



The Escape

K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

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Almost nothing could be as bad as finding out your mother is Visser One. The most powerful of all Vissers. The leader of the Yeerk invasion of Earth. But it happened to Marco. And even though he's been handling it pretty well, he knew there'd come a time when he'd have to face her again. Knowing that the Yeerk in her brain had taken his mother away.

So when Marco, the other Animorphs, and Ax discover that Visser One is overseeing a secret underwater project, they know they have to check it out. But Marco's not sure if this is a battle he'll be able to fight....

The Escape Details

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From Reader Review *The Escape* for online ebook

Noella says

[confront his mother with an expressionless face and have Visser One think a Yeerk was insi

Ben Babcock says

Marco books might be the best books if you're looking to jump into *Animorphs*. After fifteen books that might very well be the case. Applegate, cognizant of course that random books from this series would end up on library shelves the world over, with unconscionable gaps as a result of poor funding and attrition, tries her best to summarize the key points at the beginning of every book. But Marco does it best: succinct, but with that typical Marco humour. Like Jake, Marco knows what it's like to have a family member who is a Controller. But Marco's mother isn't just some random Yeerk ... she's Visser One, one of the most powerful members of the Yeerk Empire.

And now she's back on Earth, doing nasty things with sharks.

That sounded wrong, sorry. She's back on Earth, planning to invade a planet with a sentient aquatic species by modifying hammerhead sharks. Which frankly sounds terrifying, and I'm very glad that the Yeerks are only using Hork-Bajir on Earth. Can you imagine if *Sharknado* was a thing back in the 1990s? Visser One would be all over that.

Random Yeerk: Visser, my host's family was watching a program on their primitive video transmission devices—

Visser One: You can just say "television." It's fine, really.

Random Yeerk: —ah, yes, Visser. Anyway, we were watching the primitive television devices. One of their longer-form fictional documentaries—

Visser One: They're called "movies."

Random Yeerk: —ah, yes, Visser. One of their longer-form fictional movies was on. Something about these creatures we're experimenting on being carried by tornados and deposited on the land.

Visser One: That sounds like it would end badly for the sharks.

Random Yeerk: Oddly enough, Visser, no. More so the humans.

Visser One: Hmm ... I suppose if we created vortices using our Blade ships ... yes. Yes, that could work. In fact, that's brilliant. Keep this up and I might have a replacement for Visser Three in the near future.

Random Yeerk: *salutes*

And so the Yeerks develop actual sharknado technology and win the war. Thanks, Hollywood.

Anyway, so *The Escape* is obviously most notable for the return of Marco's mother and the *feelings* that result. Marco has to make the whole "save your mother or save the world" choice, with Applegate once again foreshadowing how bad it's going to get by the end of this whole war. And now the rest of the Animorphs know that his mother is Visser One, so that's cool.

Also, Tobias has his morphing powers back. He used them a little in the last book, but now we get to see him acquire a couple of new animals. I love his hesitance because he can't fly in something like a dolphin or shark morph. It's hard, sometimes, to get a read on Tobias' character; we forget he's just this goofy, shy kid who really doesn't want to draw too much attention to himself. So no wonder he's reluctant to leave behind his hawk form—which he is used to now—for another strange animal experience.

The entire underwater setting is a welcome change of pace. Marco does a great job describing the nature of the shark mind and what it's like to be able to sense electromagnetic fields and just be a stone-cold killing machine.

It's also important to note that, for once, **the Animorphs' plan actually works fairly well**. They infiltrate the base, sabotage it, and escape without too much hullabaloo. Maybe they're finally not sucking at this whole saving-the-world thing.

All in all, definitely an enjoyable instalment in the series. It has some series moments, but they don't eclipse the rest of the book. This is mostly about the plot, the Yeerks' machinations, and Marco's feels for his mom. It's good stuff.

Next time, the Animorphs venture onto the strange and glorious information superhighway! And it is glorious.

