



The Illusion

K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

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The Yeerks possess a weapon that could be the biggest threat to the Animorphs yet. The anti-morphing ray transforms a person in morph back to natural form. Unless they find and destroy the top-secret ray, the Animorphs could be exposed for good.

The Illusion Details

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From Reader Review *The Illusion* for online ebook

Kim Dyer says

This is possibly the hardest one to review so far. On the one hand, there is a lot I liked about the start of the book. The scenes where Ax taught Tobias more about his Andalite heritage were very sweet and moving, and something that I'm surprised weren't touched upon much earlier in the series. It's probably the grittiest Animorphs book too, feeling a lot more intense and real than some of the others. If you're looking for an example to use when arguing that Animorphs is YA and not middle grade, this is the one to use.

But on the other hand, I also felt that it went a bit far. Tobias's torture takes up over 30 pages of a book that's only 140 pages long. It's brutal and grim, and the ghostwriter goes to great lengths to describe it in detail, making it very hard to read. The novel also felt a little rushed to get to this point, with action scenes degenerating into sounds and short sentences which make them hard to follow.

All in all, it's certainly unforgettable, but I'm not sure I could ever read it again.

Jen says

Holy crow, you want to talk about right in the feels? On a certain level, I can't believe Scholastic had the guts/temerity to publish and market this and give it to kids. I am so incredibly glad they did, but whoa; even as an adult this rips my heart out and stomps on it.

My one biggest beef with this would be that they carry forward the mission from the last book, but it seems absolutely no one has anything to say about Rachel being one person again. I think Applegate lost out on so much by not exploring the fall-out from the two Rachels plotline, *especially* since this is a Tobias book.

That said, this book is so incredible in that it spends a goodly chunk of its time actually describing torture. In a YA book. That's something else, and to have a character as awesome as Tobias have to explore what it is to stay yourself under the most extreme circumstances was outrageously intense. I can't...I just...I was totally with Rachel when she wanted to rip Taylor apart, even though I know Tobias was right.

In this we get to see that Jake is drawing further and further into leader mode, which is a whole different kind of heartbreaking; we get to see a voluntary host and how humanity is itself crap sometimes and doesn't need Yeerks to create bad situations; and we get to add the Andalite heritage Tobias has to his identity crisis. I like that that is pressed so much here, since we know that Elfangor is Tobias's dad and since the boy/bird paradox is wearing a little thin by now. Tossing in the Andalite variable really brings a new dimension to Tobias trying to figure himself out, and I love love love his morphing Ax and being able to tell us what the raw nature of an Andalite is.

But rough. Such a rough and dark book in so many ways. Oh, this series; still so powerful even after all these years.

Jerry says

Back to what I've come to expect from this series!

Katelynn says

Okay I need to get serious for a second. This book exploded me. Any emotional damage I have as an adult is PROBABLY FROM READING THIS AS A TWELVE YEAR OLD (thanks mom) (but seriously, thanks mom). I wonder if this book - my favourite from the regular series, a book I read so often I carried it with me everywhere and eventually lost it - is how I came to love the things I love. How all pain has a root that I love to unearth; how pleasure can hurt more than anything, how the memory of it is what makes you want to die in the end. And how everything can be made okay by that brave, golden love of your life, walking over the sand on the beach to meet you after it's all over. That's my writing in a nutshell. And that's this book in a nutshell. This book, hands down, is the reason that, 15 years later, I still can't forget everything these kids went through. And I think I became a better kid from sticking it through with them, too.

JonSnow says

5/5 excellent book! So glad I've kept reading.

Update:

Read this one again, it was so good! This book really adds some depth to Tobias.

Spoilers:

The whole Tobias being captured on purpose, plot, and his issues with identity are thought provoking to say the least. I really enjoyed this one.

Ben Babcock says

Damn but the cuts keep coming.

