



## The Unknown

*K.A. Applegate*

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## **The Unknown** K.A. Applegate

There's a new rumor in town. Someone has discovered an item that proves life on other planets exists, and they've been hiding it on a base called Zone 91, the most secret place on Earth.

Cassie and the other Animorphs already know about life on other planets. Too well. Their enemies the Yeerks will try to access Zone 91, to find out if what's there will threaten their mission to conquer the planet. So the Animorphs decide to pay Zone 91 and the Yeerks a little visit. But what they discover is not at all what they expect.

## **The Unknown Details**

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## From Reader Review The Unknown for online ebook

### Jenny Clark says

"There are days when it feels like a noose slowly tightening around my neck. There are days when I don't feel like I can trust anyone."

"Looks and clothing don't matter even slightly to me. And the people who matter are the ones who see past all that."

Not a bad installment, but kinda filler-ish. The end was rather funny, once they figured out what the item was.

Cassie is becoming more and more worried about lying to her parents. This one did not have much in character development, just deepens relationships that are there already. I did like the more serious side of Marco that we are starting to see.

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### The Library Ladies says

(Originally reviewed at [thelibraryladies.com](http://thelibraryladies.com).)

**Narrator:** Cassie

**Plot:** As we know from my last rant, ahem, I mean, review, I have some struggles with Cassie books some times. But, while this book continues the tradition of giving Cassie some of the more stupid missions, we were at least spared the awful drama and holier-than-thou whining that ruined the last Cassie book for me. In fact, this book was a lot of fun...when it wasn't being entirely stupid.

Through a mall-trip-related deal, Cassie convinces Rachel to travel out with her and her dad to the Dry Land (a nearby semi-desert area) to check out a sick horse. But this isn't a normal horse. In fact, this horse seems to be trying to make a phone call using a paid phone booth! What's more, Cassie and Rachel see a Yeerk squirm out of the horse's ear (the horse is clearly suffering from a snake bite), and then almost get shot by Dracon beams.

Returning to the other Animorphs the next day, they convince the very skeptical group that the bizarre horses really are worth checking out. Understandably, the group can't seem to figure out why Yeerks would want to Control horses of all animals. Maybe it has something to do with the nearby Zone 91, a military base rumored by conspiracy theorists to host proof that aliens exist (I see what you did there, Applegate).

Cassie, Marco, Rachel, and Tobias decide to check it out. In an unfortunate bit of timing between morphs, Cassie, Marco and Rachel are captured by a military patrol and brought into the base. They only escape by morphing cockroach while the man in charge, Captain Torrelli, is away checking out their names and numbers. Somehow he doesn't get the fact that "Fox Mulder," "Dana Skully," and "Cindy Crawfod" (Cassie really sucks in the lying department) might, MIGHT, be fake names. After escaping the building, and in Cassie's case, proving that roaches can survive anything after being run over by a tank, the group witness a herd of horses with a particularly modest horse that moves to be behind a bush while it does its business.

(And here we have the first example of what is an unfortunate trend for this book. Potty humor. Never fear, I will point out the other examples as we go!)

Now convinced that something is up with the horses here, the group decide that they should morph horses themselves to try and figure out why exactly Yeerks would be doing this. What follows is a bizarre escapade at a racing track where somehow Cassie ends up morphing a famous race horse (Minneapolis Max!) and winning a horse race. Ultimately, they all get horse morphs and fly back to the desert to join the herd of the horse!Controllers.

The Yeerks seem to have the brilliant plan that going in as Controlled horses they can discover what information, if anything, the humans have on any alien lifeforms on Earth. To do this, they decide to simply charge into the base as a herd of horses. The Animorphs join in and they discover some strange alien contraption that neither the Yeerks nor the Animorphs recognize. Heading back into the desert, the herd is intercepted by a Yeerk Bug Fighter and none other than Visser Three himself checking on how the mission went. After being displeased with the results, he decides that they should go with Plan B and infest some humans that work on the base. He also is displeased with the presence of other horses with the group, thinking they could be Andalites in morph. Cassie decides to take a dump as a way to convince them that they're just regular horses. (Potty humor again!) When this doesn't work, they simply run away, only escaping when some officers from the base show up and the Yeerks retreat rather than expose themselves.