My reviews of *Animorphs*:

← #14: *The Unknown* | #16: *The Warning* →

Julie Decker says

Erek the Chee tells Marco and his friends that the Yeerks are doing something weird in an underwater facility, and suggests the Animorphs should check it out. Visser One is supposedly involved, which makes Marco both excited and wary since he knows the visser's host body is his own mother. The group has to go through various stunts morphing dolphins and acquiring sharks to sneak into the facility, but they find out that the Yeerks are mutating sharks' brains so their bodies will function as good host bodies for Yeerks to use on a distant planet: Leerans, a race of telepathic sea creatures, are being targeted by the Yeerks elsewhere in the galaxy, and the Yeerks hope to use the sharks as their water-based shock troops. Unfortunately, the Animorphs end up getting the shark-mutating treatment themselves while finding this out (along with a Yeerk control device in their brains), so they end up having to figure out how to destroy the facility in order

to liquidate the chips. Marco encounters his mother while in the facility. Visser One believes Marco to be a Controller, and gloats about how much of a racket her host body is making over this discovery. Marco faces the possibility of seeing his mother die again, and has to figure out whether he really is doing the right thing by trying to save her.

My favorite lines:

Marco: "We like to keep busy. It's either rescue entire races or play Nintendo."

Marco: If you step back far enough from the details, everything gets funny. You say war is tragic. I say, isn't it crazy the way people will fight over nothing?

Marco: "We're still just us. Nothing that happens can really change what you are. Right?"

Jake: "Look, Marco. I'm not exactly a philosopher, okay?"

Marco: "Yeah. Well, I'm me, no matter what. No matter how many morphs, no matter how many battles. No matter what. I'll still be me. Everyone better accept that."

Jake: "Marco, if it makes you feel any better, you'll always just be a punk to me."

Rachel: "Olivia Newton-John? Have you been listening to dinosaur-rock radio again?"

Marco: "How about you? You actually know who sang that song."

Rachel: "My mom controls the radio in the car. And she wonders why I don't go places with her."

Marco: I'm me, Marco, not some touchy-feely, share-your-feelings-with-the-group kind of person. I don't share feelings, I make people laugh.

Ax: "Now, this is an interesting human concept. This hologram makes it almost appear that we are under the water."

Rachel: "Ax? It's not a hologram."

Ax: "Then . . . we are underwater? Protected only by badly made human plastic?"

Rachel: "Yeah."

Ax: "Why do you humans do things like this?"

Rachel: "Eenie, meenie, minie, moe?"

Marco: "Heads or tails?"

Cassie: "One potato, two potato?"

Ax: "What do these things mean?"

Marco: "These are highly advanced human methods for making choices."

Marco: "Hey, it's me. Please don't remove my head. I use it sometimes."

Janelle Dazzlepants says

In this book, the Animorphs discover a secret Yeerk facility in the ocean. The facility is being used to create shark controllers for the invasion of a water planet, Leeran. The frog-like species that inhabit the planet (also called Leeran) cannot be infested by the Yeerks, as they possess strong psychic abilities. Therefore, the Yeerks are genetically engineering sharks to serve as aquatic versions of the Hork-Bajir. Shark brains unfortunately don't allow for Yeerk infestation, so they've been modifying shark anatomy accordingly.

This facility is being headed by Visser One, the Yeerk that has infested Marco's ~dead mother. Marco is torn as to whether he should tell the other Animorphs the truth about his dead mother, not wanting his friends to kill the innocent woman who is just acting as the host body. Unfortunately Visser One is swept up in the deluge as the Animorphs destroy the facility, and Marco is unsure if she made it out alive. Thanks to the words of a traitor Leeran, if she did make it out alive, there's the very real possibility that the Yeerks now know that the 'Andalite bandits' are not Andalites at all.

I feel like the pacing has been off for the past couple of books. In *The Unknown*, the Animorphs undertook reconnaissance for 95% of the novel and the action was bunched up quickly in the last few pages. It's the same deal here: the Animorphs discover the Yeerk facility, do some reconnaissance and infiltrate it, but the actual battle is over in the blink of an eye within the last 5 pages.

I'd prefer that the book be equally divided into quarters:

1. While going about their daily business, the Animorphs stumble across a new Yeerk facility/mission/whatever
2. The Animorphs decide to do reconnaissance on the Yeerk facility/mission/whatever
3. The Animorphs interfere with the Yeerk facility/mission/whatever, winning by a stroke of luck
4. The Animorphs regroup to discuss the outcome of the Yeerk facility/mission/whatever and what it means for their continued fight against the slugs.

I'm hoping Visser One made it out alive, because I'd like to see Marco reunited with his mother at the end of the Yeerk war. That being said, her being alive can only mean bad things for the Animorphs! Assuming the traitor Leeran didn't die, it's likely that he managed to get it through her skull that the Andalite bandits are actually a ragtag bunch of kids. Fingers crossed that Visser One survived the destruction but the Leeran somehow didn't!

