happiness but refuses to pledge any sort of commitment. At the same time, Pitt does not tell Loren about the possibility that he has found her father's body.

Machita arrives at an amusement park where he is to meet Emma on a tunnel ride. Emma joins Machita as the boat begins to enter the tunnel. Emma gives Machita an envelope with Operation Wild Rose in it. Machita is nervous; therefore, he only glances at the papers before handing the money to Emma. Machita then attempts to stab Emma in the eye with an ice pick, but is distracted by what he believes to be a mechanical doll within the ride and misses. The mechanical doll turns out to be a real person who attacks Machita. Machita fights off the monster, but Emma is able to get away with the money. Later, Machita discovers that Emma did not give him Operation Wild Rose. Lusana is upset, not because of the money but because of his concern about the feasibility of Operation Wild Rose. Lusana does not have time to argue, however, as he is due to leave for the United States soon. Lusana chooses to leave Jumana in charge while he is gone, something that Machita believes is a mistake.

Loren receives a visit in her office from Congressman Daggat. Daggat wants Loren's support when Lusana appears before their committee to ask for financial aid. Loren refuses based on Lusana's criminal history in the United States. Daggat complains to Felicia about Loren's refusal. Felicia tells Daggat that she and Loren were schoolmates and are still friends. Daggat comes up with a scheme to force Loren to help get Lusana the financial aid he needs. At the same time, Pitt is overseeing the raising of Chenago, a Civil War ship. While going over the procedures with his crew, Pitt gets a phone call informing him that the officer who authorized Vixen 03's final flight was not a USAF general, but a Naval admiral who is still alive. Pitt decides to go visit this admiral. Admiral Walter Bass owns a country inn south of Lexington, Virginia. Pitt flies there and takes a room, meeting Bass' lover upon his arrival. Pitt speaks with Bass, telling him that he found Vixen 03. After checking Pitt out, Bass tells Pitt that Vixen 03 was carrying cargo that contains bombs laced with the Doomsday organism.



Part 3, Salvage: Chapters 26-32 Analysis

The President has ordered Vixen 03 to be squashed based on the fact that there is evidence that Eisenhower did the same. The reader finds this interesting as it seems to imply that there is something about Vixen 03 that could be dangerous either to humankind or to certain careers. It leaves the reader wondering what will happen should someone else decide to salvage the plane. Steiger still wants to recover the plane so asks Pitt to go back and get one of the canisters so maybe its contents can convince someone to salvage the entire plane. Pitt wants to but has to go back to work. While working, though, Pitt learns the name of the man who authorized the flight, possibly the only person still alive who knows the details about Vixen 03. Pitt goes to see him and learns that the plane was carrying the Doomsday organism, reinforcing what the reader has suspected all along. The discovery of this plane by the wrong people could mean mass deaths, adding tension to the plot.

At the same time, Machita meets with Emma to retrieve the plans to Operation Wild Rose but is unsuccessful. At the same time, Machita is unsuccessful in killing Emma, causing a rift between him and Jumana, Lusana's second in command. Lusana has to go to the United States to ask for funding, so he leaves Jumana in charge. Machita is concerned that this could mean trouble for the AAR, leaving the reader curious if his concern is career motivated or if Jumana could possibly cause trouble for the AAR. If so, the reader also wonder what impact this could have on the overall plot. At the same time, Daggat launches a scheme to blackmail Loren in order to force her to vote with him when Lusana makes his plea for funding. This foreshadows trouble for Loren, and by association, Pitt.



Part 3, Salvage: Chapters 33-41

Part 3, Salvage: Chapters 33-41 Summary

Bass tells Pitt that he was a munitions expert in the Navy and in the fifties was assigned to oversee the development of a biological weapon. Experiments were carried out on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific called Rongelo. Vixen 03 was loaded with bombs that contained the biological weapon. After Vixen 03 disappeared, it was discovered that the biological agent continued to inhabit the island and that it would not be uninhabitable for at least three hundred years. This made the biological weapon, or Quick Death, too dangerous to use and it was destroyed. Bass now urges Pitt to remove the weapons from Vixen 03 and dispose of them. Pitt arranges a meeting with his boss at NUMA as well as Giordino and Steiger. At this meeting, Bass again tells his story and explains that the only thing that can kill the organism is water. Bass wants Quick Death disposed of into the ocean, but he does not want the government to know about it out of fear they will want to keep it for educational purposes. Sandecker agrees. At the same time, Pitt tells them about the suspected murder of Loren Smith's father, causing Bass some stress over the idea that someone else has found the wreckage.

At the same time, Fawkes orders many of the guns and the bulkheads removed from his ship in order to lower its weight and raise the water line. A group of blacks are on their way to Fawkes, receiving training in transit to help them learn how to run Fawkes' ship. Lusana, meanwhile, arrives in the United States without going through the normal channels because he is concerned that his life is in danger. Lusana goes directly to Felicia where he finds her with Daggat. Shortly thereafter, Felicia has dinner with Loren. As women tend to do, they discuss their lovers. Loren tells Felicia how she is dating both Phil Sawyer and Dirk Pitt. Felicia gives Loren keys to an apartment she is not using in order to give her a private place to meet Pitt. Later, Daggat has a conversation with Dale Jarvis, director of the National Security Agency, about Lusana's illegal entry into the country as well as what Lusana told him about Operation Wild Rose. Jarvis goes out on his own to look into it.

Pitt and Loren spend a night together in Felicia's apartment before Pitt leaves for Colorado. That same night, Daggat gets a call from a photographer who he hired to photograph Pitt and Loren. Daggat picks up the photos but refuses to pay the photographer the full prize, angering him. Later, when Lusana appears before their committee, Daggat shows Loren the photos to encourage her to drop her objection to Lusana's appearance. At the same time, Jarvis gets a copy of Operation Wild Rose that was purchased by one of his employees from an informant called Emma. Jarvis reads the report and then orders a check on the whereabouts of all battleships still functioning. All battleships are accounted for, except the Iowa, which has been sold for salvage. At the same time, Fawkes is spending time on the river near Chesapeake Bay observing the traffic. Pitt and his team arrive in Colorado and begin the salvage of Vixen 03. When the plane is removed from the water, Pitt and Bass board it to check out the cargo. The first thing they notice is that the fifth body has disappeared. Bass, who has been having



symptoms of a heart attack, collapses. Before they can take him to the hospital, Bass tells Pitt that eight of the canisters are missing.

