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K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

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The Animorphs have been split up before. And they've had to fight battles without one another. But this time is very different. Not only is Cassie totally alone. She's managed to find herself in Australia. In the rural Outback. The other Animorphs and Ax don't even know she's there.

Cassie doesn't have any idea where she's going, or if she can even survive the rugged terrain. But she does know she has to get to a town or village and contact her family and friends. Because she's just realized that there's someone else who is also new to the Outback.

Visser Three.

The Unexpected Details

Date : Published August 2000 by Scholastic Paperbacks (first published July 1st 2000)

ISBN : 9780439115186

Author : K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Fantasy, Aliens

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From Reader Review The Unexpected for online ebook

Ben Babcock says

Nobody expects the Australian Inquisition!

Animorphs #44: The Unexpected is a wildly uneven book that vacillates from cringe-worthy to touching and back, with little to no regard for anything resembling a unified plot, coherent characterization, or actual writing skills. It's not that it's a bad story; it's just a mess.

Cassie ends up in Australia after inadvertently stowing aboard a passenger jet bound for that country. The first half of the book comprises her hiding from the Yeerks aboard this jet in various morphs and in her human form, culminating in a dramatic escape from the plane by jumping out of it. This is *Megamorphs*-level action, I must say, and it is quite exhilarating. But when Cassie touches down in Australia, half the book is already gone, yeah? And so the rest, no matter how interesting, feels far shorter than we deserve.

This book is notable for how little the other Animorphs appear in it. I do enjoy Cassie as a narrator, but having her carry virtually the entire book on her own is a tough ask. I would have preferred to see all, or even some, of the Animorphs stranded in Australia. There's so much more the writer could have done with that idea! Instead, Cassie makes friends with a kid of Aborigine descent (presumably?) and then they get to amputate his grandfather's leg together. Fun times!

I kid, but I kid you not—that leg amputation scene is some of the darkest shit we've seen so far in this series, at least for its grittiness. And that's where I have a big problem with *The Unexpected*: it just can't decide if it wants to be a light romp in the Outback or this serious rumination on Cassie's misgivings about prosecuting this war against the Yeerks. And in not making a decision, we get these incredibly jarring transitions from light-hearted to dark in a way that doesn't work. At all.

Anyway, next time we're back to Serious Drama™ as Marco's father gets embroiled in a suspiciously advanced physics project!

My reviews of *Animorphs*:

← #43: *The Test* | #45: *The Revelation* →

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

Cassie takes on the Yeerks by herself and is summarily transported to Australia where she reveals her morphing power to an Aboriginal family but it's OK because they're charming natives who believe in spirits, hee hee isn't that cute *rolls eyes*

The book opens with the Animorphs somehow believing they can take a piece of crashed Bug fighter to the Government to prove they're fighting an alien invasion – because presumably an alien itself, a talking bird,

and four kids who can turn into animals, not to mention an ally race of ancient androids and friendly parasites and a freaking spaceship that looks like Snoopy isn't enough to convince the Government they need to start fighting a war. No, that piece of Bug fighter is going to convince EVERYONE.

See the full review on The Moonlight Library!

Amantha says

Two things I learned from this book: Cassie can't differentiate between an Australian and South Dakotan accent, and it's perfectly okay for two fourteen-year-olds to amputate a 70-year-old man's leg if necessary.

Okay.

Caitlin says

So, I liked this book. The plot was an interesting diversion from the usual and I didn't have any qualms about the writing (except for the somewhat abrupt ending.) My problem with it was such: if you're going to do a stand-alone one-person book at this stage in the game, so late in the series, with only so many books left, I expect some sort of like *reason* for it. Except for maybe some of the stuff at the beginning, I came out of this thoroughly confused as to its point. It didn't really expand the plot, it didn't expand on Cassie's character, it didn't really *do* anything.

So while it was good, and I didn't hate it or anything, in the grand scheme of things, I just wish there had've been more.

Quote I liked:
(view spoiler)

And a tiny "Marco/Ax" thought popped up in my head. I tried to tell it to go away, but I dunno man. Cassie has Jake, Rachel has Tobias.... don't judge me. (hide spoiler)]

T Berry says

I have mixed feelings about this book.

There were some things I really enjoyed about it. Cassie taking care of business on her own (which....I feel

like that's happened more with her than any other Animorph at this point. I can think of like....3 or 4 other times she's done something big entirely on her own). Australia (including aboriginal characters and the kangaroos. And the boomerang for hunting rather than play/sport).

The ending scene felt, for the most part, great.

Aside from Cassie's fairly unfounded guilt over "learning how to throw a boomerang from someone else" while Jake was sick with worry about her. As if she was only having a grand time in Australia and not spending most of her time guilty and afraid. I guess that's the first of my downsides. I get that Cassie is, generally, the moral center of the Animorphs. But too often that gets translated as guilt over....I don't want to say silly, but that's the only word that comes to mind—things.

Also the whole opening premise was pretty silly. In an over the top and out of character way. Like, from the start, Cassie not getting any response when she was calling for help. As well as....basically the whole way that thing went down. I assume the point was to get Cassie to Australia for this book, but that was a clumsy and convoluted way to go about that.