This is probably one of my favourite books of the series. *The Illusion* is Tobias' moment. Although early books in the series address the challenges Tobias faces living as a hawk, this book drives home the *incompatibility* of his life with human lives. Red-tailed hawks don't live as long as humans. Tobias can only assume human form for two hour intervals, assuming he doesn't want to lose his morphing ability. And as his friends age in their human forms, his human morph will always be that of a teenage boy.

To top off the sucker punch, this book explicitly addresses the attraction between Tobias and Rachel, from beginning to end. There is no subtext here, no "will they or won't they". From the drama-infused opening to that ending monologue where he realizes that he is human, bird, *and* "The person that Rachel loves" (cry),

this is all about love. And of course, like any great literature, it's doomed love.

Applegate addresses the anti-morphing ray more directly in this book. Tobias serves as bait, because the red-tailed hawk is not a morph but his actual form, so the ray won't work when turned on him. What the Animorphs don't count on, however, is that the Controller in charge of the ray is an insane Yeerk in the body of an insane teenage girl (an anti-Rachel, if you will) who decides that torturing Tobias is much better than merely killing him after the ray doesn't work.

Not going to lie, the middle part of this book is incredibly uncomfortable. Like, watching a torture scene in a Tarantino movie uncomfortable. OK, maybe not *that* bad ... but this is definitely one of the most graphic psychological moments of antagonism in the entire series. The sub-visser strips Tobias raw, emotionally speaking. If this were a TV series, *The Illusion* would be a clip show, with flashbacks to previous episodes interwoven through the narrative. First Tobias experiences incredible moments of pain, and then the sub-visser complements that with excruciating moments of pleasure. All the while he tries to take refuge in his subconscious, hawk and human, while he rails from the realities that Rachel might be dead and he might never get out of here. If this were a TV show, the entire episode would hinge on the performance of the actor playing Tobias. In the case of the book, Tobias' voice is exquisite in its portrayal of his hurt and his anger.

There is commentary here about war too, of course. It actually comes fairly early in the book, as Rachel talks about how much she wants Tobias to be human with her, but they agree he should stay as a hawk because then he can help in the fight. This is one of the costs of war that isn't always made manifest amidst the depictions of battles and campaigns: war is a suspension of the ordinary. It's the "we'll get married after the war" you occasionally see. Tobias is hurting, but he can't process that hurt right now, because he has a war to fight. So he bottles it all up, stuffs it down into his subconscious, and soldiers on. Like that's healthy.

Then there's the ending. It's perfect. The Animorphs get a day at the beach. No Yeerks. No lingering problems. Just a single, blessed moment of relaxation. For once everyone gets a chance to be, if not happy, then content. It is a calm before the storm, of course—nothing lasts forever and the war is *far* from over, with everything about to get worse. But it is such a sharp contrast to everything that just happened, and it is a reminder that there will never necessarily be a good or perfect time to take that walk, go to that beach, or be happy alongside the person you love: you just have to seize the moments as they come, because you don't know how long they'll last or when you'll get another.

This one is for Rachel and Tobias. Your doomed love is too big for my heart.

Janelle Dazzlepants says

This is by far the darkest issue in the Animorphs series yet. The fact that it centres around Tobias kind of tells you everything, really.

Tobias is still struggling with his identity as both a bird and a boy, when he volunteers to be the bait in a Yeerk trap. The Animorphs need to make the Yeerks think they've caught an Andalite, and as Tobias can easily morph and demorph from Andalite without revealing that the bandits are a bunch of kids, he's the natural choice. Unfortunately it doesn't go too smoothly for Tobias - he's repeatedly tortured by a pretty blonde Controller to the brink of death, until the Animorphs come in and save the day.

Sometimes I struggle with the idea that these were books written for kids. Sure, there are sad moments in every Disney movie and that helps kids learn about death and conflict, but this was pushing it a bit for me. I was horrified and upset, seeing into his psyche as he was tortured almost to the point of insanity. Even though this is clearly a fictional series, it was a horrible reminder of some of the things that humanity is capable of. I'm happy to go back to farfetched tales about time travel to the Jurassic period. :(

Orinthia Lee says

3.5 dibuletin ke bawah.