Part 3, Salvage: Chapters 33-41 Analysis

Bass tells Pitt about Quick Death. This organism seems so deadly that the reader wonders how Pitt will be able to save the world from it. However, Pitt is the hero, so the reader has faith, especially after learning that water will kill it. It seems too simplistic, but it is good news. Now Pitt has to bring the bombs to the surface without letting anyone in the government find out because they could confiscate the bombs to learn from them. This could prove dangerous, especially if the organism is made again and allowed to be released. It could mean the annihilation of the entire world. Pitt convinces his boss to do as Bass asks, raising the plane without informing the government. However, when they do, they discover that not only is the body of Loren's father now missing, but so are eight of the weapons. This can only mean that someone else has definitely learned of the location of the ship and has stolen the weapons for an unknown reason. Pitt has his work cut out for him now.

At the same time, Pitt and Loren are photographed in a compromising position, allowing Daggat to blackmail Loren, showing his darker side as well as his determination to do what he believes is advancing his race, touching on a theme of the novel. Loren is now in a position where she feels she must support the offer of funds to the AAR, even though she does not believe they qualify for the aid and she does not like Lusana's criminal history. Also happening in these chapters, the director of the National Security Agency has taken an interest in Operation Wild Rose, quickly searching for the location of all battleships after reading the plans for the operation, telling the reader that the strategy includes the use of battleships. This opens only a few options, including the terrorist motivated bombing of a United States city using the sixteen inch guns on a battleship. At the same time, Fawkes is having all the metal on his new boat replaced with wood in order to raise her water line. This suggests to the reader that Fawkes' ship is rather large, perhaps a battleship, and Fawkes plans to sail it where the water is fairly shallow, perhaps a bay or river. This makes the reader wonder what Pitt's story line has to do with Fawkes' activities and causes tension as the reader concludes that there can only be one connection between the two story lines.



Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapters 42-46

Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapters 42-46 Summary

Pitt calls Sandecker and tells him about the missing weapons. Sandecker wants to go to the government, but Pitt urges him to wait. Pitt suddenly has an idea and asks Sandecker for several days before Sandecker goes to the government. Pitt then goes to visit the Rafertys. Pitt has come to the conclusion that only the Rafertys could have killed Loren's father, put his body in the plane, and then removed the body. Lee Raferty was a deep sea diver, meaning he could easily have dived on the plane without suffering the same effects Pitt suffered on his first dive. Maxine Raferty was also present when Pitt spoke with the FAA investigator who identified Vixen 03 for him. When Pitt presents his theory to Lee, the man admits to killing Loren's father in order to reap the benefits of Vixen 03's cargo alone. Lee and Maxine sold the weapons to an arms dealer for several thousand dollars each. As Lee continues to talk, Maxine pulls a gun on Pitt. There is a fight and both Rafertys end up dead, while Giordino is placed in the hospital with a gunshot wound to the thigh.

In South Africa, Jumana has ordered a raid on a local village, killing everyone including women and children because the men of the village work for the white government. Machita protests that this goes against what the AAR stands for. Jumana has Machita arrested. Lusana learns about the raid from a newspaper article while still in Washington, D.C. Daggat urges Lusana to return to South Africa to stop Jumana from further damaging their cause. The following day, the defense minister of South Africa orders a raid on the AAR camp. Everyone is killed; the body count topping two thousand. Machita, however, survives because of the location of his cell, and he is able to climb out of the rubble.

Pitt travels to the office of Phalanx Arms Corporation and speaks to the man to whom Lee Raferty sold the eight weapons from Vixen 03. Orville Mapes takes Pitt to see the weapons, but they discover four of the weapons were accidentally sold. Mapes tells Pitt that three customers bought weapons from that lot, including the British Imperial War Museum, the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Oklahoma, and the AAR. Pitt quickly sends Steiger to Oklahoma to check out the two bombs sent to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and learns that they had bought the bombs to set off during a Veteran's Day parade, but they would not detonate. Steiger looks at the bombs and realizes they are two of the missing weapons from Vixen 03. Pitt does not have as much luck with the British Imperial War Museum, learning the one they bought is definitely a normal battleship shell. That leaves the AAR. Pitt contacts Sandecker and asks him to contact a friend with the National Security Agency.



Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapters 42-46 Analysis

One mystery is solved in these chapters. Pitt figures out that when Loren's father found Vixen 03, he went to his good friend and retired deep sea diver for help. Unfortunately, the Rafertys got greedy and killed Loren's father in order to keep all the rewards to themselves. Through his confrontation with the Rafertys, Pitt learns where the weapons were sold. However, the Rafertys were killed in the ensuing battle. From here, Pitt begins searching for the weapons. Pitt and Steiger find six of the eight missing weapons quickly. However, it appears the last two were sold to the AAR. This is confusing to Pitt who does not understand why the AAR would want battleship shells. Unfortunately, it connects two story lines for the reader, allowing the astute reader to realize that Fawkes is about to attack an American city with two of these weapons in his arsenal.

At the same time, the temporary leader of the AAR has ordered the massacre of innocent blacks, causing an upheaval in AAR ranks. Lusana is ordered to return to Africa to fix this mess while Machita is arrested. The South African government orders a raid on AAR and kills everyone at the compound except Machita who ironically escapes because of the location of his cell. Now no one remains of the AAR but Machita and Lusana, suggesting to the reader a setback that will deter the cause of the AAR and perhaps a fight for the leadership. It also seems to take away the motivation for Fawkes' attack on American soil. However, it also appears no one has seen fit to tell Fawkes about this new development.



Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapters 47-51

Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapters 47-51 Summary

Jarvis learns of NUMA's interest in the naval shells the AAR has recently bought and decides to contact Pitt. Before he does, Pitt meets with the photographer who took the pictures of himself and Loren. The photographer came to Pitt because of his opinion of what Daggat plans to do with the photos and Daggat's attitude. Pitt goes to see Loren and instead witnesses her climbing into Daggat's limo. Pitt joins the group in the back of the limo and announces that if Daggat does not back off Loren, he will take a sworn statement from the photographer and go public with his attempted blackmail. Daggat agrees to back off. That same night, Loren accepts the proposal from Sawyer. At the same time, Lusana is kidnapped as he waits for a flight back to South Africa. Fawkes has Lusana taken aboard his ship and imprisons him on board.

Jarvis and Pitt meet. Pitt tells Jarvis about Vixen 03 while Jarvis shares his knowledge of Operation Wild Rose. Pitt thinks about the name of the military strategy and realizes that the plan will be launched from the Iowa, whose state flower is the wild rose. Jarvis calls to find the location of the Iowa and learns it is the one battleship that has been sold from scrap. Pitt and Jarvis rush to the salvage yard where the Iowa is docked, but when they arrive they find it gone. Not only this, but they learn that a crew had arrived to join the Iowa just that evening. They missed them by only a few hours. As they stand on the dock trying to figure out what Fawkes is planning, Pitt points out that they should have known Operation Wild Rose would go into effect that day because it is Pearl Harbor Day.

Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapters 47-51 Analysis

Jarvis finds out that NUMA is trying to locate some naval shells and this makes him wonder what NUMA knows that he should know. Jarvis contacts Dirk Pitt and has a conversation with him regarding Vixen 03 and Operation Wild Rose. They both come to the conclusion that someone is in the process of enacting Operation Wild Rose and are using two of the weapons from Vixen 03. Not only does this bring the two story lines together, but it injects a great deal of tension into the plot when Pitt and Jarvis are too late to stop the Iowa from leaving its dock. Today is Pearl Harbor Day, and it is clearly the day Fawkes and the defense minister have chosen to attack an American city.

At the same time, Pitt easily ends one story line when he stops Daggat from blackmailing Loren. Pitt is not the type to be blackmailed, and he makes this clear when he refuses to allow Daggat to walk all over him or Loren. It is a pity Pitt does not feel that he can commit to Loren because he is quite the romantic character, and Loren is clearly in love with him. However, Loren accepts the marriage proposal of another man because she knows Pitt will never commit to her. This tells the reader the kind of woman Loren is, that she needs someone to take care of her and to commit to being in her life

for the long haul. Loren needs security, something she would never have in Pitt's arms. Finally, Lusana is kidnapped and taken aboard Fawkes' ship. This informs the reader that Fawkes plans his revenge by making it appear that Lusana was behind Operation Wild Rose.



Part 5, The Iowa: Chapters 52-63

Part 5, The Iowa: Chapters 52-63 Summary

De Vaal sends a note to the American government pretending to be the Prime Minister of South Africa informing them of the imminent attack by the AAR. On the Iowa, Emma has boarded the ship without anyone's knowledge and prepares to carry out an assassination. At the same time, Fawkes is carefully directing the Iowa through Chesapeake Bay to the Potomac in order to carry out the attack on Washington, D.C. Pitt goes to the hospital to visit Bass and to learn all he can about the weapons from Vixen 03. Bass tells Pitt that the weapons deploy a parachute to slow them down and that they will only detonate after the altimeter senses that the weapon has gone below one thousand feet. The Iowa almost gets trapped in a sandbar, but Fawkes successfully maneuvers it clear. Jarvis meets with the President and informs him as to the impending attack on American soil. Pitt meets with Steiger and Sandecker to decide what their role in the unfolding drama should be. Jarvis has told them to steer clear, but Pitt convinces everyone he should board the Iowa in order to disarm the weapons.

As the Marines prepare to charge and board the Iowa, Steiger flies Pitt onto the ship from a helicopter. Pitt crash lands but is safely on board. As Pitt makes his way through the ship, he stumbles across the room where Fawkes is keeping Lusana. Pitt frees Lusana and allows him to join him in the hunt for the Vixen 03 weapons. During this time, the Iowa has begun firing bombs at Washington, D.C., nearly destroying the Lincoln Memorial. The Iowa is hit by a bomb called the Satan designed to fire precisely where it is aimed. This causes damage to the guns and the munitions room underneath. Fawkes goes down to see what he can do to help his men and stumbles across Pitt just finishing the disarming of the first weapon. Pitt tells Fawkes what is happening and how important it is to find the other weapon. Fawkes agrees to help while Lusana takes the organism containing balls up on deck to dispose of them in the water.

Part 5, The Iowa: Chapters 52-63 Analysis

Fawkes carefully pilots the Iowa from Chesapeake Bay to the Potomac in order to reach the shores of Washington D.C. outside Mount Vernon. Fawkes intends to bomb Washington. At the same time, Jarvis meets with the President to try to figure out what to do while Pitt meets with Steiger and Sandecker. Jarvis wants to keep the President from taking custody of any of the Vixen 03 weapons, as per Bass's wishes. Pitt wants to be the one to disarm the weapons before the government can get to them. Pitt knows everything that Bass knows about the weapons now, so he is the best person to deal with them. However, waiting for the government to allow him to go on the ship would take too long, so Pitt once again shows his character by dropping onto the Iowa from a helicopter.



The Iowa takes up a position outside Mount Vernon and begins firing, nearly wiping out the Lincoln Memorial. Ironically, however, the building around the memorial falls at just the right angle to protect it from damage. At the same time, Pitt manages to disarm one of the weapons after finding Lusana and freeing him. Fawkes is beginning to have second thoughts about Operation Wild Rose when his men begin getting hurt when the Americans fire a Satan bomb at them. Fawkes goes down below to help his men and finds Pitt. True to his nature, Fawkes does not fight Pitt, nor does he attempt to re-incarcerate Lusana. Instead, the three men join together to get rid of the bomb and find the second one. This shows the characters of all three men, that they care more about humanity than their actions might imply.



