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John Gregory Betancourt

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Like the twisted strands of mutant chromosomes, an insidious alien conspiracy winds its way through the entire Alpha Quadrant, just as it stretches across several years of Starfleet history - beginning near the very start of Captain Picard's command of the Starship Enterprise!

It is only the first year of the U.S.S. Enterprise-D's ongoing mission when a virulent epidemic strikes the populace of Archaria III, endangering the lives of thousands and provoking acts of mob violence against those believed responsible for the spread of the disease. While Data and Natasha Yar team up to uncover the true origins of the virus, Dr. Crusher finds the implacable sickness resists all her efforts to find a cure. The desperate quest for a cure becomes even more urgent when Deanna Troi succumbs to the dreaded plague...again and again.

Infection Details

Date : Published June 1st 1999 by Pocket Books (first published January 1st 1999)

ISBN : 9780671032555

Author : John Gregory Betancourt

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Media Tie In, Star Trek, Science Fiction, Star Trek The Next Generation, Fiction

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From Reader Review Infection for online ebook

Benjamin Plume says

I absolutely loved this series. It was kind of Robin Cook meets Star Trek.

Dan Quigley says

This is the first book in the Double Helix series of Star Trek: The Next Generation. Betancourt writes a short and highly readable novel. The plot is imaginative and well-paced, with a good deal of suspense. A reader even has the opportunity to learn some interesting science concepts in the field of microbiology as a side-benefit.

The main objection any critic could raise against the book is that at least one of the characters was not portrayed at all accurately. One of the subplots is Worf neglecting important Starfleet duty in order to get drunk with murderous fellow Klingons. He was leading an away team expedition at the time. It is not even remotely within character for Worf to act as he did on this occasion, and no amount of artistic license granted Betancourt is sufficient to overlook this deficiency.

Otherwise, it was a well-written novel, perfectly paced, and a fun read. The story has me looking for other work by John Gregory Betancourt to read.

Jacque Hedges (Carter) says

I love Star Trek but was wondering who these people were who were impersonating my favorite characters. I don't know when this was written, it was just the next book in my kindle queue so it may have been written before the characters were fully developed in the first or second season of the series. If so, that may explain why I didn't really know these people. It's certainly not going to stop me from reading other stories by this author. The story was flat for me.

I see. I just read some of the other reviews and most of them commented on the characters not quite being the ones we know today.

Sean Randall says

The first in a series spanning 6 books and perhaps as many authors, Infection throws us right into an epidemic of interesting proportions; very genetically specific ones. i won't go into too many details of the

plot, but will note that sometimes this book felt like a trial run itself.

"The big question is motive, It can't be racial purity. It can't be the Purity League. In fact, Starfleet has only been able to come up with one possible motive... Practice." Captain Picard.

Apart from that, there was a lot of well-executed character interaction. The whole Riker in a beard thing was quite prescient, for instance. Worf and yar were explored well, though not to the detriment of the story; onscreen events (such as Farpoint) were brought in, giving us more of an idea of when this book takes place than just a stardate.

I can't quite see jean-luc Picard as an Old Spacedog, I must admit, and Crusher's leaping to conclusions is perhaps a little out of character (though her impetuosity is well-known). There's a lot that goes completely over our heads, of course - the shady General, the net result of the plague, and so forth. presumably because there are more books in the series, and revealing all now would spoil the rest.

To sum, a bit short, then, with the action squeezed in but exciting, with the ending feeling perhaps a little forced. The characterisation was well done - even to the slight lack of gelling which characterise later episodes and novels - a hallmark of early TNG, I believe. the writing style will almost certainly vary from title to title, as they are written by different authors. Something to look forward to: keeps a series rolling on.

