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A nuclear bomb strikes at the fiery heart of Earth and, spewing molten lava, a volcano rises with unnatural speed from the ocean floor. It continues in hot spots round the globe, Hawaii, Washington DC and the Far East. Geologist Philip Mercer is the first to unravel the secrets of Vulcan's Forge.

Vulcan's Forge Details

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From Reader Review Vulcan's Forge for online ebook

Glen Stripling says

I was pleased to find Jack B. Du Brul's main character in his action thriller is a geologist, as I am one too. I was intrigued that his novel could have a bit of sci-fi, which would be a genre mix that would appeal to me. But I was astonished that VULCAN'S FORGE would have so many features of realism. Du Brul's writing keeps you on your toes with a spiderweb of various plots that all get resolved in their own time.

The story opens in the summer of 1954 with Captain Linc, commanding the "Grandam Phoenix," an ore ship 200 miles off the coast of Hawaii. Linc is instructed to wreck the ship so his company can collect insurance. When he does, his crew is murdered by men on a "rescue ship," just when an underwater atomic bomb goes off.

About 40 years later, we are taken to the Oval Office, where we find Du Brul's President of the United States is advised a NOAA ship called the "Ocean Seeker" is lost 200 miles north of Hawaii, (and near the point where the "Phoenix" was lost).

Meanwhile, we are introduced to Philip Mercer, (perhaps a play on the word "mercenary?"), a geologist with commando experience in Iraq. He gets a message from someone claiming to be Jack Talbot, and old friend he met in Alaska. The message says Talbot's daughter Tish, is in danger and Mercer finds her in a hospital where there are indeed men trying to kill her. He gets her out and finds men trying to kill him in a car chase in Washington D.C. and a shootout in a subway.

Mercer gives Tish refuge in his apartment while he tries to learn what all is going on.

He soon learns that Tish is being hunted because she was aboard the "Ocean Seeker" that went down near the "Phoenix" site. The site is of interest to an eccentric business mogul named Takahiro Ohnishi a Hawaii resident with an obsession with his Japanese heritage.

Ohnishi feels he has more in common with all ethnic Japanese than American citizens and the people of Hawaii should not have to bear the consequences of America's financial blunders. And it is clear he has an interest in secession where Hawaii could be an independent nation run by himself via his puppet mayor of Honolulu, David Takamora. With money and political power, Ohnishi is able to control Hawaiian society by inducing riots and social upheaval to resist federal control.

The only person who stands in Ohnishi's way is Jill Tzu, a determined journalist, who refuses to cooperate with his increasingly fascist propaganda machine. She disappears.

The "Phoenix" wreck site is also of interest to Colonel Ivan Kerikov, a KGB veteran who took part in an old Soviet project called Vulcan's Forge, after a newly discovered alloy was formed from the Bikini bomb test in 1946. The plan was to use a nuclear bomb at a volcanic site north of the Hawaiian islands, sink the "Phoenix" and make this new alloy called "bikinium."

Mercer learns this was done through a KGB front organization called Ocean Front and Cargo, with headquarters in New York and the Soviets were using Ohnishi to disrupt American interests. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kerikov sees that Vulcan's Forge is no longer needed to undermine American interests but it could still be used to make himself wealthy and prosperous.

The President of the United States, frustrated by the possibility of civil war, which could bring a lot of bloodshed to Hawaii, tends to believe that Mercer is doing a better job of investigating all of this than his cabinet, the CIA or the FBI, who tend to get in one another's way.

Towards the end Mercer goes on a commando raid to Hawaii, where he is helped by a double cross on Ohnishi's side and we are given a great final surprise at the end of the novel.

Since I am often interested in action-adventure drama, I found VULCAN'S FORGE to be a page turner. I did find some of the killing scenes and forced sex on a young girl a bit harsh but I realize they are presented in the context of showing Ohnishi's cruelty.

All and all I consider VULCAN'S FORGE a great novel and it leaves the reader left with food for thought on how men who claim to be liberators can be tyrants as well.

Alice says

I was very undecided on my rating for this novel. The hero, Mercer, is reminded me a bit of the Bond in Flemings novels- kinda of a jackass. He is handsome, commanding, good at almost everything and, for me, really smug. There was just something about him that I just don't like which is a little refreshing.

I'm not sure if I'm going to make the full commitment to reading this series, but there was some good action in this one even if most of the characters seemed like cardboard cutouts. Onto the next one.

