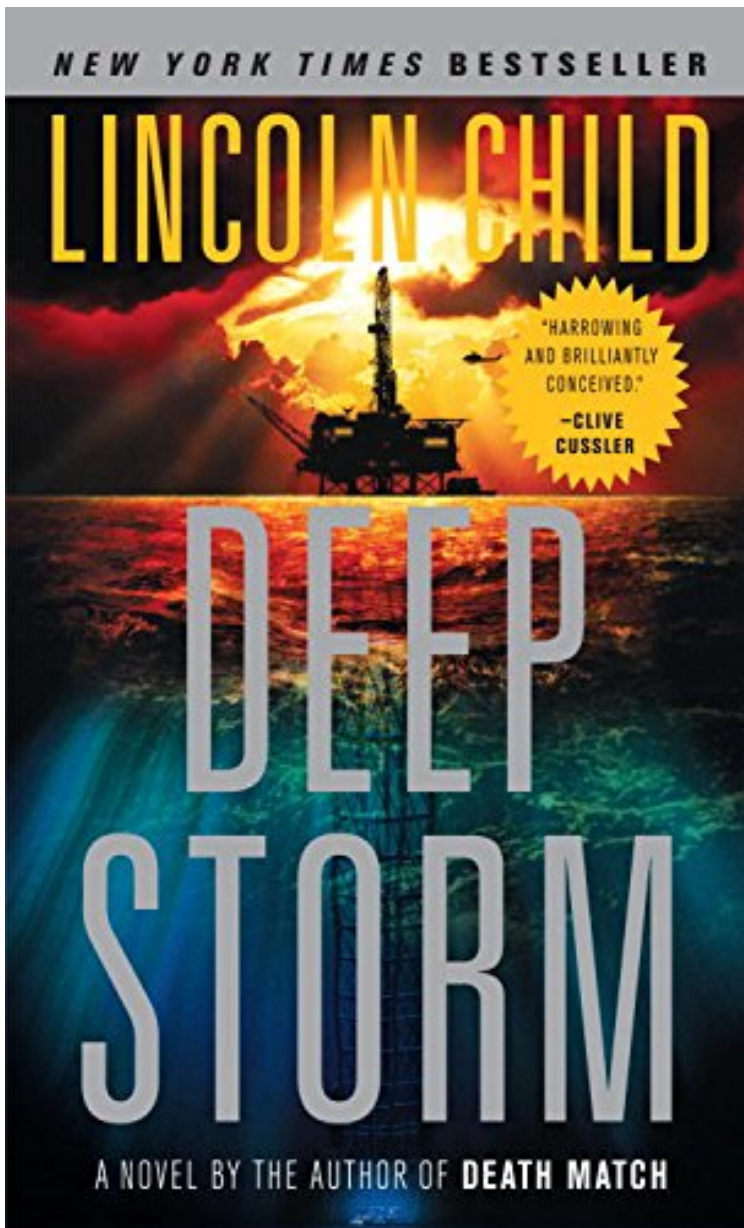


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Deep Storm



Par Lincoln Child
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn this explosive new thriller, one of the most incredible and frightening discoveries mankind has ever faced is about to surface.On an oil platform in the middle of the North Atlantic, a terrifying series of illnesses is spreading through the crew. When expert naval doctor Peter Crane is flown in, he finds his real destination is not the platform itself but Deep Storm: a top secret aquatic science facility, two miles below on the ocean floor. And as Crane soon learns, the covert operationhe finds thereis concealing something far more sinister than a medical mysteryand much more deadly.Extrait1It looked,