But the repercussions caused by the Leeran don't end there! So far we've been under the impression that the Yeerk invasion has started small, confined to this medium-sized American town. We've believed that the Yeerks don't have the resources or power to do much more than infest school principals and start up small businesses. But in this book we learned that the Yeerks are gearing up to simultaneously invade the planet of Leeran. The Yeerks must have a much larger force and much more resources than we anticipated to pull that off. And who's to say that the Yeerks are only invading Leeran and Earth - it's entirely possible that they're in the midst of invading 5 other planets!

This wasn't the best paced book, but it presents a lot of new challenges for the Animorphs! Excited to see where the next few books take me.

Jesus says

Awesome as usual

Abriel says

The lovely ladies of Morph Club are doing a book-by-book review of this series. So good.

^ click to listen to episode 18-book 15 :)

From the site:

"Megan & Carey read Animorphs book 15: The Escape! Let's all go to the Amazon Cafe and think deeply about frog aliens, Marco and his feelings, all the adults whose lives are ruined by animorphs, so many sharks, inter-Visser politics saving the day again and one extended, somewhat irrelevant digression about driftball"

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

Brought to you by The Moonlight Library!

The Yeerks have a secret underwater facility and are preparing hammerhead sharks for infestation prior to launching an attack on another water-based planet. The Animorphs have to stop them, at any cost. Also, Visser One is back.

This is one of Marco's better books – because he's legitimately afraid of sharks. The first time he morphed a dolphin, a shark bit him literally in half. He's afraid of getting close to sharks, and he's even afraid of morphing a shark. He is also afraid of the other Animorphs finding out that their greatest enemy is wrapped around his mother's brain, and he's afraid of failing to rescue her.

Overall, this book delves pretty deeply into Marco's fears and insecurities. Also, it's a funny book for Tobias, who can acquire and morph – but only out of his hawk body. This means that to acquire a dolphin he has to re-enact a rodeo. In front of a mid-day audience. No kidding. It's also mostly set in a giant underwater facility which is really cool.

Marco has to reveal his biggest secret that he's been keeping from the other Animorphs. He doesn't want their pity because he's the comedian of the group, but in the end he needs to succumb because despite his ruthlessness, he's still hopeful that one day his mother will be free.

This book is pretty essential for the overall storyline and it's a sort of prequel to one of the later books that takes place on Leera after the invasion is launched. The big events include Marco's secret revealed, and Visser Three in some kind of giant water snake morph witnessing Rachel in bear morph letting Visser One go. That's a repercussion that reverberates through the rest of the series. Of course, Visser One doesn't know Marco is an Animorph – she interacts with him as a human and deduces he's been made a Controller. Of course, Visser One is far more intelligent than Visser Three...

Stephanie says

This book is considerably more solid than the last one in the plot and the logic of events. Even considering the events at Ocean World and the Leeran's comments regarding the "Andaliti bandits" - but then, once

someone has an idea in their head of what's going on, it can be really hard to change it. This book was really about Marco grappling with what he wants to see happen to his mother, even though she is the host to Visser One, and him deciding how to go about acting upon his decision.

Do what's right. Forget about what anybody thinks. Do what's right.

I'm a joker. I'm a comedian. That's how I deal with life. See, I've always believed that to some extent you get to decide for yourself what your life will be like. You can either look at the world and say, "Oh, isn't it all so tragic, so grim, so awful." Or you can look at the world and decide that it's mostly funny. -- page 22 -- Though I think there's a few more ways to view the world, Marco sets up a good dichotomy, one that is clearly more attractive and encouraging for the youth.

/Not everyone has a dolphin morph,/ Tobias pointed out. /I can fly cover./

I saw Cassie cock an eyebrow at Tobias. I think we were having the same thought. It was a little like Tobias didn't want to morph, now that he had his morphing power back.

"Ax has a shark morph from when we first rescued him," I said. "That will do as well as dolphin. And if Tobias doesn't want to morph--"

/I didn't say that,/ Tobias said quickly. -- page 27-28 -- This might sound bad but... aww, Tobias is afraid of water! Of course, whether that is more because he is a hawk or because he didn't know how to swim as a human before or something, who knows?