Robert says

I honestly cannot go more than three stars on this book, and that may be stretching it just a little. Say about two and three quarters and I would feel better. Just rounding off to get three stars. Not a bad story really, just seems a tad far fetched. Oh, and wait till you meet the characters. No problems telling the good guys from the bad. The good guys are all real hunks with the chiseled chins and wind swept hair, penetrating gaze and all that bullshit. The bad guys you can almost picture them as evil little trolls, cackling madly through yellow stained teeth while rubbing their dirty little hands, with chipped fingernails crusted with filth. You get the idea. As I said earlier though, the story is fun and the action is fast paced. So not that bad, just figure it as kind of a fluffy piece of cotton candy to rot your brain with.

Dan C says

The premise was a bit interesting. However, in my opinion after the semi-intriguing premise of a new element etc. was exhausted, the book fell flatter and flatter. I couldn't finish it which is rare for me.

Disclaimer: I don't read this type of techno-fantasy book often, I bought it second hand to support charity. So, I am a bit biased as it is not my cup of tea.

If I make the mental effort to try to be objective and impartial... I still think it wasn't good.

Dan Shea says

I generally liked this book. I do have a few problems with it. The first problem is that the author thought it was necessary to have a 14 year old girl get raped in this book. Had nothing to do with the actual story, was given way too much detail.

The second problem is that the main character is a borderline alcoholic. This guy never misses a chance to get buzzed. Again, doesn't really do anything other than make me start to doubt the guy's ability to do all of the physically challenging stuff he sets off to do.

Third, although the story itself was really cool, I didn't really believe the character. Here is a geologist who seems to be a master of covert ops. Not just in skill, but in the mindset and tactical knowledge required to be better than many of the professionals he faces. His self-sufficiency needed to be dialed back a bit.

Deal with those issues and this could have been a 5 star book. Heck, get rid of the child raping and I would have given this a 4. That part was just sick and pointless.

Also, this author seems to depict Navy SEALs as people without souls. I know some SEALs and they are far from that. I was more than a little disappointed by that characterization.

Dee Hadrill says

I was disappointed with this one as I've known Jack DuBrul as an author through his work with Clive Cussler on the Oregon series, which is my favourite of all Cussler's series. This one was really hard to get through. The lead character (Philip Mercer) was a geologist but he's not just any geologist, he's "Super" Geologist!! Seriously, is there nothing this guy can't do??? At least there was eventually a small comment made that he had undergone some training with elite forces (and I stress the 'some'), but he can kill people without a backwards glance, fights like a superhero, oh, and he has a genius level mind and can out think anyone on the planet apparently!! In one part he goes into battle with a troop of SEALs and only he and the SEAL commander survive - ergo, he's tougher than a whole troop of hardened warriors! Yeah, I don't think so! Oh, and he meets a girl for a matter of minutes and all of a sudden, he's kissing her and treating her like they've known each other for much longer.

I am willing to try the next book though because this was Mr DuBrul's first novel and, if the Oregon books are any indication, he gets a lot better with his characters. And Philip Mercer isn't a bad character; (he's pretty damn likable in fact) it's just that he is too perfect!

Paul says

Imagine a story much worse than anything Clive Cussler has written and you have Vulcan's Forge. The main character is a geologist, I mean, the best-most-awesome-smartest-best looking-military trained geologist who can do anything/kill anyone/screw anyone with a look from his deep blue gray eyes at a moments notice. The plot is that he must stop an evil Japanese genius from taking over Hawaii in a military coup AND from getting control of a big ass volcano with special properties that the Russians planted 50 years prior and is

now about to sprout out of the ocean. I knew that it was garbage going in, but I was desperate for a book to read and this one was on top of a pile right next to me. It probably could have been decent, but the main character is like a God and everytime he gets himself out a jam he chugs a few beers and wants to bone the hot chick he just saved. If I had to guess, I'd say that the author is fantasizing about himself as an action hero.

Steve Rourk says

You have to give Du Brul some credit for doing everything he can to make Mercer the Indiana Jones of the geology world...unfortunately, geology doesn't conjure the same romantic imagery as lost cities and buried treasure.

Dave Edlund says

I'm rounding up from 2.5 to 3 stars for this one. The title and book cover are the best part, unfortunately. I had high expectations, but the plot was a confusing tangle that left me feeling cheated--just when I was expecting the thrill-level to ramp up, Mr. Du Brul simply ended each thread in the plot. The tension and suspense fizzled.