Peter Crane thought, like a stork: a huge white stork, rising out of the water on ridiculously delicate legs. But as the helicopter drew closer and the distant outline sharpened against the sea horizon, the resemblance gradually fell away. The legs grew sturdier, became tubular pylons of steel and prestressed concrete. The central body became a multilevel superstructure, studded with flare stacks and turbines, festooned with spars and girders. And the thin, necklike object above resolved into a complex crane-and-derrick assembly, rising several hundred feet above the superstructure. The pilot pointed at the approaching platform, held up two fingers. Crane nodded his understanding. It was a brilliant, cloudless day, and Crane squinted against the bright ocean stretching away on all sides. He felt tired and disoriented by travel: commercial flight from Miami to New York, private Gulfstream G150 charter to Reykjavik, and now helicopter. But the weariness hadn't blunted his deep and growing curiosity. It wasn't so much that AmShales was interested in his particular expertise: that he thought he could understand. It was the hurry with which they'd wanted him to drop everything and rush out to the Storm King platform that surprised him. Then there was the fact that AmShales' forward headquarters in Iceland had, rather oddly, been bustling with technicians and engineers rather than the usual drillers and roughnecks. And then there was the other thing. The helicopter pilot wasn't an AmShales employee. He wore a Navy uniform and a sidearm. As the chopper banked sharply around the side of the platform, heading for the landing zone, Crane realized for the first time just how large the oil rig was. The jacket structure alone had to be eight stories high. Its upper deck was covered with a bewildering maze of modular structures. Here and there, men in yellow safety uniforms checked couplings and worked pump equipment, dwarfed by the machinery that surrounded them. Far, far below, the ocean frothed and worried around the pillars of the substructure, where it vanished beneath the surface to run the thousands of feet to the sea floor itself. The chopper slowed, turned, and settled down onto the green hexagon of the landing zone. As Crane reached back for his bags, he noticed that someone was standing at the edge of the LZ, waiting: a tall, thin woman in an oilskin jacket. He thanked the pilot, opened the passenger door, and stepped out into frigid air, ducking instinctively under the whirring blades. The woman held out her hand at his approach. Dr. Crane? Crane shook the hand. Yes. This way, please. The woman turned and led the way off the landing platform, down a short set of stairs, and along a metal catwalk to a closed, submarine-style hatch. She did not give her name. A uniformed seaman stood guard outside the hatch, rifle at his side. He nodded as they approached, opened the hatch, then closed and secured it behind them. Beyond lay a spacious, brightly lit corridor, studded along both sides with open doors. There was no frantic hum of turbines, no deep throbbing of derrick equipment. The smell of oil, though detectable, was faint, almost as if efforts had been made to remove it. Crane followed the woman, bags slung over his shoulder, glancing curiously into the rooms as he passed. Once again, curiosity pricked at him: there were laboratories full of whiteboards and workstations; computer centers; communications suites. Topside had been quiet, but there was plenty of activity here. Crane decided he'd venture a question. Are the divers in a hyperbaric chamber? he asked. Can I see them now? This way, please, the woman repeated. They turned a corner, descended a staircase, and entered another hallway, even wider and longer than the first. The rooms they passed were larger here: machine shops, storage bays for high-tech equipment Crane didn't recognize. Crane frowned. Although Storm King resembled an oil rig in all outward appearances, it was clearly no longer in the business of pumping crude. What the hell is going on here? Have any vascular specialists or pulmonologists been flown in from Iceland? he asked. The woman didn't answer, and Crane shrugged. He'd come this far; he could stand to wait another couple of minutes. Up ahead, the woman had stopped before a closed door of gray metal. Mr. Lassiter is waiting for you, she said. Lassiter? Crane wondered. That wasn't a name he recognized. The person who'd spoken to him over the phone, briefed him about the problem at the rig, had been named Simon. He glanced at the door. There was the nameplate, white letters on black plastic, spelling out E. Lassiter, External Liaison. Crane turned back to the woman in the oilskin jacket, but she was already moving down the corridor. He shifted his bags, knocked on the door. Enter, came the crisp voice from within. E. Lassiter was a tall, thin man with closely cropped blond hair. He stood up as Crane entered, came around his desk, shook hands. He wasn't wearing a military uniform, but with his haircut and his brisk, economical movements he might as well have been. The office was small and just as efficient-looking as its tenant. The desk was almost studiously bare: there was a single manila envelope on it, carefully sealed, and a digital recorder. You can stow your gear there, Lassiter said, indicating a far corner. Please sit down. Thanks. Crane took the proffered seat. I'm eager to learn just what the emergency is. My escort here didn't have much to say on the subject. Actually, neither will I. Lassiter gave a brief smile, which disappeared as quickly as it came. That will come. My job is to ask you a few questions. Crane digested this. Go ahead, he said after a