/I cannot believe I'm flying with seagulls,/ Tobias sneered. /I could get kicked out of the hawk fraternity for hanging out with lowlifes./ -- page 31 -- Tobias sure likes to sneer at the others when they're in seagull morph lately, huh? (Actually, a lot of sneering in general seems to happen in this book...)

/Yeah. Well, I'm me, no matter what,/ I said defiantly. /No matter how many morphs, no matter how many battles. No matter what. I'll still be me. Everyone better accept that./ -- page 34 -- Another good little 'life lesson/words of wisdom'.

[After Tobias dug his talons into a dolphin to acquire it and proceeded to get dragged above and below water by said dolphin, and only got off after Marco-seagull bodily flew in to him to get him off the dolphin.] /Well, as long as the *dolphin* is okay,/ Tobias said. /Because I really, really hope the *dolphin* is okay./

Are you going to be sarcastic the rest of the day?/ I asked him.

/Yes, I am going to be sarcastic the rest of the day. I nearly drowned. Now I'm going to go become the thing that nearly drowned me. I will be sarcastic until further notice./ -- page 40-41 -- It's also nice to see Tobias showing more of his human emotions. He had seemed rather quiet and down-to-business between books 3 and 13, like he had given up or forgotten how to show his human character more.

/You know,/ I said thoughtfully, /that could be a regular act at The Gardens. Hawk and dolphin. Kind of a dolphin rodeo, if you really think about it./

/Hey, Marco? You need to remember that you're just a lowly seagull right now, which is practically a pigeon, and I'm a hawk,/ Tobias said. /You want to keep grinding my nerves, I'll be glad to show you the difference when it comes to aerial combat./

/Dolphin rodeo. I'm just saying it has possibilities./ -- page 41 -- Yeah Marco, and who would you propose be the first dolphin rider? Because I don't think Tobias is ready to saddle up for that! (And, you tell him, Tobias, haha!)

/Okay, let's focus a little here,/ Jake said, trying to impose some order on our idiot play. /Keep the shore to your left and let's take a quick run around the island./

/You mean like a race?/ Tobias asked. /Because that would be cool!/
In my head, I heard Cassie laugh. /So, Tobias. I guess you're past your fear of the water?/
/It's kind of hard to be afraid of anything right now,/ he said. /This was worth it. This is so cool. It's like flying, but with a really thick wind. Come on! Race you!/ -- page 48-49

"Sharks can *all* die as far as I'm concerned," I said. I laughed like I'd made a joke. But it wasn't a joke.
/They are just predators being predators,/ Tobias said. /They aren't evil. Just hungry. [...] Kill or be killed. Eat or be eaten. That's the predator's law. I know. I am a predator. I say we do what we have to do./
Tobias has toughened up a but since being trapped in hawk morph. -- page 75

/Now, *this* is an interesting human concept,/ Ax said approvingly. /This hologram makes it almost appear that we are under the water./

"Ax? It's not a hologram," Rachel said.

/Then ... we *are* underwater? Protected only by badly made human plastic?/ - page 80 -- Dissing human products again, Ax? Tsk tsk, no more Cinnabon for you!

[Jake just told Marco being tense is weirding out the others] I just stared at him. "You're telling me it's more relaxing for everyone if I act like we're all going to die?"

"It's what they expect from you," Jake said. -- page 98 -- We all somehow seem to end up filing a particular need in the lives of the people around us. And when we don't follow that pattern, the ones closest to us notice it and start to worry about us. That's part of how friendships and relationships work.

[Ax, Tobias, and Marco just had to navigate some tight indoor spaces as birds. Tobias told them what to do, tighter and tighter spiral to get ready to land. Ax hit the desk, Tobias hit the floor, and Marco hit a metal trash can and was rolling inside it.] /Everyone okay?/ I asked.

/I have damaged my bird body,/ Ax said calmly, /but I am alive./

/Me, too,/ I said, testing a painful tail. /I think I broke my tail./

/Good grief. This is the last time I ever fly through a building with you two amateurs,/ Tobias said. -- page 127 -- Good thing Tobias was there to instruct them, though! Otherwise they would have crash landed much sooner, and with considerably more damage.

I guess there are times when the only way to survive is to be as ruthless as the enemy. To destroy before you can be destroyed. -- page 137 - A dark outlook for Marco, and in a way, it is his revised interpretation of the predator's law from earlier.