On the way home, Ax reveals that he actually did know what the strange alien artifact was: a primitive Andalite toilet. So yes, the whole crux of this little story is centered around a LITERAL TOILET.

Through shenanigans, Cassie realizes that the Yeerks will likely try to infest Zone 91 officers while they're at a company day trip to The Gardens. The Animorphs show up, get chased around through a log ride by Captain Torrelli who recognizes Cassie and Marco as "those punk kids." Finally, they find the Yeerks camped out in the Horror House. They're just standing around pretending to be part of the ride, including Visser Three himself. The Yeerks nab the Captain, and the Animorphs morph their battle morphs and give chase through the Horror House, and then, conveniently, into a parade. For some not super clear reason, the Yeerks pretty much let Captain Torrelli get away and fly off. Somehow all of this is hand waved away by the general public as "just part of the amusement park."

So...there you have it. There were several really fun scenes tied up in all of this nonsense. We get a whole chapter of the kids at school, which is always fun. There were some good character moments with Cassie and her parents. And, tone wise, this book was very, very funny.

But beyond all of that, it's just dumb. The whole horse!Controllers idea doesn't make any sense given how we've seen the Yeerks operate in the past. The campy nonsense at The Gardens is completely wacky. And the fact that the whole thing ends with the Animorphs pretty much hand-waving the threat to Captain Torrelli away as "well, now he'll be on his guard" is ridiculous. The Yeerks could take control of him at any time! Beyond all of this, the central conflict is around an Andalite toilet. The stakes...they are not high or interesting in this book.

Actual quote from the book:

*We had done some very important things as Animorphs. We had fought some terrible and vital battles. This wasn't one of them.*

**Peace, Love, and Animals:** Cassie, herself, is much more tolerable in this book. Part of it has to do with the

fact that she hangs out with Rachel quite a bit in this story, and their friendship and banter is always enjoyable. Her relationship with her parents remains as one of the more fully developed families in the series. She has a few moments where she again reverts to her “this is all my fault!” whininess, but for the most part it was much more toned back from her last book.

Bizarrely, for a character that is often really smart in other books, she has some seriously dumb moments here. I mean, it was just a book or two ago when she morphed Rachel and was able to lie straight to a Controller’s face in a much more high stakes moment. But here, she has tons of issues coming up with a lie at the base with Rachel and Marco (Cindy Crawford??) and then messes up understanding military time when they try to disrupt the Yeerks’ plan at The Gardens. Seems out of character for her.

Another huge misstep she makes is while she’s at the race track and somehow ends up in the race itself, she goes and thought speaks to the jokey! Why??! What if he was a Controller! The Animorphs never do this for a reason, and it’s such an inconsequential moment, that’s it’s completely inexplicable why she would choose to break this rule now.

**Our Fearless Leader:** Jake doesn’t do much in this book. He plays his usual leader role, gets exasperated at the banter when they go off topic, and repeatedly tells Ax to stop calling him “Prince.”

**Xena, Warriar Princess:** As I said, there’s a lot of fun Cassie/Rachel friendship moments. In exchange for going out to the desert with Cassie and her dad, Rachel gets to take Cassie shopping for outfits. Then they go to school and Rachel is massively disappointed by the fact that no one notices. In fact, poor Cassie only gets talked to after boys come up to Rachel first, and then they forget Cassie’s name calling her “Kendra” and “Carla.” In desperation, Rachel pays Marco two dollars to make a scene over Cassie in the next class. Something he plays up quite a bit. These are the type of very fun “real world” scenes that we don’t get often, but are great fun when we do.

**A Hawk’s Life:** It’s super fun having Tobias around for more of this book! He gets to plan with the group while in his “human morph” at the mall. And then gets to morph horse along with everyone else, too. It’s explained that since hawk is Tobias’s “true form” now, that he has to acquire all of his morphs as a hawk. We miss out on the scene of how this worked out with the horses.

**The Comic Relief:** Marco gets in a lot of fun quips about “modest horses” and “phone call making horses” etc etc. He also proves to still be the most canny member of the group when he, Cassie and Rachel are captured at the base. While there, he insists on asking about aliens and generally making out like a conspiracy theorist. When they escape and Rachel and Cassie challenge him on this, he says that that’s the only way they would be dismissed. Three regular, sane kids out there without shoes are a real question. Three crazy kids...well, they’re crazy.