Jimyanni says

This is a reasonably good story, set early in the Next Generation series during the period when Tasha Yar was still alive, Will Riker was still clean-shaven, his fellow officers were still frequently surprised by Data's capabilities, and Worf was still unsure of the proper balance between his Starfleet culture and his Klingon culture. It's got a pretty good balance of action and drama, and does a fair to middling job of properly understanding and presenting the characters as they were at that point in the series -- not easy, considering that it was written well after that point, when the characters had mostly progressed well beyond their early characterizations. Still, the plot is fairly predictable, and the conclusion is a bit too abrupt and pat, a bit too convenient. It makes for an enjoyable quick read for a fan, but not much beyond that.

Paul says

PLOT OR PREMISE:

This is the first of six books dealing with biological terrorism by an unknown foe. The story is interesting, as a planet has been infected with a plague with an 100% fatality rate -- but only for those aliens who are of mixed-race...pure breeds remain unaffected!

WHAT I LIKED:

I am not a hard-core sci-fi reader, but I do enjoy Star Wars and Star Trek. This is definitely different from most ST:TNG plots where they steer away from racial relations that aren't easily solved. The plot is interesting and the medical portion is solid.

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WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE:

Unfortunately, the problem with this novel is that the characters are written similar to those of the first few books in the ST:TNG series i.e. when the characters weren't quite developed yet or as well-defined as they became in the TV series. So, when you read those early books now, you can't help but say to yourself "But THAT character wouldn't do THAT!". Such divergence from the real characters they become was understandable early on in the series, but now that there have been seven years worth of episodes, fifty odd books, and a couple of movies, going back to the "not yet defined" characters seems too far out of the fold. The characters fit the timeline in the series, but are not true to their real character not yet revealed.

BOTTOM-LINE:

A readable entry but fans of later seasons may have trouble relating.

DISCLOSURE:

I received no compensation, not even a free copy, in exchange for this review. I am not personal friends with the author, and I do not follow him on social media.

Jenny T says

In the early days of Picard's captaincy, the Enterprise is called to Archaria III, a planet suffering from racial strife and a plague virus that has killed more than 40,000 people. While Dr. Crusher searches for a cure, the others seek to find out who intentionally unleashed it on the population (which we never do learn, this being Book 1 of 6)

A fairly average Trek novel, but I have a feeling it's leading up to something much bigger.

James Haresign says

As I was reading Double Helix: Infection on Kindle as part of collection, I was shocked at how suddenly it ended. I felt like I wasn't even halfway through the story when all of a sudden things started to wrap up. The story never really got going, the ending was by chance, I just don't feel any sort of resolution from it at all.

Now obviously it's part one of a bigger series so it was never going to be one hundred percent resolved, but you can frame it in a way that offers the individual story closure. The situation on that particular planet could be much better addressed than it was.

Solomon, a gun for hire, releases a killer virus on a backwater world that only targets half-human hybrids. This kicks off a whole host of racial tension on the planet. Riker accidentally falls in with the racist extremists, Worf has to deal with Klingons trying to escape the quarantine, Troi contracts the virus as it gets loose aboard the Enterprise, all while Dr Crusher races for a cure. All of that sounds exciting, a great set-up for a ripping yarn. Only it never is.

Riker's accidental infiltration happens right at the end, just before the end is obvious. Worf just gets the Klingons drunk, feels stupid and is never heard from again. Troi contracts the virus as Crusher offers an explanation as to how they can keep someone alive indefinitely, though it won't cure them it will reset the virus to its first stages, meaning her life is never in any real danger. Solomon is never explored past his

introduction as he releases the virus, then suddenly he's dead. There's an entire second Galaxy-class starship that turns up that adds absolutely nothing to the story at all.

So how does it resolve? By Tasha Yar and Data accidentally glancing up at just the right moment and spotting Solomon taking readings. It's so anti-climatic you almost don't notice Crusher comes up with an idea that might offer a solution, only for it to not matter as they now have all the data from the terrorist's ship.