(view spoiler)

Jonathan Grant says

Eh, it was decent. Wonder if the Leerans will pop up again.

Swankivy says

Marco doubts his ability to fight when emotions are involved. Wow. The Marco books are always so good because he is sort of the clown of the group, yet he has some of the deepest emotional issues, considering his parents' roles in this war.

Notable moments and inconsistencies:

Despite the fact that Ax does not appear to have powers of thought-speak when he is human morph, the kids morphing parrots still have thought-speak abilities while in a body that can theoretically talk. This is more evidence that Ax should be able to thought-speak when in human morph--and really, Tobias should too.

At one point when Marco is trying to think of a good unobtrusive morph for sneaking around, he suggests that turning into wolves would be a bad idea since people would notice those. Nobody objected, but the people who needed to hide were just himself, Tobias, and Ax. Tobias and Ax did not have wolf morphs because Tobias couldn't morph when Marco and the others did their wolf missions, and Ax wasn't part of the team yet.

When the Animorphs break into an aquarium to get hammerhead shark morphs, they attract Controller attention when guards notice them. Ax is in his natural form when this happens, and so of course the Controllers notice him. But despite the fact that kids are with him, they only seem interested in the Andalite. Even to the point where one of them says that the kids are "irrelevant." That seems excruciatingly short-sighted of them, since this can't possibly be a coincidence and they'd have to know the human children could be Andalites in morph (or some other explanation still implicating the kids). Visser Three sure is giving host bodies to some oblivious Yeerks.

These Controllers also have guns. All of the security guards at the aquarium have guns. Which is odd since not even all actual police have guns. Security guards in most places don't have weapons that can exert deadly force.

Visser One refers to "shark-Controllers ready for use on Leeran" at one point, and Ax says "the Yeerks are invading Leeran," suggesting that "Leeran" is the name of the planet, but later it's made clear that the planet's name is Leera and the inhabitants are Leerans. This appears to be a mistake.

When Marco and the others begin to get too small and the chips embedded in their brains threaten their lives, it becomes clear that something inside a brain does not change size with the size of the animal morphing around it. This suggests that Visser Three, as a creature physically inside the brain of a morphable creature, would be restricted by the size and shape of the skull cavity. It seems he shouldn't be able to morph into something with a head too small to house a Yeerk, since Yeerks themselves don't change with the animal unless they themselves are morphing (and they are not). It's unclear how large an animal has to be before a Yeerk can safely be inside it.

Marco did not kill the Leeran that knew he was human; he only knocked it unconscious with a punch. It's never said how much the Leeran learned about him (and the other so-called Andalite bandits); it's unclear whether it knew his identity or whether it only knew he was human. But since this Yeerk was not eliminated, it's possible there is a security risk here and no one seems to realize it; it was never assured that everyone in the facility was destroyed at the end.

michelle says

the best book in the series thus far??

Edwina says

Very, very inaccurate and mean to sharks. Asides from that, pretty good. The shark thing was really bad though. Especially considering I am a long-term fan of sharks in general, this book wasn't exactly a fun read for me.

August Busch says

Decent for the series. I appreciate that it references events from previous books and works on the long term plot. Marco and his mom, even though extremely coincidental, is a good story line.

Jenny Clark says

"I guess there are times when the only way to survive is to be as ruthless as the enemy. To destroy before you can be destroyed."

A very emotional instalment. Marco is growing and learning, changing.

I enjoyed his spiel on irony at the beginning, and his explanation for why he is the way he is.

Slowly but surely, they are all becoming more and more ruthless. Jake is still trying to stay his old self, but bits are slowly being lost in the pressure of battle. Marco keeps joking, but only because he realizes it is his part. If he is not joking and complaining about how dangerous things are, the others get nervous.

A very interesting change of group dynamics is in store, I feel.

Ashley says

This is the first Marco book that's really worked for me on a Marco level. I really liked *The Android*, but not because of Marco, more because the idea of the Chee and the Pernalites just took over that book and drowned everything else out. Sure, there's a subplot involving Marco's dad getting his groove back slotted in there, but it's the Pernalites you come away remembering, because awwwww, sad. His first book, despite the presence of clear stakes, felt a little too slight for me.

But with *The Escape*, Marco's internal life goes beyond "disguises pain with humor" for the first time.