**E.T./Ax Phone Home:** While the group are morphed horses, Ax is able to understand the Yeerks because they are talking Galard, some universal alien language. Another stupid thing about this book: it never really says how the Yeerks are “talking” at all while in the body of a horse. If I’m not mistaken, horses don’t have the most advanced vocal cords...

**Best (?) Body Horror Moment:** At once point while morphing, Cassie gets to see her hand as just bones. Fun!

**Couples Watch!:** Not much of anything here. When Cassie comes home late from their mission, her parents make a point of embarrassing her, asking if she was out on a date with Jake. It’s another nice human moment

in the book.

**If Only Visser Three had Mustache to Twirl:** I seriously don't buy the fact that Visser Three would show up at The Gardens and pretend to be a part of the Horror House ride. It just seems like something that he would consider so beneath him. And really, wouldn't it me? I mean, come on, the guy is the third most powerful Yeerk in the Empire! Does he really need to come along on the infestation mission of one little human Captain??

He does have this moment, though, when he meets up with the horse!Controllers and is upset with their findings (the fact that they didn't know what the alien artifact was) and kills one of them in a fit of rage:

*the Visser screamed in enraged thought-speak. The Visser indicated the no-longer-in-one-piece horse-Controller, like it had been someone else's fault he'd been lost.*

**Adult Ugly Crying at a Middle Grade Book:** Can I cry at the sheer stupidity and at the fact that the book is pretty much potty humor wrapped up in an Animorphs story??

**What a Terrible Plan, Guys!:** This time it's the Yeerks with the terrible plan! I mean, come on! Why, oh why, would they Control horses to check this place out? At no point in this series have we ever seen the Yeerks hesitate to just infest whomever is convenient. And they've already gotten thousands of people, so it's not like it's even that hard for them to do. This just makes absolutely no sense. And the plan to capture the guy while at The Gardens is almost as stupid, too! Yes, let's make a huge scene with Visser Three and Hork Bajir running around to capture this one guy while in the middle of a crowded theme park! Yes, that is the way to keep aliens on earth a secret (the apparent reason they're so interested in getting a hold of the artifact in Zone 91 in the first place!) So stupid. Visser Three himself admits that Plan B was better:

*"We still have the backup plan. It was always the better plan. We'll simply take control of a few of the humans working at this base."*

No one knows why this was ever the "backup plan."

### **Favorite Quote:**

The level of exasperation behind Marco's comment in this quote pretty much sums up my feelings about the plot of this entire book.

*said Marco. Ax said condescendingly.*

**Scorecard:** Yeerks 3, Animorphs 6

NO POINTS FOR ANYONE! BAD YEERKS! BAD ANIMORPHS!

**Rating:** So, the plot for this one was pretty stupid. But there was a lot of really fun "real world" moments that we don't often get, and there were a lot of really funny lines and running jokes, so much so that I actually still very much enjoyed reading it. The rating would then be somewhere in the middle. Not great, but its saved by a few things from being a complete disaster.

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## **Ashley says**

[Andalite toilet (hide spoiler)]

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## **Matthew says**

Funny, tense, yet witty and creepy.

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## **Swankivy says**

The unknown. What is it?

I think it's a toilet.

Hahahaha.

You'll understand if you read it. In any case this has kinda been done before in science fiction but I still find it neat how the author mixes humor with grave seriousness in this series.

Notable moments and inconsistencies:

A typo happened fairly early in the book: "shrivele way" was written instead of "shrivele away."

Zone 91 is an obvious reference to Area 51.

When Cassie is injured in a bomb blast that is thought to be just a "lost" bomb from the nearby military base, the theory that it's just an accident is accepted readily by Cassie's dad. I think most fathers would be so shaken and freaked out about their daughters being almost caught by a BOMB in an area deemed safe for civilians that he would at least start up an investigation of some kind. A military base causing bombs to go off outside the base which could kill civilians would be a massive scandal and news story.

During a conversation between Cassie's parents, Cassie overhears her dad joking that they can embarrass her by dragging her in to talk to "Father Banion" about her relationship with Jake. This suggests that there is some involvement with religion in their family. In a previous book, Ax noticed that Cassie's family does not do a prayer ritual of any kind before eating dinner, while Jake's family does. So apparently Cassie's family is churchgoing but does not say prayers at mealtimes.