Julie Decker says

Tobias is yet again confused about his nature, caught between bird and human (with a bit of Andalite on the side). After some confusion with Rachel suggesting she wants Tobias to be human, the team has to go after the Anti-Morphing Ray and Tobias volunteers himself as the one to be captured, because if they use the ray on him he won't turn into a human and they'll think the ray doesn't work. Their plan to infiltrate The Sharing's community center and fall deliberately into the Yeerks' trap goes well, but then Tobias is in the position where he has to endure torture to make the Yeerks think they're wrong about their technology working to reveal morphs. He meets Taylor, a human-Controller with an insane past, and while he's tortured with memories both painful and pleasurable, he also has visions of his Andalite father. He doesn't know how much he can stand, but he won't give up his friends. Especially since they won't give up on him.

My favorite lines:

Tobias: It's funny. We've been on so many missions together. Battled Hork-Bajir-Controllers side by side. Saved each other's lives time and again. And still, after all that, it's something as simple as dancing that makes my heart pound.

Ax: "This looks promising."

Tobias: "This looks like trouble."

Ax: "As you pointed out: We are here in search of trouble."

Taylor: "Your childish loyalty is amusing. But you'll learn, Andalite. You'll learn that it's foolish to protect your friends. Friends always betray you."

Tobias: "Mine wouldn't."

Taylor: "Oh, wouldn't they? I pity your innocence."

Tobias: "What would you know about disloyalty?"

Tobias: "You've failed him. Visser Three won't tolerate failure. You know that. But I guess that's life in the happy little Yeerk Empire. I won't give in. Do you know why?"

Taylor: "No."

Tobias: "Because if I surrender, you'll live. And if I resist, you'll die. And I want you to die."

Jenny Clark says

Poor Tobias, fighting to stay in the battle, fighting to stay human, fighting to stay with Rachel...

"We're the same you and me. Warriors. But you've got to realize that there's more I'm not just a warrior," she said, her blue eyes glittering so close to mine "I'm a girl. I'm trying not to let myself be dragged off the cliff, away from all normalcy, into this insane life we live. I don't like what it does to me, Tobias, and I need to be a girl again. I need a little bit of normalcy, okay? Not a lot, but some"

"All the things we're supposed to live while we're in school, Tobias, you know, dances like this, nights out at the movies, walks on the beach. That stuff is passing us by. I want those things. We deserve them"

Well, this one hit hard. Tobias is sacrificed or sacrifices himself, depending on how you look at it, for the group and is exposed to torture at the hands of an insane yeerk/young woman. Yikes.

I thought Ax and the kids could not use thought speak as humans, but Ax thought speaks to Tobias while Ax is in human morph.

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

Brought to you by The Moonlight Library!

Tobias and the Animorphs need to stop the Yeerks' newest invention: the anti-morphing ray. This means one of the Animorphs needs to 'prove' it doesn't work. The only one who can do that is Tobias – his nothlit body is a hawk, so any forced 'demorph' would fail.

This book is one of the most harrowing in the series. Not only does the darkness stem from Tobias' own sad home life, but it features torture by an insane Controller and the most incredible and gory fight scene written into the Animorphs series. In short, it's awesome J

Tobias isn't 'captured' until about halfway through the book, and before that we get a lovely scene where he needs to practice morphing Ax (so he still has an 'Andalite' morph). Tobias and Ax are related, in a weird way. This scene makes me smile and breaks my heart a little. Ax may be millions of miles away from his home world and people, but Tobias is his nephew and Ax wants to share his culture with the strange, broken human boy.

Similarly, as Tobias slowly moves towards death, he experiences a strange Andalite fable called utzum, one that Ax does not entirely believe in. I've always loved the romantic idea of Tobias being part Andalite, but when you look at it really, morphing is all about DNA. He actually has no part of Andalite in him at all, not even the human part of him. He would have inherited some stranger's genes (Elfangor's human morph) along with his mother's, so I've never really understood how he can experience Andalite things such as Ax's cry for help in Book #4, or this utzum.