Having said that, I did overall enjoy the book, I suppose. Hence why it's a 3 instead of a 2. There were just definitely things I didn't like about it. Probably either 5 or 6 out of 10.

Aurora Dimitre says

I mean, it's a Cassie book.

Jackie Krasuski says

I do not know how I ever would have survived junior high without this fantastic science fiction series. Maybe the story quality went down as the book numbers got higher, but the idea that aliens were invading our planet secretly... it was almost good enough for a young teenager to believe.

Stephanie says

It's a real shame that Cassie's books tend more often than not to fall shorter than everyone else's in terms of quality and poignancy, at least in my opinion. With her moral compass and kind nature, she has the potential to have some pretty amazing books. (I mean, she was pretty amazing in the previous book, even though her "moment" was small.) Except in order to bring out her character, she often gets put into rather ridiculous situations. This time, she gets stuck alone in the cargo hold of a flight to Sydney, where she has to trick and fight Hork-Bajir- and other Controllers on her own, crash lands in the Australian outback somewhere, has a local indigenous Australian and his family discover her secret, and then has to fight off Visser Three, Taxxons, *and* Hork-Bajir mostly on her own. Really, this book could have only worked well if it appeared earlier in the series, i.e. before The Sickness (Animorphs #29).

Ridiculous point the first: The other Animorphs take a *long* time to respond to her calls for aid when things start to get heated between some Marines and some Controllers.

Ridiculous point the second: After all the fighting near the gates between Animorphs and Controllers and Marines, that *any* flight takes off as soon as it seems to do. Granted Cassie was knocked out for a time, but I

doubt it was more than the probably minimum 4 hours the airport security would require after such a big breach of security.

Ridiculous point the third: After the first Bug fighter's riders failed to capture or kill Cassie, that no alarms went off and no emergency landing was arranged as far as we can tell when the cargo bay doors were *wide open for quite some time* until Cassie was able to close them.

Ridiculous point the fourth: The passengers had mysterious burns from Dracon fire, and the plane's door was opened for Cassie to escape. (Do you really think the Yeerks cared what happened to the people on the plane and thought to close the door and leave things as they were before they arrived? That's what I thought.)

Ridiculous point the fifth: Cassie's massive self-doubt about her abilities to make good decisions at any point during this book. Really, this is more like at least three separate ridiculous points all together.

Three more under the cut: (view spoiler)

The redeeming qualities of this book are when Cassie actually reflects on her own actions in this war, and how can she live with herself and her decisions, and more importantly *how* she should continue her resistance. There are also Cassie's interactions with Yami's grandfather, and the wisdom he imparts to her.(view spoiler). And then the humor at the very end – between Ax and Marco's comments, then Tobias' description of what Jake was like while Cassie was missing. (view spoiler) This is also the fewest amount of quotes I have selected from a single Animorphs book in a LONG time. Barely three pages before adding in the actual review and the additional commentary.

Do everything you can, and anything you must.

< Move over, Marines, > [Marco] said. < The zoo has landed. > [after Marco and the others excepting Cassie arrived in a baggage car]

< We thought maybe – just maybe – you could use a little help, > Marco called, knuckle-walking across the tarmac.

< And the rest of us were [expecting to look] like roadkill. > Rachel. Squinting her nearsighted grizzly eyes and bounding after Bald Spot. < We took a vote. We're pooling our money and enrolling Marco in driver's ed. > -- page 8 – Love how Marco's driving skills keep coming back into play! But it seems strange how long the other Animorphs were completely silent to Cassie's calls... they could have at least had Ax tell her they were on their way or something. (The brackets is me replacing the original word, "looking" with something that makes a little more sense grammatically and in tense.)

[Ax is morphed a cheetah] Ax cornered a third Controller between two cargo bins.

Whipped his tail. Flicked air. Let out a sound that wasn't even close to "meow."

< This appendage works well to balance the cheetah when it runs, but it is useless as a weapon. >

< You'll have to settle for teeth and claws, Ax[-]man, > Jake called. – page 13 – Missed a dash mark for Ax's nickname. A nice bit of humor in general, too.

A thumb, four fingers, pale and bumpy like a plucked chicken, shot from the tip of each wing. Rib bones

melted and reshaped, growing to my normal size. Legs straightened and lengthened, the claws softening into ten toes on two human feet.

And then I stopped morphing.

I was still more gull than girl, a weird mix of fluffy wings and pure horror. The Blair Muppet Project. But I didn't look human. Not even close. – page 20 – I'll give you that, Cassie... but you also don't exactly look like an Andalite mid-morph, either, especially with your hair peeking out on your head too.

Besides, Marco and Ax found this piece of information on a closed Defense Department site in an encrypted, top-secret memo to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It takes way more than a security clearance and a secret code to defeat Ax. – page 36-37

(view spoiler)

Jenny Clark says

The writing was good, the adventure was good. The characters were good, though I feel like this is a step back for Cassie at parts. There are parts where she doubts herself the same way she did in much earlier books, but she also shows great strategic thinking here, and stays by her convictions.