The Zone 91 group attends The Gardens under a fake company name. The name they choose is "Gondor Industries." K.A. Applegate likes Tolkien references and this is just one of many.

It wasn't made clear why the Zone 91 company's outing to The Gardens was known to the Yeerks. Cassie found out about it because she was there to infiltrate, but up to that point no Yeerks had gotten inside, and the horse-Controllers who did never saw anything but the Andalite toilet. Why did they know about the outing if they didn't already have people on the inside?

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## **Joy says**

Um? When I started to reread this book, I did not remember the plot. Maybe I blocked it out from my memory. It's a mess!

A secret military base. Yeerk invested horses. Yeerks take over an amusement park. Cassie wins a horse race. Visser 3 fights Daffy Duck. And of course, the andalite toilet.

We also learn that andalites don't have a concept of money, and there's a universal standard language. Roll on that luxury space communism.

It wasn't -bad- as such, but it was poorly structured and generally mediocre. Too many ideas that didn't fit together.

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## **Z says**

Fantastic. There's conspiracies, X-Files references, Cassie being awful at being a spy, confused Air Force people, racehorses, and gratuitous use of the Gardens. What more could you ask for?

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## **Stephanie says**

[I mean, how could Viss

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## **Ben Babcock says**

I've spent a lot of time so far talking about how the *Animorphs* series is amazing. It deals with complex topics and themes in a way that remains entertaining and accessible for adolescents. It's a great gateway drug to full-blown science-fiction fandom. Although most of the books tend to feel light and fun, there is a very serious undertone to the entire series, one that finally comes to the fore as Applegate (and her legion of ghostwriters) draws the series to a close.

So it's easy to forget that this is, ultimately, a kids' series, and so there are times when the books are ... shall we say, lighter? That's not an excuse for *The Unknown*, but it's a reason.

The *Animorphs*, narrated by Cassie this time, investigate Zone 91. They do this as *horses*, because it turns out that the Yeerks are also interested in the alien tech the government is hiding in Zone 91, so much so that some poor low-level Yeerk grunts have to become horse-controllers.

Visser Three could literally morph an army officer, waltz onto the base, and take a peek—but *no*. He makes his underlings be horses. He is a *horrible* boss. He makes that Kevin Spacey character from *Horrible Bosses* look like nice-guy Boss of the Year.

Even the Visser eventually realizes this plan is beyond bonkers and falls back on the tried-and-true method of taking over *humans*. So shenanigans go down at the Gardens between the Yeerks and the “Andalite bandits” over the army officers having a field trip there. And the commander of the base, who caught Marco and Cassie and Rachel when they were trying to sneak onto it the first time, is a fairly incompetent loonie right out of ... well, a kids’ book.

P.S., the alien device? An Andalite toilet. A defunct model of Andalite toilet. Hilarious, no?

Very little about the plot of *The Unknown* makes sense, even within the *Animorphs* universe. But this gives me an opportunity to nitpick elements of that universe.

Zone 91 is Area 51 in all but name. That’s because if Applegate set the action at Area 51, then we would be able to conclude that the *Animorphs* live within flying distance of Groom Lake. It’s a big deal that the *Animorphs*’ location is undisclosed—not only does it make the story seem more secretive, but it creates a “this could be happening in your town!” atmosphere that surely thrills young readers.

Still, it’s awfully nice of Visser Three to confine so many of his operations to this small area of the United States. It seems like the invasion would proceed more quickly if the Yeerks set up their base somewhere like Washington, D.C., or even a metropolis like New York.

For that matter, this whole secret invasion strategy doesn’t seem to be paying dividends. The Visser’s Blade ship took out an Andalite Dome ship—so why, exactly, hasn’t the Visser just landed a full-scale military force? I mean, yeah, there would be rebellions to deal with, and I guess dealing with the then—five billion unruly population might be difficult. So maybe an all-out invasion would be untenable—but this tortuously slow process of taking over middle school principals is absurd.

I guess that’s why he’s Visser Three, not Visser Two, eh?