Of course, when you love Tobias and are watching him be tortured to death, you can suspend your disbelief, ignore the plot holes, and focus on how Elfangor is his daddy and Tobias is actually the son of the greatest Andalite hero ever. And that's how he's strong enough to not only withstand the torture, but to let his torturer go when the other Animorphs finally show up to rescue him and Rachel puts two and two together and understandably flies into a rage in grizzly morph.

ladysugarquill says

That was the longest and most detailed torture scene I have ever read. The fuck.

Julie says

Ghostwriter: Ellen Geroux.

So, speaking of Tobias and identity issues...

I keep mentioning that the last several books have been painful, and this one is no exception. The plot actually picks up on the mission introduced in the previous book: the Yeerks are developing an Anti-Morphing Ray, and so the Animorphs decide to use Tobias as bait in order to make the Yeerks think that it doesn't work. They willingly let Tobias be captured to further their aims.

Sacrifice and hard decisions have been the de facto theme for a while now. Which ties into one of my favourite quotes here, which is nothing new and has been touched on before, but it really illustrates the toll of leadership:

"I'm glad you made it, Tobias. You're our eyes. Our ears. Our air force. If we lost you, we'd be nothing. Like Joan of Arc without her sword, Patton without his pearl-handled pistols..."

<Saddam without forty-eight palaces, the special Republican Guard, and a jar of anthrax? Stop the flattery, man. You're making me blush.> We both laughed. It felt good to hear Jake say I was indispensable, but with Jake you could never be sure anymore what was sincere. And what was just expedient.

He'd been the most open of guys, back in the old days. What you saw with Jake was what you got. But he'd been a leader for a long time now. He'd learned to say what he needed to say.

Jake needed me as one of the Animorphs. He liked me, respected me, was happy for me when I was happy. And, when he had to, he used me without regard for anything but winning.

It's delivered matter-of-fact, but it's a quietly heartbreaking moment for me: the insidious creeping doubt inside these friendships, to the extent of mistrusting a simple compliment. Yet Tobias does so for good reason -- I don't think he's wrong about it, either. It's also so complicated knowing that Jake can manipulate his own friends (soldiers) for the greater good, but draws the line at his innocent family. He isn't infallible.

Anyway. After Tobias is captured, he's on his own. This book actually reminds me a bit of #6 The Capture in

that regard, in that the last chunk of the book retreats into Tobias' head and becomes an internal struggle, a mental battle, see-sawing through memories. It feels like most of the book is him being tortured at the hands of an unstable Yeerk; the section drags on, not because it's bad, but because it's excruciating. He's tortured. Emotionally, physically. Straight-up tortured.

It's a very good book, but it does feel a bit like it's re-treading old ground; Tobias has been wrestling with his "am I human or hawk or what" feelings for over thirty books now. Which is an overly-simplified way of describing it, and I suppose kudos to the series for not neatly and easily resolving an issue like that within a single book, but I feel like I want a bit more (hence docking a star). I want more scenes like him morphing Andalite and learning about Andalite culture from Ax, exploring his own 'heritage', so to speak.

Also, I only just recently realised that until the forties, Ax and Tobias have half as many narrated books as the others, trading off books in the narration order -- this might actually explain why Tobias was one of the characters I connected with least over the course of the series. It's a shame, because he *is* great. (Ax still stood out to me because his book was the first one I ever read, and plus, yanno, he's an alien, so I pay more attention to him.)

The last idyllic scene of all the Animorphs relaxing at the beach together, and Tobias/Rachel being adorable, is an extremely welcome one. They've all been through a fucking lot lately, every single one of them. It's been a rough ride ever since the David trilogy, rarely letting up.

They deserve the downtime, but I can't imagine the future books are going to be any easier on them.