The other aspect, the raging racist tendencies of backwater humans and their KKK-like group that the book spends so much time hand wringing and – rightfully – amazed at how modern humans can still think that way is possibly even worse. We get countless examples of it being out of control and short sighted, yet how is it resolved? By blaming the outbreak on them and banning their organisation. No lessons are learnt, nothing is done to really resolve the problem, just a law is passed to drive them underground. It's possibly the worst non-Starfleet, Big Brother Government ending you could imagine. There's even hints by Riker that there's something going on with the leadership and it's all a big manipulation but it's never revealed. Now, admittedly, this could be an area that's expanded on in later books, but you could quite easily make it a cell of a larger conspiracy that the crew of the Enterprise never actually realise. At least it would give them some sort of victory, other than being handed the cure.

Even with all that – which strikes you as the story ends – throughout the book you have to deal with the author's choice of showing you internal conflict versus dialogue. It's an interesting idea, showing how different what people say and what people think are, but it never works. It's used far too much as exposition, and just breaks up the flow of conversation or action, making everything a chore to read.

Making matters worse is how Dr Crusher doesn't sound anything like the character we got to know throughout the TV show and movies. It could be excused with someone like LaForge who barely appears, but she's one of the main cast, and it just makes everything worse.

I've read quite a few Star Trek books over this year, and I have to say Infection is the least enjoyable to date.

Lori says

more science-- liked it, but could not find whole series cheap or at library. would read if found it all.

Flosse07 says

als bekennender Trekkie war es mal an der Zeit, sich den Büchern zuzuwenden.

Das Lesen des Romans war sehr kurzweilig und viel mir aufgrund des flüssigen/seichten Schreibstils recht leicht. Dazu kamen dann die aus TNG bekannten Charaktere, so dass das Leseerlebnis für mich recht rund war.

Angela says

Easy read set very early on in Next Gen. A planet is dying of a plague that only kills those of mixed race,

someone is using a biological weapon. Its focus is mainly on Dr Crusher and Will. A quick read and a decent enough story.

Joshua Palmatier says

A mildly interesting Star Trek book. I'm taking this as more of a "prologue" for the entire Double Helix series, though. It was a quick, fast read, although I thought the idea behind it could have been developed more, the plot thickened so to speak. Perhaps that's what happens in the succeeding novels.

April says

Now that the Trekkie is out the bag, I'll follow it with shame in admitting that this is the first *Star Trek* novel I've read in, approximately, the past ten years.

NextGen is probably my favourite (~~nothing remotely, of course, due to Tasha Yarr and the fabulous home-Brit Sir Patrick Stewart~~), so it made sense I'd nab *Double Helix* at a local thrift store for around 50p.

Infection is, all in all, written quite well. I'd defend Betancourt in saying that he does pace a very interesting, dramatic plot following the planetary outbreak of a biological virus that seems to affect only the 'Mixers' (mixed races) on Archaria III, of which the consequences are severe. With no possible cure on the horizon and fatalities within the thousands, shit has--most definitely--hit the fan.

The *Enterprise* crew are on it, however, and *Infection* chronicles the harrowing journey of our characters trying to save a whole planet and catch whoever is responsible for creating this disastrous plague. Though some progress is made, tragedy subsequently strikes, and Deanna Troy is unfortunately hit with this painful disease, furthering Dr. Crusher's strenuous quest to create a working cure. (This would be listed as a spoiler, yet, however wrongly it is, the blurb does list this quite specifically).

The main problem I had with this book seems to be a main criticism overall: the characters. People who have grown to watch these characters develop over the years will undoubtedly find this book a little troubling and confusing. It seems we have taken a step back when it comes to the personalities of each character, more especially Worf and--to me--Tasha. Even Crusher seems odd and misplaced, and some of the inner dialogue is downright weird and not something I'd expect many of the characters to think or even behave. Worf's behaviour in this book is particularly strange.

Anyway, I did enjoy the plot a lot (racism is something I find interesting for the characters to comprehend and perceive in *Star Trek*) and look forward to try and seek out the rest of this series to see how it ends. A thoroughly entertaining novel and plot overall, but 'off' in terms of the behaviour of some of my beloved characters.