Part 5, The Iowa: Chapters 64-67

Part 5, The Iowa: Chapters 64-67 Summary

Fawkes and Pitt attempt to climb into the room where the guns are loaded, but they run into Emma. Emma and Pitt fight and Pitt takes a bullet to the head. Fawkes attacks Emma and manages to smash his head against the floor, killing her. Fawkes then puts Emma's life jacket on Pitt, discovering in the process that Emma is a woman, and throws them both overboard. At the same time, Lusana is killed throwing the balls with the Quick Death into the water. Fawkes returns to the task at hand, but before he can find the weapon from Vixen 03, he is attacked by a Navy SEAL. The SEAL kills Fawkes. At the same time, one of Fawkes's men fires the guns, sending bombs toward the National Archives building and the weapon from Vixen 03 into Washington. As the President and his security advisors are discussing what can be done to stop the weapon, Steiger flies the helicopter under the parachute and snags the weapon on the helicopter. Steiger and Sandecker fly out over the water to dispose of the weapon. However, there is no clear strategy for Steiger and Sandecker to survive their heroic maneuver.

Pitt is pulled out of the water by the Navy SEALs. Pitt finds a notebook on his body that Fawkes put there explaining his role in Operation Wild Rose. At the same time, Pitt learns about Steiger and Sandecker's fate. Pitt calls Giordino and together they fly a NUMA plane out over the ocean to where the helicopter is and attempt to cut the parachute loose with a laser. Unfortunately, the laser fails. Pitt instructs Steiger to fly in a dive toward the water with the hopes that the weight on the remaining cords will cause the weapon to come loose. It does and the weapon falls into the ocean without detonating. Steiger and Sandecker land on a cruise ship. Back at the White House, Jarvis convinces the President to destroy all evidence of Vixen 03, including a plan to destroy Rongelo.

Part 5, The Iowa: Chapters 64-67 Analysis

Fawkes and Pitt attempt to go get the second weapon from the guns but are stopped by Emma. Pitt is injured, so Fawkes steps up and stops Emma. Ironically, Emma turns out to be a woman. Fawkes throws Pitt and Emma over the side and returns to disarm the weapon, but the SEALs grab him and kill him before he can. The bomb is fired from the gun, but Steiger manages to snag it onto the helicopter as Pitt instructed him to do. This is a very dangerous act and assures that Steiger will die. However, Pitt is rescued from the water and manages to come up with a plan to save Steiger. Again, Pitt shows his strength and his intelligence.

Even as Pitt and Fawkes show their heroic sides, as well as Steiger and Sandecker, Lusana proves himself to be a hero as well. Lusana has been painted as a drug dealer who has decided to lead an army in Africa in order to get power for himself. However,

Lusana proves himself to be heroic when he places himself in front of a Navy SEAL in order to throw the Quick Death over the side of the ship. Lusana does this because he knows that his people need him to be a martyr, not to save the millions who could die if exposed to Quick Death. However, Lusana has still died to the betterment of others, making him a hero.



Fool's Mate and Omega

Fool's Mate and Omega Summary

Pitt goes to Natal to bury Fawkes with his family. Before he fills in the grave, Pitt waits for the arrival of the defense minister, his assistant Colonel Zeegler, and Machita. Pitt tells De Vaal that he knows about his connection to Operation Wild Rose, that he has figured out how De Vaal had Fawkes' family killed using mercenaries from Angola in order to convince Fawkes to participate in Operation Wild Rose. Pitt also tells the gentlemen that he knows De Vaal was partners with Emma and was planning to run off with the money Emma made from the information she sold. This proves De Vaal a traitor in the eyes of Zeegler who stands by and watches Machita kill him. De Vaal falls into the Fawkes family grave where he will remain. Zeegler wants De Vaal to remain officially missing so he will not be a martyr to his people. At the same time, a bomb is fired on Rongelo from a ship near China. Rongelo disappears into the ocean, wiping the last evidence of Quick Death from the world.

Fool's Mate and Omega Analysis

Pitt proves De Vaal a traitor to his country, leading to his death by his closest advisor and his biggest enemy. De Vaal is buried with the Fawkes in order to keep him from becoming a martyr to his people. What is ironic about this situation is that the new leader of AAR comes together with a member of the white government to kill a common enemy. However, they cannot reconcile any of their other differences, leaving them in the same position they were in before. At the same time, Rongelo is destroyed by an American ship in such a way that it appears that China has done it during a training exercise to keep America's enemies from accusing them of breaking any treaties. This effectively rids the world of Quick Death as requested by Bass before his death.



Characters

Dirk Pitt

Dirk Pitt was once a major in the United States Air Force but now works for NUMA, the National Underwater and Marine Agency. This agency specializes in locating and salvaging old shipwrecks. In fact, Pitt has just returned from raising the Titanic from the bottom of the ocean. At the beginning of this novel, Pitt is spending the weekend in the Colorado Rockies with his lover, Congresswoman Loren Smith. While Loren looks through some correspondence, Pitt decides to go fishing, only to stumble upon a mystery. Pitt finds the nose gear and air tank to an old aircraft in the garage of Loren's family cabin. Pitt becomes curious about the wreckage and decides to check into it. Before long Pitt is obsessed with finding the crashed Stratocruiser that belongs to the junk in Loren's garage.

As Pitt investigates, he befriends Loren's neighbors as well as a colonel from the Air Force who is the military equivalent to an FAA investigator. Together, Pitt and the colonel search the lake near Loren's house until they find the wreckage. Pitt dives on the plane and finds the flight plane that tells him the code name of the flight and where it was going. Pitt also stumbles across the name of the man who authorized the flight. This information leads Pitt to Admiral Walter Bass who tells him that the flight, Vixen 03, was carrying bombs filled with a deadly organism that could wipe out an entire city and leave it uninhabitable for more than three hundred years.