Richelle says

It's somewhere around here that I forget if I've read the book or not, but this one I definitely read. I'm pretty sure it broke my young heart, too.

Jonathan Grant says

This one was pretty good. Liked Taylor's character. Tobias' torture bit kind of a dragged ... in a bad way though.

Chelsea Gouin says

Lovely Tobias. <3 This book was really intense and I had to remind myself it was aimed at a young audience. It gets way dark and deep by the end of it. It starts out fun enough with Tobias and Rachel on a date but quickly goes south when Erak reveals a plan involving the Yerks anti-morphing ray. So Tobias is the chosen one for the mission, being a nolilth and his primary body being that of hawk, they can trick the Visser into thinking the ray is a failure. There is an intense torture scene where Tobias can't figure out who he truly is...boy, hawk, Andalite hybrid... the poor kid had his identity crisis as the Yerks fried him. It was a good book that tied up a few loose ends. Then again, there are few Tobias books I haven't enjoyed.

Alan Gilfoy says

Tobias' hawk issues sure sure showed up quickly, but slightly differently than his usual angst. It's clear he's fawning over Rachel - can't blame him for that. It makes sense that the species barrier would get to them, that Rachel wants some normalcy. "She's not all warrior" seems like a nod to the split personality of the last book.

It looks like Ereka is creating a diversion for them, or he came to tell the Animorphs something and needed to come up with a distraction for himself.

There was great planning for the bait mission. I liked the change of pace in confusing the Yeerks about their plan versus sabotaging the device or event itself. Responsible leader Jake and brave Rachel - it makes sense that they'd volunteer first, though Ax is better for the mission and Tobias is much better. I sort of saw that choice coming.

It's about time one of them morphed an Andalite - even though they couldn't make it a habit (showing the Yeerks a bunch of clones), I thought that would have happened a bit already. Tobias trying out the morph was great for the Tobias-Ax relationship as well as providing canon on Andalites.

How do the Yeerks understand morphing technology well enough to reverse it?

The action flowed well. I was surprised that the eagle wasn't Rachel, but instead an actual injured bird. Well, it was terminal anyway.

Ah, so losing Tobias is one of the few things Rachel is afraid of. Tobias didn't seem to want Taylor dead, with "let Visser Three torture her" as an argument that would resonate with Rachel. The Taylor-Rachel comparison told me that "popular girl falling from grace" was another path Rachel's life could have taken. This seems similar to how Tobias could've been susceptible to the Sharing if he didn't have Jake looking out for him.

Tobias' torture was more great background on his messed-up life. His uncle was gratuitously mean about the art, but I don't understand the neighbor kid getting praised for crap either. Tobias' uncle zoned out in front of the TV reminds me of Marco's father after Eva's supposed death. The choppy prose seemed symbolic of the pressure Tobias was under. I've often heard of writers doing that and this is one of the first times I've noticed it.

Often Animorphs blends plot and comic relief. This book combined current action and facts about the setting similarly well.

Stephanie says

This book was so incredibly difficult to read. Usually, I have a hard time slowing down as I read these. Not this one. No, this one I could not *not* read slowly. It hurt to read, and not for any deficiency in the writing or the story. It hurt to read because of what happens, what Tobias suffers on this mission. If we thought he had

already suffered and lost enough – getting trapped as a red-tailed hawk, having to survive as a hawk, gaining back his morphing ability but staying a hawk, learning about who his father is, falling in love with Rachel despite now being different species – that was just the internal suffering. That was just his characterization and personal development.

To backtrack to the happy side, though, there are some very touching moments between Tobias and Rachel at the school dance. And a very good “family” moment between Ax and Tobias in the woods. Those are the lights on either side of this dark tunnel of a book.

(view spoiler)

Out of respect for life, you must endure.

Quotes and comments – I typed up and commented on the first 92 pages before finishing the book, so the ideas/tones behind the comments will reflect that break.