Abbe says

Product Description

Like the twisted strands of mutant chromosomes, an insidious alien conspiracy winds its way through the entire Alpha Quadrant, just as it stretches across several years of Starfleet history -- beginning near the very start of Captain Picard's command of the *Starship EnterpriseTM*!

It is only the first year of the *U.S.S. EnterpriseTM*-D's ongoing mission when a virulent epidemic strikes the populace of Archaria III, endangering the lives of thousands and provoking acts of mob violence against those believed responsible for the spread of the disease. While Data and Natasha Yar team up to uncover the true origins of the virus, Dr. Crusher finds that the implacable sickness resists all her efforts to find a cure. The desperate quest for a cure becomes even more urgent when Deanna Troi succumbs to the dreaded plague...again and again.

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Chapter One

Stardate: 41211.0 Captain's Log, Supplemental

The *Enterprise* continues on its mission to Archaria III, a planet jointly colonized by humans and Peladians. A new disease has cropped up, terrifying the inhabitants. So far, more than five thousand cases have been confirmed.

The only drug at all effective in treating this disease is a rare compound called Tricillin PDF, which seems to prolong life, though only for a week at most. The *Enterprise* will deliver a supply of the drug, quarantine the planet, then stay to oversee research into finding a cure.

" -- And render whatever aid the Archarians require until the emergency is over," Captain Picard said, leaning forward at the conference table and gazing at each of his senior staff in turn.

William Riker, Geordi La Forge, and Worf looked uncomfortable at the mention of the plague, and he didn't blame them; he had always felt ill at ease when faced with intangible dangers. Deanna Troi looked deeply concerned, and Dr. Crusher looked...intrigued? *She has dealt with plagues before*, Picard reminded himself. *She knows how to contain them.*

The persistent low rumble of a starship at maximum warp filled the room. None of his crew spoke. *They feel the tension building already*, he thought.

"Captain," Dr. Crusher finally said, "I may have to bring samples of this virus aboard the *Enterprise* for study, and perhaps a few patients."

"Understood, Doctor. So long as all necessary security precautions are maintained, I see no problem. In the meantime" -- he slid a data padd across the conference table to her -- "the doctors of Archo City Hospital have prepared a full report, which you may find useful."

"Thank you." She pulled the padd in front of herself and began skimming the opening remarks.

"Something else is troubling you, sir," Deanna Troi said softly.

Picard hesitated, then gave a curt nod. Best to get it out in the open. "What disturbs me most is the thought that this whole problem may be of our own manufacture...a biological weapon."

"Impossible -- how could that be?" Riker said, shaking his head dismissively. "Legalities aside, it's against everything the Federation stands for!"

"We do have treaties with most sentient races which prevent the development and use of biological weapons," Data said. "With all due respect, sir, the deployment of a genetically designed plague on a remote agricultural world such as Archaria III seems highly unlikely."

"Not necessarily," Picard said. He cleared his throat. "Archaria III is in many ways a throwback to human civilization two or three hundred years ago. It was settled by religious zealots early in the twenty-second century, and although they have largely come into the Federation's fold, old prejudices and resentments still bubble to the surface from time to time." The room was quiet for a moment while Picard allowed his point to sink in.

Riker finally broke the silence. "Sir, if I may ask, what is it that leads you to conclude this disease is a weapon?"

"Might be a weapon, Number One. A radical political group called the Purity League claims the plague is an act of God against 'blasphemous unnatural unions.'"

Riker gave him a blank stare. "Sir?"

Picard cleared his throat. *How to phrase this delicately.* He said, "The Purity League is opposed to interspecies mating -- 'mixers' as they call such people."

Again the rumble of the ship's engines filled the room. *They can't believe it, either,* he thought. *Humanity is supposed to be beyond such prejudices.*

He noticed that Deanna Troi, half human and half Betazoid herself, hid her inner feelings behind a mask of professional calm. He would have given a lot to know her true reaction. Undoubtedly she was even more shocked and horrified than he had been.