None of these complaints are serious jabs, mind you. The bar is totally lower for a series of Scholastic novels. For that same reason, *The Unknown* is not *bad*. It just lacks the gravity that I, as an adult fan, have come to appreciate about most of the books up until now. And even the humour doesn’t work well for me here. I liked Rachel and Cassie’s exchange about the latter’s (lack of) fashion, as well as Cassie’s eavesdropping on her parents’ conversation about discipline. Yes, Cassie, parents totally lie to you for your own good! But the whole throwaway gag of the Andalite toilet and the bumbling base commander and whatnot is just too juvenile (and it was probably too juvenile for teenage me reading this for the first time, because teenage me was just as much of an old, crochety man as I am now, although I had already ditched the corduroys by that time).

I just glanced quickly at my ratings so far, and it seems like my lowest-rated book has been #9: *The Secret*. It’s also a Cassie book—I should make it clear that my issue here is *not* Cassie. She’s a great narrator; she brings a kind of dry sense of humour to the table that is quite distinct from Marco’s buddy-buddy comedy. That is, I love her observations.

Still, *The Secret* had more meaty motifs than *The Unknown*, for the most part. So I guess that means this is my least-favourite *Animorphs* novel so far. It had to happen eventually. And keep in mind that this is not a *bad* novel, so think about what that means for the rest. It just lacks the punchiness of many of the previous instalments, and that tends to be what I’m looking for these days.

Next time, Marco’s mom is back in town. And she brought some mind-reading friends.

## My reviews of *Animorphs*:

← #13: *The Change* | #15: *The Escape* →

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### Deviki says

Um.....

Was the story plot nice?..... Not really

Did this *really* needed to happen?..... Not really

Did it feel like....one day author's friends started to talk about infamous zone 91 and all the famous alien TV show and movies associated with it..... And suddenly the author thought "you know what?.... Maybe I can just make a reference about zone 91 and make some kind of connections to the story I'm writing now".....

Did that work?..... Maybe about 10% worth.....

And in the end, you kind of have a very wacky and barely relatable story to tell.....

Now now..... Being a 90's kid, we all have seen our fair share of all the alien movies and TV shows and so called documentaries and what not about aliens....I'm not sure it was a bigger "thing" back then or I just somehow lost interest after that but whatever the reason it was, back then there was quite a lot of shows that involved Aliens....like we went a lil alien crazy back then..... So its no surprise that this alien craze would be mentioned somehow..... I mean, literally in the first book when they all saw the Andalite ship appearing from the sky.....everyone thought it was a flying saucer.....not like wondering if its a magical thing or anything.....I guess if you are in that 90's era you would make an instant connection an alien arriving in our planet .....because that's what TV and movies thought us .....we tried to relate seeing an alien appearing before our eyes to all the movies we watched.

However..... This book did not do much justice to that infamous 90s all alien related things. It makes sense to relate all the huge hype about aliens with this book, but in my opinion it kinda felt like it was poorly executed. It really felt like someone threw in a suggestion and the author thought "eh why not make a wacky story about it"

In the beginning of the story..... you see a horse was trying to make a phone call..... You know, its something to do with Yeerks or other new aliens. Because we are reading a science fiction book about aliens. But after that incident everything seemed so "cartoonist" like the whole plot that relates to zone 91 and the kids escaping the military prison and then later the events at The Gardens.

After reading 13 books, we know that Yeerks, Taxxon and Hork Bajir is not the only alien we know living among humans. So why the Animorphs doubt this is anything but an Alien's work is beyond me.....

Its almost comical really when they tried to deny the possibility of a possible "other" alien could have been captured by humans in zone 91.

Let's not jump ahead.....let's go back to the beginning.....

So. when Cassie's father gets a call to go out to the Dryland and get a unusually behaving horse and as soon as they got there..... Both Rachel and Cassie found out that there is something else is making the horse act weird and they quickly find out that it's actually a Yeerk. So now the question the book need to tell is "why

infect a horse?".....

So, later we found out that the Yeerks are trying to figure out what this whole hype is about zone 91.....well I guess.... An alien such as Yeeks would wanna find out what other aliens humans may have discovered. I mean, if there is actually another alien race already living among humans..... Maybe Yeerks find that to be a threat to their evil planning.....But the author didn't quite mention it properly why the Yeerks want to know about zone 91. However, the whole approach about this thing could have been more meaningful if the discovery wasn't a joke.

I felt like the author could have gone a different way with this book..... But like I said... It felt like she just wanted to touch on the subject of zone 91 and all the 90s cool alien shows and movies but don't really want to go down that path..... Just a surface touch for good luck sake..... I'm not sure if I'm making any sense here lol.....