We’d been through this before [Rachel and I]. I didn’t know how to answer. And I didn’t know why she was pushing it.

Ever since I overstayed the two-hour time limit in morph I’ve considered hawk to be my true form. Hawk is the body I have to keep if I want to help the other Animorphs and Ax combat the Yeerk invasion. Why was Rachel ignoring reality? She knew as well as anyone that I’d be out of the fight if I stayed more than two hours in human form. – page 5 – Tobias really is more about the team than the individual, isn’t he? I think Rachel is ignoring reality at this dance, and all the time, because if Tobias were to stay human, she would have a reason to “stay human” as well. Even though he’s a bird, he grounds her. He keeps her human.

“Tobias, I want to explain...” [Rachel] broke off as her eyes followed mine to the picture of the red-tailed hawk and the caption beneath it. “Longevity in the wild,” it read. “Almost never reaches the figures attained by captive birds guarded against disease and predation. A generous estimate: eighteen years.”

Rachel stared at the wall. I looked at the floor. In an instant, the bulletin board display had thrown our friendship into the harsh light of reality. Rachel was a girl who could, on occasion, become a bird of prey. I was a hawk who could, on occasion, become human. – page 9 – Ouch. Not just the harsh reality of their friendship, but also any possible relationship they might have/develop. And the harsh reality of their own lives as human and hawk.

The clock was ticking down and I wasn’t even sure Rachel was on my side.

In minutes I’d be trapped. Trapped as a person who was no longer me. – page 13 – That’s probably the hardest thing for Tobias – he no longer considers himself human, and doesn’t want to go back to it. As we’ve seen through his books, he has truly and completely embraced who he is as a Bird-boy. To become anything else would be to sacrifice himself needlessly.

[Jake said,] “I’m glad you made it, Tobias. You’re our eyes. Our ears. Our air force. If we lost you we’d be nothing. Like Joan of Arc without her sword. Patton without his pearl-handled pistols...”

/[...] Stop the flattery, man. You’re making me blush./ We both laughed. It felt good to hear Jake say I was indispensable. But with Jake you could never be sure anymore what was sincere. And what was just expedient.

He’d been the most open of guys, back in the old days. What you saw with Jake was what you got. But he’d been a leader for a long time now. He’d learned to say what he needed to say.

Jake needed me as one of the Animorphs. He liked me, respected me, was happy for me when I was happy. And, when he had to, he used me without regards for anything but winning. – page 19-20 – We are seeing a

lot more of Jake through the eyes of others lately, aren't we? And they are all seeing the same thing: a leader who says what needs to be said, and does what needs to be done, in order to win.

/Been boning up on famous leaders, haven't you?/

"A little, yeah. Don't tell anyone, though. I want my brilliance to appear unstudied. Natural." Jake smiled up at me and gave a quick salute. "Later, Red Baron." – page 20

/Tobias,/ Ax said as he reached the clearing,/ this is a special moment, is it not?/

/How do you mean?/ I answered carefully.

/Well, you are.../ Ax hesitated in an uncharacteristic way. /I mean, we are related, are we not? You are not Andalite, exactly, but you carry the Andalite heritage. I am glad you will have that DNA in you from now on. It is a very unique genetic mixture./

/Oh, we all know how much you think of your species, Ax,/ I kidded.

/I do hold Andalites in very high regards. It is true. But it isn't an unthinking allegiance. I honestly admire my culture. There are things I would like to teach you, to share with you if you are interested./

If I was interested! I wanted so much to stay cool. To make it seem like I could take it or leave it. But this was something, finally, that I really did have a right to. I was part Andalite, even if not genetically. God knew how. Or at least [t]he Ellimist knew how. But I was. And it excited me. – page 32-33 – And now, it is time for a touching Ax and Tobias family moment. As much as the Animorphs are Tobias' family, this is blood/ancestral family, something that until now, was never a valuable nor important thing in his life.

[Tobias struck the tree with his tail] FWAPP!