Kim Dyer says

For a filler story, this was certainly not one of the worst. It's basically a solo adventure for Cassie, in which a mission goes wrong and she finds herself trapped on plane on route to Australia. The first half of the story was probably the most exciting. Cassie does not actually reach her destination until over half way through, but her attempts to avoid Controllers in the confined space of the aeroplane in rather tense and exciting.

Yet the book did have some problems. Firstly, the natives portrayed in this story are a lot like the Inuits back in *The Extreme* and the Amazonian Tribe in *The Forgotten* - simple, spiritual people who are surprisingly open to morphing due to their belief in shape-shifters. I guess points for including people of other cultures, but I wish that these portrayals were based less on stereotypes. Secondly, this ghostwriter is not great at writing action scenes. The pacing of this novel is pretty poor on the whole and fights become confusing as they degenerate into sound effects.

The character development for Cassie, however, was interesting. You can see how she's slowly reaching breaking point. She is quieter about this than Jake, however the choices she has made are beginning to weigh on her as she fears the point where she will eventually make a fatal decision. I am really curious to see if the story will ever reach this point, as Cassie's sensitivity often makes her seem like the "weakest" link in the team, but I suppose only time will tell.

Julie says

Ghostwriter: Lisa Harkrader. I'm hoping her later books are better, because this one was just sort of 'ehhh'. That said, her characterisations of the team were fine, and so was her prose -- the book itself is an action-packed thrill ride from problem to problem, complete with explosions and base-jumping out of airplanes.

But the problem is mainly structural and with the premise itself, which a ghostwriter probably couldn't get around if this was the plot handed to them. Separating an Animorph from the rest of the team is a *really* risky prospect as an author -- they need to be interesting enough to carry the whole book by themselves, and the plot itself needs to be interesting enough to help you get over how much you miss the rest of the team. (Books like #41 *The Familiar* could get away with it because you still got to interact with *some* version of the Animorphs, plus the premise was so BATSHIT NUTSO FASCINATING.)

Unfortunately, *The Unexpected* doesn't deliver on either of those fronts. I liked the characterisation details about Cassie here, but you don't learn or explore anything particularly earth-shattering about her. The Australian setting is interesting for showcasing other environments and other cultures, but there was no real point to this tangent, and mostly I rolled my eyes about the little pseudo-romantic diversion (what was the

point?). Our aboriginal character reminded me a bit of the sassy Inuit from #25, and I'm conflicted about it; on the one hand, it's nice that there's representation of indigenous peoples in this series, but on the other hand, the fact both times they didn't bat an eye at shapeshifting magic is a little suspect.

The whole plot just feels a bit like a bunch of deus ex machina thrown together for the sake of having an adventure in the outback (which is nigh-impossible to make happen and have it still feel natural) -- the romp in the Amazon made a lot more sense and was way better constructed, imo.

When you finally reunite with the rest of the team at the end, I was just awash in how VERY VERY MUCH I HAD MISSED THEM, and how perfect their group banter was, and how fun and funny they are together as a group -- so I desperately wish Harkrader had had more of a chance to write exactly that, rather than being bogged down with a single-character adventure, which drags.

Favourite quote:

(view spoiler)

Noella says

A confrontation between the Yeerks and Animorphs happen at the airport and Cassie gets cornered into hiding in a cargo bay of a plane headed to Sydney. Somewhere on the way she abandons the plane and finds ends up meeting some aboriginals. She spends time in the outback learning from them until the Yeerks come searching for her. No trip to Australia is complete without a kangaroo sighting, and in Cassie's case, acquiring the kangaroo morph. I thought this side story was a bit late in the series and doesn't really further the overall plot of overcoming the Yeerk invasion. With only a few books left in the series, I'm unsure how it will end and whether it will be satisfying...

David Latham says

A Cassie story i liked. But, by this point in the series i am really judging these stories by how important are they to the over-all story line?

So this is why it can only be a 3 stars, because although it was a good read, very important for the character development of Cassie - especially after Tobias latest story and the aim to blow up the Yeerk Pool and her being against it due to her morals. But did we really need a story where she somehow gets sent to Australia?

Amalia Dillin says

Cassie takes on the world kind of alone in this one, and seems to make new friends to help her in the fight along the way. Also deals with some of her guilt about being in the fight at all, and a little bit of weird guilt for maybe thinking a boy she met while fighting for her life was kind of interesting/attractive which I thought was... I mean, she and Jake are not even formally together so it is weird that she gets down on herself

about this, start to finish. I don't know. Why should she feel like she has to hide the fact that she made a friend on the other side of the world? It isn't like she was pursuing anything romantic with him at any point in the story. AND THEN she feels guilt because Jake was searching for her with single-minded purpose and intensity and she was learning to throw a boomerang, and i am like, GIRL. YOU WERE CLEANING UP THE MESS YOU MADE AND HELPING TO SAVE PEOPLE'S LIVES. IT IS NOT LIKE YOU TOOK OFF ON AN AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK VACATION AND LEFT EVERYONE HANGING ON PURPOSE WHILE YOU KICKED BACK.

anyway. *ahem*

This book clearly felt a little problematic to me in some areas.

Jerry says

A different sort of adventure from this series...but a great one!