So, the whole thing that made me frown is how the kids got caught by the military people and they escaped so quickly like nothing ever happened..... These people know that there is an alien (even if it is not a weapon) that the thing they are guarding is actually a real alien object.... They know, we are not alone in this universe.....but to think bunch of kids in leotards and bicycle shorts and no shoes and no means of transportation suddenly appearing out of nowhere is taken too lightly by them seem ridiculous.

THEY are not gonna let you off the hook just because you're kid. Especially when they found you in a unusual situation. Not to mention, they would have taken records of the kids face, thumbprint and whatnot..... But no.... Everyone and everything was very comical in this book.... Like the kids got away with saying cheesiest things and making bad jokes and nobody does anything. I think considering this kids are not anywhere near an adult or guardian, the military could have easily slapped them around for answers. I mean who is gonna believe some bunch of kids .....

They might not be local police but you are trespassing on their secure ground. They have all the rights to keep you on hold in their military prison. So heloooooo.....

Also why is the Yeerks plan so elaborate?..... They could have kidnapped one soldier and Visser three could acquire his DNA and go in and do the same until he have gotten the VIP access to their secure storage. Instead he send a bunch of horses to do the trick.....like whatttttt.....

Also does anyone feel like this place is even really secure? I mean within a few minutes a bunch of wild horses could make it all the way into the secured area just like that..... So..... Not very high tech and very secure like how the author was trying to convince the reader. I don't think a military secure facility would allow wild animals to roam around their compound. Like why the hell would they ? Its not safe and wild animals can poop everywhere and make a mess.

Then the whole thing at the Gardens..... Man this one.... This one **really** takes the cake..... So many people saw the aliens.....the captain was kidnapped by an alien and he knew this was not part of the The Gardens show.... Because he screamed and ran for his life when he got free. Then again everyone saw Hork Bajir and an Andalite running around. Mind you, people have seen an Andalite before at the mall (Ax).....so I'm pretty sure someone would have recognized that alien..... also after the Captain clearly knew about an actual alien.....and he escaped .....NOTHING HAPPENS.....like what !!!!!!!!

Here is the thing..... Visser three was so adamant about other animals being around them at while they were doing their evil planning yet..... They never seems to notice that a certain bear, hawk, wolf, tiger and gorilla always seem to be making appearance everywhere they are trying to deploy their plan.

Like when they were inside the house of horror.... The Hork Bajir and Visser three was there but a few fake gravestone away was a bear and a hawk and snake..... Like did they not see the same bear and hawk appearing before this..... Why didn't they just destroy them..... Instead choose to wait it out.....Like it makes no sense to me at all .....

Like sometimes, I wonder if Yeerks and Andalite really is smart like they claim. Or if the author bother recalling all the plot holes in previous books.

So in overall was the story fun to read? Maybe

Was it a fast read? Yes

Did this book move forward with our story!? Definitely not. It was just another book with wacky adventure.

BTW..... How soon can Cassie and Jake be more the just like like with each other? I'm kind of getting tried with their same description of their supposed "likes" for each other.

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### **Nikki says**

The plot of this is whatever, but it is SO FUNNY. I had forgotten how hilarious they all are. Even Cassie! Rachel and Marco's banter is A+ as usual.

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### **Janelle Dazzlepants says**

This is the first Animorphs book I ever owned as a child! I'd completely forgotten the plot though, so it was like reading it for the first time. :)

In this book, Cassie and Rachel discover that the Yeerks are controlling a pack of horses out in the desert. The Animorphs go to investigate, and find that the Horse-Controllers are trying to sneak into 'Zone 91' (the equivalent of Area 51). It turns out that the military staff of Zone 91 are unaware that the crashlanded alien spacecraft they've been guarding since the 1950's is actually a primitive Andalite toilet. The Yeerks are also clueless as to the purpose of the artifact, but want to destroy it all the same to further their mission. If humans have no proof of alien life, that makes it easier for the Yeerks to invade without questions being asked.

The Yeerks plan to destroy the artifact through enslaving the military personnel that work at Zone 91. Fortunately for them, the Zone 91 staff have rented out the Gardens Amusement Park that Saturday night, making it easy for the Yeerks to ambush key military personnel while on scary rides. Visser Three and co. try to snatch a high-ranking officer in the House of Horrors, but the Animorphs intervene, saving the day.