/Ahhh! Oh! Ouch! Ax?!/

/Yes, Tobias. You have impaled the tree with the tip of your blade. That is not the desired result./

/Yeah, I sorta guessed that./

I yanked and twisted. I couldn't free my blade.

/You struck with impressive velocity,/ Ax observed. /That, at least, is admirable./ -- page 36-37 – Haha. Nice job, Ax, just have Tobias plunge right into all this, hm?

/Tobias?/ [Rachel] said softly in private thought-speak.

/What is it? Do you want out?/

/No, of course not. It's not that./ She paused. /Listen. Um. You take care of yourself. I mean...be careful. Okay? Whatever happens? If it comes down to it, save yourself and forget the stupid mission./

I smiled inwardly. She was concerned about me. If I had been human... looking into Rachel's eyes, feeling her next to me, I might have... But she was a fly on my hawk body. Which was good. I could keep my cool. A hawk's feelings aren't exactly visible to others.

/I will,/ I said simply. Then added, /I have a lot to lose. / -- page 63-64 – I'm honestly surprised that Rachel would stay with Tobias on this mission – I would think it would have been considered too dangerous to have more than just Tobias caught. Plus she's running low on morph time (already over an hour gone), if something should happen.

(view spoiler)

Swankivy says

A trap over an anti-morphing ray gets Tobias in a bind--he gets very graphically tortured by a human-Controller. Scary.

Notable moments and inconsistencies:

This book is ghostwritten by Ellen Geroux.

In this book Jake admits to having begun to study famous leaders, but jokes that no one should let on because he wants his brilliance to seem unstudied.

Cassie makes an excuse about not being able to go to The Sharing meeting because she says her parents will notice her missing and would worry. Nevertheless, she is part of the mission, with no commentary. By this point it's common for them to get the Chee to pose as them when they need to be at a mission, but this setup was never discussed.

Tobias is the first of the Animorphs to morph an Andalite, and he points out through his experience that Andalites have an instinct for optimism.

Visser Three's thought-speak voice is said to strike Tobias's ear. Seems like a poor description since thought-speak doesn't use ears.

Taylor hits Tobias with her fake arm at one point, and he notes that it's her right arm. But later in the book Taylor is spilling out her experiences about how she lost her limbs and got burned, and she refers to having "lost her left arm." She's only supposed to have one false arm so it's unclear which one is "really" artificial.

There are several thought-speaking glitches when Visser Three and Tobias are both talking in thought-speak; two of Taylor's spoken lines are framed in thought-speak as well, but this is a mistake.

While Tobias is experiencing Elfangor's memories, several phrases are used to describe his experiences which sound like things humans would say, such as "making a retching noise" (Andalites don't have mouths, so they can't "retch"), "expelling" breakfast (they can't vomit) and experiencing "nausea" (which seems like an odd way to describe it if they can't vomit).

Amantha says

This one was difficult for me to read as a child, mostly because of the torture scenes. It's dark and frightening and probably one of the realest books in the series thus far (as real as a series about alien brain invaders can be anyway). This time around it was still difficult to read, but only when things started to get all trippy with Tobias remembering Elfangor's memories. And then Ax's explanation set me over the top. As I said when I watched that one really stupid episode of *Enterprise* (as if there's only one, lbr): MEMORIES ARE NOT STORED IN DNA AND CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED THUS.

Also I guess I'm kinda seeing less and less of any sort of emotional connection between Rachel and Tobias? Which is a huge disappointment considering I rooted for them so hard as a kid. But reading them as an adult, they don't feel as ~destined~ as I once felt them to be. Rachel basically just whines all the time about how Tobias is unwilling to commit to being 100% human and how this totally sucks for her, and Tobias seems to be hung up on Rachel's beauty. He kind of acknowledges her self-destructive tendencies, but he's more likely than any of the others to ignore them or even admire her for them. They're basically super dysfunctional, and not just in the "Romeo and Juliet" way they keep referencing.