Pitt convinces his boss, Admiral Sandecker, to salvage Vixen 03. However, when they bring the wreckage to the surface, they discover that eight of the bombs are missing. Pitt studies the wreckage and the absence of a fifth body he saw on his dive and realizes who took the bombs. Pitt goes to visit Loren's neighbors and accuses them of killing Loren's father after he stumbled on the wreckage of Vixen 03. The neighbors admit to killing Loren's father in order to keep all the money they make selling the bombs. From that information, Pitt is able to track down the location of all the bombs. The only problem is that two of the bombs are on board an old battleship and aimed at downtown Washington, D.C.

Congresswoman Loren Smith

Congresswoman Loren Smith met Dirk Pitt at a Washington party. Loren is not the kind of woman to fall for a man in a matter of moments, but the minute she set eyes on Dirk she knew he was the man for her. Unfortunately, Pitt is not the kind of man to settle down and raise children. Due to this fact, Loren also dates the White House press secretary. While involved in this romantic triangle, Loren is also wrapped up in her committee assignments. One of these is the foreign aid committee. Loren does not think that the AAR should qualify for financial aid. The chairman of the committee, Daggat,



believes the blacks of Africa deserve all the help they can get. In order to convince Loren to cooperate, Daggat has pictures taken of her while she is with Pitt.

Pitt learns about the pictures after Loren sees them. Pitt goes to Daggat and tells him that if he does not get rid of the pictures and stop blackmailing Loren, he will have him brought up on charges. Daggat stops blackmailing Loren. Shortly after this, the White House press secretary proposes. Loren says yes even though she still feels strongly for Pitt and does not feel the same for her new fiancée. The reader is left with the impression that Loren has chosen to marry the press secretary for reasons other than love.

Hiram Lusana

Hiram Lusana is an American who was born into poverty and forced to turn to criminal activity in order to provide for his siblings. As an adult, Lusana continued his profession in crime rather than seek out alternative avenues for survival. As a result, Lusana became a wealthy drug dealer. Lusana moved to Africa in order to protect himself from prosecution in America and used his money to fund a new Army to help the blacks in South Africa rise above the whites and take the country back. Lusana's army, the African Army of Revolution, is different from other groups that have risen to protest the discrimination and cruelty of the white South African government. The AAR chooses their military targets with caution, careful to make sure that no blacks are harmed in their attacks.

Lusana believes that one day his AAR will overthrow the white South African government and put blacks in positions of power. Lusana sees himself as the leader of this new black government. However, Lusana needs money to help see this through. Lusana goes to America illegally in order to avoid possible threats against his life and appears before a congressional committee to ask for aid. When this meeting is finished, Lusana plans to return to Africa, flying in the open because he believes he is in no danger returning to Africa. Unfortunately, Lusana underestimates his enemies and finds himself kidnapped before he can catch his flight.

Congressman Frederick Daggat

Congressman Frederick Daggat is a black man who believes the advancement of any black is good for all blacks. As such, Daggat throws his support completely behind Lusana despite Lusana's past history as a drug dealer and his plans to rule in South Africa. Daggat leads a congressional committee that decides which foreign governments should receive financial aid from the United States. Daggat arranges for Lusana to appear before his committee. However, before Lusana arrives, Daggat approaches Congresswoman Loren Smith, who is also on the committee, to ask for her support for Lusana. Loren refuses. Daggat then puts into action a plan to blackmail Loren by photographing her in a compromising position with Dirk Pitt. Unfortunately for



Daggat, Pitt learns of the scheme and threatens to bring charges against Daggat unless he backs off. Daggat is defeated.

Felicia Collins

Felicia Collins is Lusana's lover and an old schoolmate of Loren's. Felicia is given to Daggat as a reward for Daggat's support in Lusana's quest for American aid for his AAR. Felicia is not offended, however, because she believes Lusana's fight is a just one that will benefit all people of color. Felicia tells Daggat of her relationship with Loren after she learns that Daggat is having difficulty getting Loren's help in the fight for Lusana's funding. Felicia helps Daggat set Loren up to be photographed with Dirk Pitt by giving Loren the keys to the apartment where the photographs are taken.

Colonel Abe Steiger

Colonel Abe Steiger is the military version of an FAA investigator. When Dirk Pitt is able to establish that the plane to which the nose gear he found in Loren's garage belongs to a military transport plane, Steiger comes to Colorado to help him find the plane. Steiger and Pitt call in one of Pitt's friends and together they find the wreck of Vixen 03 in Table Lake. Steiger is shocked to find the plane in Colorado because its flight plan suggested that it was to fly from California to Hawaii, therefore should not have flown over Colorado on its fateful last flight. However, with proof of the crash in Colorado, Steiger goes to his supervisors to request permission to salvage the plane. Unfortunately, permission is denied. Steiger backs off until Pitt is able to establish the nature of Vixen 03's final flight and convinces his own boss to allow the salvage effort. Steiger continues to work with Pitt after it becomes clear several of the bombs that were supposed to be in Vixen 03's cargo bay are missing. Steiger locates several of the bombs himself and later is instrumental in keeping another from exploding over Washington, D.C.

Lee and Miriam Raferty

Lee and Miriam Raferty are Loren's neighbors in Colorado. Lee is a retired Naval deep sea diver. Pitt introduces himself to the Rafertys in an attempt to find out any information they have to offer on a plane crash that could be related to the nose gear and air tank Pitt found in Loren's garage. The Rafertys claim no knowledge of such a crash, but later when Pitt finds the body of Loren's father in the plane and then the body is moved, he realizes the Rafertys have lied to him. It turns out that the Rafertys were involved in the salvage of the plane's cargo with Loren's father, and they became too greedy to be willing to share the bounty with Loren's father. As a result, the Rafertys killed Loren's father and moved his body when they realized Pitt had found the wreckage.



Admiral Walter Bass

Admiral Walter Bass is a Naval officer whose specialty was munitions. Bass was assigned in the fifties to work with a scientist who had developed a biological weapon with the potential of killing thousands. To test the weapon, Bass ordered thirty-six bombs created with the biological agent inside. However, the bombs were never used because the flight taking them to the test area crashed. At the same time, Bass learned from other tests that the weapon had the potential to live for hundreds of years, making the location of the attacks uninhabitable for that length of time. As a result of this research, the agent was destroyed, except for the missing bombs on Vixen03. When Bass learns that Pitt has found Vixen 03, he urges the destruction of all the bombs, including eight that have disappeared from the plane.