Actually, it takes that base and makes it more poignant. The kids learn that the Yeerks are getting up to something in a secret underwater base, and Visser One (Marco's mother, yes) is up to some hoobedy-boobedy with a new alien species called the Leerans, who are psychic. SO: They need to somehow get into an underwater fortress, that is guarded by weirdly intelligent hammerhead sharks by the way; somehow avoid the psychic alien who could immediately sense not only that they are Animorphs in disguise, but that the "Andalite bandits" are really humans; and then on top of all that, find out what is going on at the base, and shut it down.

I found the way that Marco responded to everything pretty compelling. He spends the first half of the book trying to pretend that nothing is wrong. Nobody but Jake knows that Marco's mom is Visser One, and on top of that, Marco has to deal with the traumatic memory of being bitten in half by a shark, which is triggered by their encounters with the hammerheads. But he can't pretend, and the others notice his odd behavior, his failure to crack jokes in the face of imminent death, his out of character reticence. And then, not only does he have to face his mother/Visser One—(view spoiler)

There's this lovely little moment where he thinks that for him, there's no decision between right and wrong, heroic and un-heroic, like there is for Jake. There's only funny, and not funny. It's a chilling, sad moment where you see what this fight has started do to someone with Marco's personality. It's a much different type of trauma than we've seen with the others. It's balanced in the end by Marco choosing to believe that his mother has survived, but you can see how all these traumas and victories at cost are going to bit by bit affect him.

I haven't mentioned the thing with the sharks yet, because it stretched my ability to suspend my disbelief, almost to the limit. I get that the Yeerks wanted to engineer water-based soldiers without having to use them as hosts; it would allow them to invade a planet full of psychic aliens. But . . . making sharks smart, giving them implants . . . it just seemed pretty silly. Even if they could pull it off? What, are they going to literally empty the ocean of sharks? They'd need a hell of a lot of them for an invasion of Leera. I think humans would notice that, which would ruin this whole thing where the Yeerks are trying not to alert humans they are here.

Anyway, the silliness and implausibility of the plot would have been more of a problem if it wasn't backed up by good character work for Marco, but it was, so I feel like I can just let it go.

Next up: Jake, and something about a Yeerk website? I have no memory of it, so I guess everything will be a fun surprise.

Julie says

I am unmitigatedly, unabashedly, a Marco fangirl, and so I can't really help but give this 5 stars. Just as the strain is heavy on Jake to always be the confident leader, Rachel to be their gung-ho fearless one, Ax to be their knowledgeable galactic expert -- in Marco's POV books you can see him struggling with his own role as the comedian, the one keeping everyone else's spirits up. The group is a finely-tuned gyroscope, and if any piece of it gets out of synch, the others falter. Marco does his best to hide his depth and nuance, too, but things finally come to a head in this one, as the situation with his mother escalates. Just, fuck, *all my feelings*. His helplessness and murderous rage and obsession with not being pitied hits the heartstrings.

This book also advances the overarching story a bit more too, revealing that the Yeerks are carrying on other

invasions of other planets, and the stakes on the other side of the galaxy are pretty damned significant...

The stuff with the sharks also bored itself into my memory when I read this in my youth. But I am deathly afraid of sharks so, uh, of course it would.

Nikki says

I love Marco's intelligence and his humour, and I love his narration because we get to find out what goes on behind the one-liners. His books are some of my faves to read.

Deviki says

You know what, I kind of forgot I was actually reading this book.....I guess I forgot about it when I was busy planning short trips here and there during my off days. I guess I also forgot about it because I was reading another book in between.

In this book, we already know that Marco's mom is actually Visser One. So, here we just revisit that "fact" again.

After 15 books, you kind know what the story line is going to be about. The difference is when they decided to morph into new animal, find out new Yeerk plan and New alien species. Besides that everything else is the same.

I think I've mentioned this many times, but again I feel like a lot of the "things" or "adventure" these kids do, will be super easy to track because they are quite careless and there is a lot of plot holes. But if you can just close your "eyes" to that "fact" then I suppose it makes *somewhat* sense.

Nearly half this book takes place in the ocean or underwater LOL. From the ocean, swimming pool, aquarium and ocean again.

I think the kids may have help destroy Yeerk's new hammerhead army plan but then again it is a small victory against the whole Yeerk invasion. I don't understand why Marco still felt the need to keep the huge fact that his mom is the Visser One. It would have prevented the Animorphs from making mistakes.....but then again they always make mistakes when carrying out their plans.