To think that some humans are still capable of such petty resentments...

He forced himself back to the problem at hand. "Mixers -- or anyone else suspected of adulterating the purity of the human race -- are treated as second-class citizens in many places on Archaria III," he continued. "Officially such prejudices are prohibited, of course, but in the backwater towns discrimination apparently still runs rampant. Only in the half-dozen large cities do humans and Peladians work and live together with something approaching harmony. In the country, things have apparently become so bad that most full-blooded Peladians now live in isolated enclaves surrounded by their own kind."

Riker said, "That sounds like a ghetto system."

"It is. Those of mixed heritage are even less fortunate, since they belong fully to neither the human nor the Peladian world. They were relocating to the cities in record numbers -- until the plague struck. Now they're fleeing into the countryside once more, living like vagabonds in tent camps." Picard looked down at his clenched, interlaced fingers resting uneasily on the table. He didn't bother to feign relaxation. Sometimes it was good for the crew to see him share their anger.

Deanna Troi asked, "How many people of mixed blood are on the planet?"

"Nobody is quite sure. Estimates range from between 150,000 and 200,000 people. Obviously, those mixers who most closely resemble humans hide the truth to avoid conflict with the Purity League."

Data said, "I am aware of the Purity League, sir. The Federation has monitored their activities for many years, but has deemed them a minor nuisance with little actual influence."

"Their influence is growing," Picard said firmly. The private reports he had read gave alarming statistics; according to confidential surveys, fully half of the planet's human population harbored feelings of support for the Purity League, though the League's actual membership numbers were open to conjecture. It was certainly in the tens of thousands if not the hundreds of thousands.

He went on. "The Purity League's leader, Father Veritas, is using the plague as a rallying point for anti-alien sentiment. Apparently Veritas is responsible for inciting dozens of race riots in the last few months. The whole planet is in turmoil. The nonhuman population -- and especially the partly human population -- is running scared. The plague's growth has only served to make the situation worse." *"Veritas," indeed,* he thought, grimacing. *If ever there was a misnomer...*

"Sir," said Deanna Troi, "Archaria III has a long history of interspecies problems, including wars, assassinations, and racism. Its history is part of several planetary evolution courses at the Academy. I believe everyone here has studied it to some degree."

A general murmur of agreement came from the rest of his senior staff. Picard found himself surprised -- it hadn't been part of the curriculum when he had studied at the Academy -- but he was pleased. *They're keeping up with the times.*

"That is correct, sir," said Data. "It was settled in 2102 by a human sect of religious fundamentalists called the Brotherhood. Seven years later, these human settlers encountered Peladian settlers, who had colonized the planet almost simultaneously."

Picard had never seen a Peladian and knew little about them, beyond the fact that they were humanoid, militant about privacy, and generally considered pacifists...except when provoked.

Data went on, "After a series of small wars, as the two sides got to know each other, peaceful relations and coexistence began. According to the information I have accessed, with the increasing agricultural importance of Archaria III their differences were largely put aside, in favor of economic cooperation."

"That is the public story," Picard said. He folded his arms and frowned a bit. "There have always been tensions. Until Father Veritas and the Purity League burst onto the scene sixteen years

Josiah says

Plot: B

Writing: C-

Vocabulary: B-

Level: Moderate

Rating: PG13 (racism, extreme suffering leading to death, genocide, terrorism, drunken brawling, thoughts of past lovers, subterfuge)

Worldview: Any choice is valid so long as it doesn't hurt other people.

A year into the Enterprise-D's first mission, Captain Picard and his crew are still getting to know one another. Meanwhile, in another part of the galaxy the mysterious General has dispatched a terrorist to release a biological agent into the atmosphere of Archaria III, a backwater planet simultaneously colonized ~200 years ago by a religious sect of humans and the little-known Paladians. The Enterprise is called in to enforce

quarantine and assist in finding a cure for the terrifying disease ravaging bispecies people.