Patrick Fawkes

Patrick Fawkes was once a Naval officer who bought a farm in Africa upon his retirement. Fawkes lives on his farm with his wife and two grown children, as well as several dozen African workers and their families. Fawkes is called to a meeting with the South African minister of defense to discuss a potential military strategy to use against the AAR. While Fawkes is away, his family is attacked, leaving the entire family and most of the workers and their families dead. Fawkes is enraged by this tragedy and wants revenge on the man he blames for it, Hiram Lusana, the leader of the AAR. As a result, Fawkes agrees to put into action Operation Wild Rose, a plan for him to pretend to be AAR and carry out an attack on Washington, D. C..

Emma

Emma is the code name for a person within the defense ministry who sells information to anyone willing to pay. Emma sells information to both the Americans and the AAR. Emma offers to sell Operation Wild Rose to the AAR, but after they attempt to assassinate Emma during the exchange, they discover they were only sold a worthless group of papers. Later, Emma sells Operation Wild Rose to the Americans along with a group of other papers for which the government paid. Emma is then assigned to assassinate Fawkes for the defense minister. When Fawkes kills Emma instead, he discovers that she is a woman. It later turns out that Emma was working directly with the defense minister of South Africa.



Objects/Places

Flight Plan

Pitt finds the flight plans for Vixen 03 when he explores the wreckage. From these papers, Pitt is able to find the name of the man who authorized the flight, Admiral Walter Bass, which leads to the information necessary to find and destroy Quick Death.

Pictures

Congressman Daggat hires a photographer to take compromising pictures of Loren Smith and Dirk Pitt in order to force Loren to vote the way he would like her to do.

Quick Death

Quick Death is a deadly organism created by a scientist in the early 1950s as part of the United States chemical and biological warfare program. Quick Death turned out to be too dangerous to use. However, before the military came to this conclusion, several bombs were outfitted with the organism and sent to Rongelo Island for experiments. These bombs were lost when Vixen 03 went down.

Stainless Steel Canisters

Vixen 03 contains twenty-eight stainless steel canisters when Pitt finds it. These canisters hold bombs outfitted with Quick Death, intended to be used in experiments at Rongelo Island. There were originally thirty-six of these canisters. Eight canisters are missing.

Air Tank and Nose Gear

While weekendng in Colorado with Loren Smith, Pitt finds an air tank and some nose gear in her garage that her father placed there before his death. This find leads Dirk to attempt to discover the airplane from which they came.

Vixen 03

Vixen 03 is the code name for a flight carrying top secret cargo for the Navy. It is Vixen 03 that Pitt finds in Table Lake.



Stratocruiser

The Stratocruiser is a large aircraft that resembles a double-bellied whale. The Stratocruiser was built by Boeing and used both as a transport plane and a passenger plane. Vixen 03 is a Stratocruiser.

Operation Wild Rose

Operation Wild Rose is a secret military plan to gather a small group of soldiers to pretend to be members of AAR and attack a large city within a neutral country with a battleship and sixteen inch guns in order to goad the government of the neutral country to join South Africa in their fight against the AAR. This plan is put into action by Patrick Fawkes against Washington, D.C. after the deaths of his wife and children.

AAR

The AAR, or African Army of Revolution, is an organization created and run by American Hiram Lusana. This organization wants to overthrow the white South African government and put blacks into power.

Smith Family Cabin

Loren Smith's father had a cabin near Table Lake in the Colorado Rockies. It is here that Pitt finds the air tank and nose gear.

Fawkes Farm

All the inhabitants of Fawkes Farm are murdered, including many of their employees, in an attempt to goad Patrick Fawkes into attacking a city in the United States and provoking the United States into joining South Africans in their fight against the AAR.

AAR Compound

The South African government attacks the AAR compound after the AAR attack an innocent village of government workers and their families.

Table Lake

Table Lake is a man-made lake in the Colorado Rockies where Pitt finds Vixen 03.



Rongelo Island

Rongelo Island is an uninhabitable island in the middle of the South Pacific where Quick Death was used in experiments. Scientists have concluded that that Rongelo Island cannot be inhabited for more than three hundred years. Eventually Rongelo Island is bombed into non-existence.

Colorado

Loren Smith was born and raised in Colorado. Congresswoman Smith represents Colorado in the Congress.



Themes

Racial Advancement

In South Africa, racial discrimination has a long history. The government of South Africa is predominately white. This government has used their power to abuse and neglect the needs of the black citizens of their country. As a result, a movement has arisen in South Africa to replace the white government with blacks. Many of these groups are radicals who will kill everyone who gets in their way, including blacks. However, Hiram Lusana has begun a group that is more selective about their targets. Lusana does not allow the murder of African blacks. Not only this, but there is more military planning in Lusana's actions. All of this makes the AAR a real threat to the government of South Africa.

At the same time, Congressman Daggat sees the advancement of blacks in Africa as a positive step forward for blacks throughout the world. Daggat supports the AAR, despite his reservations concerning the motives of their leader, Lusana. Daggat promises his support for the AAR when Lusana comes to the United States to ask for financial aid for his crusade. Daggat is so determined to make sure Lusana gets the money he needs that he decides to take away the one obstacle that stands in his way, Congresswoman Loren Smith. To this end, Daggat has photos taken of Loren and Dirk Pitt in a compromising position in order to blackmail Loren. Due to Daggat's blackmailing of Loren and Lusana's cause putting a burr in the South African government, racial advancement is an important theme in this novel as they represent motivation for some of the actions that are instrumental to the overall plot.

Military Weapons

Military weapons are many and varied. In the fifties, the military designed weapons to be fired from the sixteen-inch guns on the deck of a battleship. Most of these weapons were armor-piercing bombs. However, a few are filled with chemicals designed to wipe out whole populations in the days and weeks after the bomb explodes. By 1988, when this book takes place, most chemical and biological weapons have been destroyed based on treaties with other countries. However, a plane crashed in the 1950s that contains some of these chemical weapons. Eight of the weapons are salvaged from the crash and sold to an independent arms dealer, then subsequently sold to several organizations, including the AAR.