Patrick Gibson says

Sorry everyone, Dubrul's good research can't save his heavy-handed writing and shallow, cliché characters. I found it hard to care what happened to anyone, even our ridiculous hero. Must the protagonist hit on the ladies the very moment he saves them from the bad guys? I'll stay with the terrorists, thanks! Dubrul needs to fire his editor, who allowed too many mistakes, such as run-on sentences, unbelievably bad dialogue, and awkward punctuations. Since this is his first I will give him another chance. Besides, the used books store has some for a dollar. My time is worth nothing and I can always use the paper in the gerbil cage. (I don't have a gerbil, I was just looking for an insult.)

Steve says

Vulcan's Forge was the first book in the Phillip Mercer series by Jack Du Brul. It was first published in 1998. I have read the Oregon Files series of novels by Jack Du Brul and Clive Cussler and had been eager to find out what Du Brul's initial solo effort was like. Not only am I eager to read the second book in the series, but I'm actually very excited that there are 5 more books in this series after that.

Vulcan's Forge introduces the lead character, Phillip Mercer, a creative and high energy Geologist with a knack for getting into trouble. The story actually starts in 1954 when a then state of the art transport ship is scuttled on its maiden voyage. The plan behind the destruction of the ship turns out to be a Soviet plot that will be decades in the making.

Jump forward to present day and Phillip Mercer receives a telegram from an old friend that once saved his life. The telegram explains that the recent sinking of a Navy vessel 200 miles off the coast of Hawaii was no

accident and that the only survivor of that tragedy is in danger. The survivor of that ship happens to be none other than his old friend's daughter. But the mystery thickens for Mercer given that his old friend actually died several years ago.

On top of that, political problems in Hawaii increase the tension as the United States approaches a possible civil war. As North Korea and ex-KGB operatives manipulate the politics of the United States, a new chemical compound is discovered to be the result of early underwater detonation of an atomic bomb. This compound could lead to breakthroughs in modern superconductor technology and is exactly the type of technological breakthrough that any nation would kill to acquire.

All of this boils down to a compelling and riveting story that makes the book very difficult to put down. The protagonist, Phillip Mercer, proves to be just the kind of character that readers relate to and want to read more about. *Vulcan's Forge* is the first book in what I anticipate to be a very exciting series.

Wes says

After listening to "Medusa Stone", I decided to go back to the beginning of the series. This story is simply put, more interesting than *Medusa* and deals with circumstances you can actually relate to. Thankfully, it doesn't linger too long in wrapping up the action after the ah-ha moment of what the mystery is all about. A good, well-paced, fun story with a fairly clean-cut, lone-wolf, slightly-smarter-than-the-braintrust-he-deals-with kind of hero. One of the better "popcorn" reads I've enjoyed.

Daniel says

Total grudge read. Quintessence: "*Vulcan's Forge*" is a giant pile of predictable infantile crap. Period.

The novel's main protagonist Phil Mercer is basically a hybrid of James Bond and Albert Einstein pressed into David Beckham's body. An American geologist with a rebel heart outsmarting the world's brightest minds and taking on hordes of special forces and secret agents on the way while taking nothing but a scratch here and there. Shooting and driving, deep sea diving, infiltration behind enemy lines? No problemo. He even got some time to spare to make the ladies lust for him happy while saving the world. Oh, did I mention that the guy is a studied geologist and not with the Mossad?

But even if you can stomach this abomination of a main character, the book's dialogue is for the most part downright stupid, character development is non-existent and the plot is littered with clichés and embarrassing stereotypes. Du Brul's writing is so by the numbers that you can see every twist and turn coming from miles away as the story gets more and more ridiculous with each consecutive page. Just think of the most illogical thing that could happen and you are pretty much on Du Brul's track.

Anyway, to make a long story short: This is an insult to everyone with an IQ above room temperature and not worth the paper printed upon (or the bytes used on your e-reader). Avoid!

Anna says

This is possibly the worst book I've ever read. You could make a parlor game out of the unbelievably bad lines. It's not enough he had to make everything a superlative; he had to take a simple sentence, get out a thesaurus, and make it ridiculously stupid.

This book also made me hate adverbs.

Upside, it made me actually laugh out loud several times.

Elaine says

Yeah, I just can't. Laughably dreadful.