In the end, after Marco's secret came out, Everything wasmehLike sure they felt pity for him but at the same time it is also not so shocking. Yeah they were startled by the revelation because he said it at the worse possible time - during kick arse time. LOL But really after that the book ended abruptly.

I'm sure Jake felt their pity after his brother got trapped by Yeerk. But I think it also gave them all motivation to fight. So why did Marco hid this from his friendsis beyond me. No offense, the only person who recognized his mother is Jake. So, not sure why he thought his friends are gonna sit in a tear-jerking circle singing "hallelujah" for him.

Gosh, I sound harsh but to be honest I started this book too long ago and I can't quite get my enthusiasm to

get into the book.

Kelsey says

This was a good one. Lots of adventure and there's a new species.

The Library Ladies says

(Originally reviewed at thelibraryladies.com.)

Narrator: Marco

Plot: In what is now becoming the usual “save the animals” opening scene of many of these stories, we see Marco and crew in the mall on a mission to morph parrots at the Rain Forest Cafe in an attempt to discourage them using live birds going forward. Obviously, this was Cassie’s plan. After making enough of a nuisance of themselves to get the job done (think parrots spewing vulgarities at customers in line), Marco and Jake run into Ereka, our friendly Chee insider, on the way out who informs them that the Yeerks are up to no good. It seems that the Yeerks are trying to take over a world populated by psychic water aliens called Leerans. Obviously, this would be disastrous for the Animorphs, since psychic Controllers could see through their morphs instantly. What’s more, the base of operations, located out in the ocean, deep underwater, is being run by none other than Visser One, Marco’s Controlled mom.

They decide to check it out in dolphin morph. Problem being, Tobias with his new morphing ability, doesn’t have a dolphin morph. This leads to a little scene of them all trekking off to The Gardens where Tobias has to dive bomb a dolphin in hawk morph to try and acquire its DNA. He ends up getting his talons stuck in the dolphin’s skin and is only saved from drowning by a well-timed controlled crash by seagull!Marco.

All morphed dolphins, and Ax as a shark, the crew zero in on the underwater compound. They are quickly surrounded by a crew of hammer head sharks. Bizarrely, the sharks seem to be operating as a pack. Marco, having been almost bit in half by a shark back in book 4, is understandably more panicked than the rest and quickly gets out of there, followed by the others.

Knowing they still need to get into the compound somehow, the Animorphs make their way to the new aquatic center in town which has hammer head sharks. They go at night, but through a few mishaps, Ax is spotted by a Controller guard on duty. They attempt to escape, eventually resorting to having Ax tail swipe away the glass holding in the massive aquarium. Marco barely escapes being eaten by a hammer head, subduing it by acquiring its DNA. The others follow suit.

Marco goes a bit nuts about the fact that he was the first to run back when they were dolphins. The appeal of the fearlessness of the shark overtakes him and he foolishly tries to morph shark in the school pool. He’s interrupted by a pair of bullies who start mocking him and taking jabs at his mom. He’s only saved (from attacking them or discovery) by Jake who shows up and calms things down.

Back in the ocean, this time morphed as sharks, the group make their way into the compound, following the other sharks. They find themselves trapped in a queue that is injecting things into the sharks’ heads that they

guess is what the Yeerks are using to control the sharks. Unable to escape, they all are injected as well. It's only later when they demorph and try to morph fly to more easily make their way around the compound that they realize what's happened: Yeerk trackers/control devices have been implanted into their heads, preventing them from morphing small animals whose skull cavities can't fit the tracker. Instantly, somehow getting rid of these trackers becomes the new priority.

The group splits up. Rachel, Cassie, and Jake go battle morph to provide a distraction. Ax, Tobias, and Marco make their way further into the compound to try and find a solution. They discover that there is a fail safe built into the compound that would dissolve the trackers if the compound itself was destroyed. Marco gets discovered by Visser One, but is able to trick her into believing that he is a Controller computer technician who was sent to work on the compound. Escaping from her, he re-joins Ax and Tobias. Ax sets the computer to auto-destruct, and the group re-joins the others to fight.

Visser Three conveniently shows up in a massive snake morph. A mad battle takes place between the Animorphs, the Controllers, and Visser Three and Visser One in the background. A Leeran shows up and tries to tell the Vissers that the morphed beings are humans. Visser One dismisses this, thinking the Leeran has confused Marco's gorilla morph for a human, since the two are closely related.