When Pitt learns what is contained in the cargo of the wreck he found, Vixen 03, he rushes to salvage the weapons and destroy them. Unfortunately, Pitt is not the first to find Vixen 03. Before Pitt can destroy the weapons, eight of them have disappeared and he has to find them. Six of them are found quickly, but the final two are on board a battleship that is preparing to fire upon Washington, D.C. Pitt sneaks aboard the ship with the intention of disarming and destroying the Quick Death bombs. Pitt finds the first and is able to disarm it, but the second is already loaded into one of the guns. In an



attempt to protect his captain, one of the ship's crew members fires the weapon. Pitt's team snag the bomb on their helicopter and carry it out to sea where Pitt is able to release it from the helicopter and send it to the ocean's depths. Military weapons are an important part of the novel because it is the discovery, search for, and destruction of the Quick Death weapons that propel much of the plot.

Deceit

Deceit comes in many different forms. For Patrick Fawkes, deceit touches his life when someone decides he is the only man who can pull off a scenario like that contained in Operation Wild Rose. Fawkes is called off his farm in order to discuss with the Defense Minister his thoughts on Operation Wild Rose. While Fawkes is gone, his farm is attacked by people dressed to resemble soldiers in the AAR. Fawkes comes home to total devastation and the belief that Lusana and his people are behind the deaths of his family and employees. As a result, Fawkes jumps at the chance to take part in Operation Wild Rose, a scheme to make it appear that the AAR is behind an attack on a neutral country. Unfortunately, it will later turn out that the AAR was not behind the attack on Fawkes' farm.

The United States government is not above a little deceit. When President Eisenhower learned that Vixen 03 has disappeared, he hides all information about the flight in order to make it appear the flight was moving from California to Hawaii when it disappeared over the Pacific Ocean. When the plane is found in Colorado, the current President is made aware of its discovery, but because of Eisenhower's past attempts to conceal the flight, the current president decides not to allow the salvage of the plane. This causes some trouble for Pitt, who would like to salvage the plane if only to return the dead crew to their family. Eventually Pitt finds reasons to salvage the plane, but when he does, he learns of another deceit that affects someone very close to him.

The Rafertys are a supposedly kind, elderly couple who are open and friendly with Pitt. The Rafertys answer all Pitt's questions about Loren Smith's father, a demolitions expert who was killed in an explosion. However, when Pitt salvages Vixen 03, he realizes that Loren's father was killed and the Rafertys' committed the murder. It appears to Pitt that the Rafertys learned that Loren's father had found Vixen 03 and became involved in helping him salvage the bombs found in her cargo bay. However, the Rafertys became greedy and wanted to keep the money they received for the bombs for themselves. The Rafertys killed Loren's father and put his body in Vixen 03, where Pitt saw it, only to move it before Pitt salvaged the plane. Pitt knows it was the Rafertys because they were the only ones outside of Pitt's co-workers and friend who knew about the discovery of the plane.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The point of view moves from character to character depending on whose view would be most informative during a given scene. The majority of the novel is seen through the eyes of Dirk Pitt, the novel's hero, but also through the eyes of a collection of characters who are important to the overall plot of the novel. Some of these characters are sympathetic, such as Loren Smith and Al Giordino. Others are dark characters with nothing but malice in mind, like Congressman Daggat. Still others are both sympathetic and dangerous, such as Patrick Fawkes.

The point of view of this novel works because it allows the freedom to move from character to character in order to allow the reader to see things that some characters might have access to but others do not. If the point of view of this novel were to remain with Dirk Pitt, either with a restrictive third person point of view or a first person point of view, the reader would not be allowed access to some meetings that take place outside of Pitt's view or knowledge. Some scenes that take place without Pitt present are important to the development of the plot and therefore would be difficult to represent with another point of view. In this way, the point of view of the novel works.

Setting

This novel has three major settings. The first is the Colorado Rockies. In the Colorado Rockies, Pitt finds evidence of the crash of a large, military transport plane. Pitt spends much time searching for this plane. Another setting of the novel is South Africa. South Africa is in turmoil because of the discrimination the white government shows toward the blacks and the blacks' attempts to overthrow their government and put blacks in their place. This setting is pertinent to the plot of the novel because it creates motive for Fawkes' attempts to destroy Washington, D.C. from the deck of an American battleship. Finally, Washington, D.C. is a setting for this novel. Washington, D.C. is not only the target for Fawkes' bombs but is also the home of Congresswoman Loren Smith as well as the headquarters of NUMA, Pitt's employer.

The settings of this novel all work well within the novel because they provide motivation for the development of the plot. The setting of South Africa opens the idea of Operation Wild Rose and motivation to put it into action. The Colorado Rockies are important because it is a logical place for a plane such as the Stratocruiser to crash and disappear for more than thirty years. Finally, Washington, D.C. is the heart of the United States and also Dirk Pitt. Pitt lives in Washington, works in Washington, and has a lover in Washington. This makes the possible destruction of Washington, D.C. more important to the plot.



Language and Meaning

The novel is written in clear, concise English. The novel is simple and easy to read, making it ideal for readers of all ages. The novel includes some words that are important to the circumstances of the plot, such as slang that is common to scuba diving or running a government. This slang is simple and used sparingly, making it an enhancement to the novel rather than a distraction.

The language in this novel works because of its ease of comprehension, which is important when considering the age and ability of its readers. Second, the language works because it includes words that are important to the characters inhabiting the plot. The language makes the novel easy for any reader to enjoy while also playing a role in characterization. Without the slang that some of the characters use, the novel might not have the authentic feel that it has. Readers must believe in the authenticity of the characters in order to care what happens to them in the plot. Overall, this novel makes a good attempt at making that happen, and the language is a big part of that.