moment. Lassiter pressed a button on the recorder. This recording is taking place on June 2. Present are myself Edward Lassiter and Dr. Peter Crane. Location is the E. R. F. Support and Supply Station. Lassiter glanced over the desk at Crane. Dr. Crane, you are aware that your tour of service here cannot be fixed to a specific length? Yes. And you understand that you must never divulge anything you witness here, or recount your actions while at the Facility? Yes. And are you willing to sign an affidavit to that effect? Yes. Dr. Crane, have you ever been arrested? No. Were you born a citizen of the United States, or are you naturalized? I was born in New York City. Are you taking medication for any ongoing physical condition? No. Do you abuse alcohol or drugs with any regularity? Crane had fielded the questions with growing surprise. Unless you call the occasional weekend sixpack abuse, then no. Lassiter didn't smile. Are you claustrophobic, Dr.

Crane? No. Lassiter put the recorder on pause. Then he picked up the manila envelope, slit it open with a finger, pulled out half a dozen sheets of paper, and passed them across the table. If you could please read and sign each of these, he said, plucking a pen from a pocket and placing it beside the sheets. Crane picked them up and began to read. As he did so, his surprise turned to something close to disbelief. There were three separate nondisclosure agreements, an Official Secrets Act affidavit, and something called a Binding Cooperation Initiative. All were branded documents of the U.S. Government; all required signature; and all threatened dire consequences if any of their articles were breached. Crane put the documents down. He was uncomfortably aware of Lassiter's gaze upon him. This was too much. Maybe he should thank Lassiter politely, then excuse himself and head back to Florida. But how, exactly, was he going to do that? AmShale had already paid a great deal of money to get him here. The helicopter had already left. He wasted no time, put it euphemistically between research projects at the moment. And besides, he had never been one to turn down a challenge: especially one as mysterious as this. He picked up the pen and, without giving himself time to reconsider, signed all six documents. Thank you, Lassiter said. He started the recorder again. Let the transcript show that Dr. Crane has signed the requisite forms. Then, snapping off the recorder, he stood. If you'll follow me, Doctor, I think you'll get your answers. He led the way out of the office and down the corridor, through a labyrinthine administrative area, up an elevator, and into a well-furnished library, stocked with books, magazines, and computer workstations. Lassiter gestured toward a table on the far side of the room, which held only a computer monitor. I'll come back for you, he said, then turned on his heel and left the room. Crane sat where directed, watching the door close behind Lassiter. There was nobody else in the library, and he was beginning to wonder what would happen next, when the computer screen winked on in front of him. It showed the face of a grey-haired, deeply tanned man in his late sixties. Some kind of introductory video, Crane thought. But when the face smiled directly at him, he realized he wasn't looking at a computer monitor. From Publishers Weekly Best known as the coauthor (with Douglas Preston) of such bestselling thrillers as *Dance of Death*, Child delivers a well-crafted and literate science fiction thriller, his third solo effort (after 2004's *Death Match*). Peter Crane, a former naval doctor, faces the challenge of his career when he investigates a mysterious illness that has broken out on a North Atlantic oil rig. Sworn to secrecy, Crane is transported from the rig to an amazing undersea habitat run by the military that's apparently pursuing evidence that Atlantis exists. Psychotic episodes among the scientific staff as well as the activities of a saboteur that threatens the project's safety keep Crane busy, even as some of the staff members confront him with concerns that exploring the Earth's core could be fatal to all life on earth. Crisp writing energizes a familiar plot, which builds to an unsettling climax with echoes of Child and Preston's *The Ice Limit*. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.