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I'm a total nut for X-Files and anything sci-fi (just take a peek at my 'read' list for proof) so naturally I loved this book. Even if there weren't the nostalgia of it being the first Animorphs book I ever owned, I'd still love the storyline. It was one of the more lighthearted and humourous books of the series thus far, with the joking jab at Area 51, the artifact turning out to be a 'waste disposal unit', and the battle in the House of Horrors.

I also liked this book as it represented another look into Yeerk culture. Before now, we hadn't even

entertained the idea of Yeerks controlling any other Earth species but humans - which in hindsight is silly, as they first creatures they ever inhabited bore a striking resemblance to monkeys! I wonder if the Animorphs will start to suspect the Yeerks of controlling other animals, because that'll certainly up the paranoia and 'we need to be stealthy' stakes.

I guess the only thing I didn't like about the book was that I wish it had been from Marco's perspective. He made a lot of wise cracks and showed some genuine fascination with Zone 91, but it would've been funnier to experience it all from the perspective of the resident sci-fi nut. I'm sure he would've slipped in some good Star Trek references. :P

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### **Julie says**

(I forged too far ahead and now I can't remember my exact impressions!)

This is around where I stopped in my last reread a couple years ago, because this is the last physical Animorphs book currently sitting on my shelf (the rest are in another country, alas). And ahahaha this one is just RIDICULOUS and freakin' hilarious, and I love it -- this time, the Animorphs take on their universe's analogue for Area 51, and it's fantastic. Maybe not as good as the Futurama episode about it, but still good. Marco is a conspiracy nut, Cassie is *absolutely godawful* at improvising on the fly, and an all-out Yeerk battle unfurling in a theme park is hysterical -- as in, I laughed so hard at one of Visser Three's reactions that I was shaking uncontrollably with muffled laughter on the subway for about 5 minutes, because I kept rereading the same two lines *over and over* and descending into more gigglefits. The Visser is such an amazingly well-done villain because KAA somehow believably writes him as both utterly terrifying, AND hilarious.

The whole book itself, really, is on the lighter and comedic side compared to the heavier subject matter of the previous. The only thing that ground my gears was Cassie talking to the jockey while in horse morph, just to win a race. For all their secrecy about morphing, sometimes the kids are SO FUCKING DUMB about talking to humans.

**EDIT:** I just upped this rating by a star, because in talking to Caitlin about it even weeks later, I still fell into gigglefits thinking about Area 51 and the horses and the theme park. This book is just SO FUNNY.

quotes to come later

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### **Noella says**

[Being undercover with the name Cindy Crawford? Giving the telephone number 123456789? (hide spoiler)]

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### **Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says**

**Brought to you by The Moonlight Library!**

The Yeerks appear to be infesting horses out at Zone 91, a poorly disguised parallel of Area 51 (which is in Nevada but we all know the Animorphs are in California!). What are the Animorphs going to do about it? Why, morph horses, of course!

This is one of the better books in the Applegate-written section of the series purely for its comedic value. We don't expect Cassie to be the funny one, but she's run over by a tank as a cockroach and then runs in a thoroughbred race. There are plenty of funny moments in this book as Cassie's naivety comes to the fore – she gives a fake name as "Cindy Crawford" and a fake phone number of "12345678". Also, Rachel buys her a new outfit, which actually makes other boys notice her, and makes Marco go slightly insane (but did we ever expect anything else?)

This is the first book after Tobias has been given his morphing power back, and it demonstrates how awkward it must be for a hawk to go to human places to acquire animals (a racetrack for the horses). Tobias also grumbles a lot about how poor the morphs are in comparison to his own body, or grumbles about being left out.

The Yeerks want to know if the rumoured alien technology held at Zone 91 is a threat to them or their invasion, and although they never actually find out what it is, Ax knows and informs the Animorphs. The Yeerks are still desperate enough to attack humans in broad daylight (well, night time, but in a public place) to force an infestation, and Cassie is the one to come up with a plan and foil them. Don't underestimate her. She may be a tree hugger but she's also one of the most ruthless Animorphs. It's dangerous, because she'll look all innocent with her big wide eyes until you realise you've lost a major battle in the war and have to retreat.

Cassie is a badass and should not be underestimated.

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