Structure

The novel is divided into eight parts. The first is a prologue that describes the crash of Vixen 03. The next five are named parts that contain the bulk of the novel. These parts are divided into sixty-seven chapters, many of which are shorter than two or three pages in length. The last two sections are epilogues that effectively wrap up the plot as relevant to Vixen 03.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Pitt's discovery of Vixen03, the realization of what the Vixen 03's cargo contains, and the struggle to destroy all that cargo. At the same time, there is a power struggle taking place in South Africa between the white government and the black population. This power struggle has taken a new turn with the rise of the AAR, a revolutionary army led by an American ex-patriot. An innocent, retired naval officer gets pulled into the fight between the blacks and the whites when his family is killed by persons he believes to be part of the AAR. While this is all going on, Loren Smith, Pitt's girlfriend, is blackmailed in an attempt to force her to vote in Congressional committee for aid to the AAR.



Quotes

"The Boeing C-9 Stratocruiser bore the look of a crypt. Perhaps the image was bred by the cold winter night, or perhaps it came from the gusting snow that was piling an icy shroud on the wings and fuselage." Oblivion, pg. 1

"As the last strands of sleep receded, Pitt found himself faced with his first decision of the day: whether to allow his eyes to bask in the majesty of the scenery or to feast them on the smoothly contoured body of Colorado congresswoman Loren Smith, who sat naked on a quilted rug, engrossed in yoga exercises." Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapter 1, pg. 13

"Alongside most sleek executive jets, the Catlin M-200 came off like a flying toad." Part 1, Vixen 03: Chapter 8, pg. 37

"Fawkes might have passed for an Aberdeen sea captain, which is exactly what he was before becoming a Natal farmer." Part 2, Operation Wild Rose: Chapter 12, pg. 59

"The crackle of the rifle fire suddenly increased and the shrill cries of women and frightened children began coming from the compound. Even the Fawkeses' prize cattle were not spared. Myrna shut out the bellows of their dying agony, choking off a dry sob at the waste of it all. She lifted the twin barrels as the first attacker crashed his way through the door." Part 2, Operation Wild Rose: Chapter 15, pg. 71

"Steiger's superiors at the Pentagon sat on his report of the discovery of Vixen 03 for nearly two months before summoning him to Washington. To Steiger it was like sitting in the audience of a staged nightmare. He felt more like a hostile witness than a key investigator." Part 3, Salvage: Chapter 26, pg. 105

"Regardless of intelligence or education, the African mind retained an almost childlike innocence toward blame. Blood-soaked rituals still inspired them with a higher sense of justice than did a serious conference across a table." Part 3, Salvage: Chapter 28, pg. 113

"'A plague,' said Bass. 'The canisters contain the Doomsday organism.'" Part 3, Salvage: Chapter 32, pg. 129

"Through the miracle of satellite holography Pitt's face seemed to grow from his shoulders, and his projected self, including voice and gestures, become identical to the original. The major difference, which never ceased to amuse Sandecker, was that he



could pass a hand through the image because it was totally lacking in matter."
Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapter 42, pg. 165

"Unlike most security guards who wear ill-fitting uniforms with waist belts sagged by heavy revolvers. Mapes's people looked more like fashionably attired combat troops as imagined by the editors of Gentlemen's Quarterly magazine. Two of them stood smartly at the gate to the Phalanx warehouse grounds in nearly tailored field fatigues with the latest in assault rifles slung over their shoulders." Part 4, No Return Ticket: Chapter 45,pg. 187

"Hiram Lusana knew his fight to rise above the filth of his childhood had culminated in this time and place. He had come to realize he could not be the leader of a people who would never fully accept him as one of their own. His path became clear. He could do far more for the oppressed of Africa by becoming a martyr to their cause." Part 5, The Iowa: Chapter 64, pg. 259

"Rongelo Island had disappeared. All that remained was a depression three hundred feet deep and two miles across. Quickly the sea rushed in and covered any trace of the gaping wound. The sun was tinted an eerie yellow-green as it stole below the horizon. The Quick Death organism had ceased to be." Omega, pg. 286



Topics for Discussion

What does Pitt find in Loren's garage? Why does it interest Pitt? What about this junk tells Pitt it belongs to an airplane that crashed rather than a plane that was sold at salvage? Why does Pitt believe Loren's father kept this junk? What does Pitt plan to do with it?

Why does Pitt spend the rest of his time with Loren flying around the Rockies in a helicopter? What does Pitt hope to find? Why does Pitt not return to Washington with Loren? How does Loren feel about this? What is the nature of Pitt's relationship with Loren? How does Pitt feel about Loren? Why does Loren become engaged to another man? What does Loren hope will come of this relationship? What about Pitt?

What is the AAR? Why would the AAR attack the Fawkes farm? Who is Patrick Fawkes? Why would someone want to hurt him or his family? What does Fawkes believe happened? Why? How does Fawkes react to this tragedy? How does Fawkes hope his actions will get revenge on the AAR?

Who is Hiram Lusana? Why does Lusana live in Africa? Why did he leave America? How does Lusana fund the AAR? What does Lusana hope to do with the AAR? Why? How does Lusana hope this will change the lives of all blacks? Will it?

Who is Congressman Frederick Daggat? What is his role in this novel? Why does Daggat vow to help the AAR? Are Daggat's motivations clearly selfless? Why does Daggat not like Lusana? Why is Daggat convinced that Lusana is in Africa for personal gain? Is Daggat correct? Why does Daggat threaten Loren Smith? What does Daggat want from Loren? How does Daggat go about getting what he wants?

What is Quick Death? Why is Admiral Walter Bass afraid of it? What does Quick Death do? How can Quick Death be stopped? Why did being under the water of Table Lake for thirty years not destroy Quick Death? What will happen if Quick Death is released over Washington, D.C.?

Why does Pitt board the Iowa? What does Pitt hope to achieve? Does he? Why does Fawkes throw Pitt overboard? What does he give Pitt before he does? How does this answer many questions for Pitt? What does Pitt do next? Why does he allow the murder of the Defense Minister of South Africa? What did the Defense Minister do?