Visser One manages to suspend the countdown for the self-destruct, prompting Rachel and Ax to go after her. Rachel is about to kill her when Marco yells for her to stop, admitting that Visser One is his mother. Ax knocks Visser One out instead. Still desperate to destroy the compound, Marco throws a chair through the glass wall, cracking it and sending the Yeerks running for cover. The Animorphs escape, with Marco thinking he sentenced his mother to death, and now knowing that the entire group will know his mother was/is Visser One. As they swim away, Rachel claims to hear a sub whirring away from the area, possibly containing Visser One. Marco accepts the hope this offers, renewing his drive to fight to free his mother in the future.

The Comic Relief: Have I mentioned that I love Marco books? He just has so much depth as a character. Not only is he just as witty as a narrator as he is as a supporting character in the other books, but there are many real issues that he deals with and brings to his stories, the biggest of which is obviously the struggle with his mother.

But here we also had a few other things that he goes through. One has to do with the fact that he ran first from the sharks. It's a nice call back to the fact that they all never fully recover from the trauma inflicted on them in all of these fights. He was almost bit in half by a shark; that's bound to stick with you. And the fact that he is then drawn to the fearlessness of the shark as a way to deal with his insecurities about his own bravery is just excellent.

He's also very self-aware as a character, and the fact that he's the most analytical of the group is on full display. Both he and Jake have Controllers in their family, but Marco is the only one who has fully thought out what saving this person would really cost (at least as far as we know, Jake hasn't mentioned most of this). He goes over the fact that if he saved her the Yeerks wouldn't just let it go; they'd be tracked, likely discovered, and the all of the other Animorphs would be discovered and the war lost. Knowing this, even though he fights to save her, he doesn't know how it will ever be possible.

He also is very practical even through all the pain of confronting his mother, constantly fighting the urge to alert her and reassure her that he's fighting to save her.

And I'm not someone who does emotional, stupid things. Sometimes I wish I were.

Lastly, when it counts, Marco does the right thing, no matter the personal cost. This practical weighing of odds, of personal issues and the good of everyone else, leads him to destroying the compound, not knowing if his mother will make it out alive. I'm not sure any other character could have done this (maybe Rachel, but she would have done it from a very different emotional place).

As I've said before and will probably keep repeating, Marco is the character I would aspire to be in this series.

Our Fearless Leader: There are a few notable moments between Jake and Marco. First, when they all go to The Gardens for Tobias to get a dolphin morph, Marco impetuously decides to snag a ride on a roller coaster while in seagull morph, pulling Jake along with him. It's a small moment of pure fun between two best friends. And, in a moment of rare vulnerability afterwards, Marco asks Jake whether they're still the same, even after it all, deep down. (Clearly he's also thinking about whether his mom is still his mom even after being a Controller for so many years).

The second moment is the reinforcement of the fact that Jake must be known at their high school as the bully repeller. We know that he saved Tobias from bullying, and when Marco is being made fun of by the bullies at the pool, Jake steps in once again. Jake has to be a fairly popular guy at this school, what with all of these good deeds and his ability to control bullies.

Jake also provides most of the support for Marco throughout this book as the only one who knows the truth about Visser One until the end where it becomes more broadly known.

Xena, Warrior Princess: Rachel doesn't do a lot in this book, other than be gung ho in her usual semi-crazy way. She's all for it when Marco suggests splitting into groups with one group morphing battle morphs and providing a distraction.

Naturally, Rachel agreeing with me convinced me I was obviously wrong.

Yeah, right Marco! We've seen him base too many decisions on what Rachel decides to do to believe this! In the end, it's also Rachel who "hears" the sub leaving the collapsing compound (obviously Visser One escapes, but it's never clear whether Rachel really did hear this or is just providing comfort for Marco), providing hope for Marco that his mother escaped. My secret (not secret) alt-universe shipping of these two continues.

A Hawk's Life: Poor Tobias and the dolphin incident! Not only is the dude already scared of water, but here he has to somehow acquire a dolphin while in hawk morph! And then gets stuck and ends up going on the worst dolphin roller coaster ride of his life. It's no wonder that after it all, he's a bit grumpy. And when Cassie starts fretting about how the dolphin is doing, we get this little exchange:

Tobias said. I asked him.

Sarcastic Tobias is a great Tobias.

Peace, Love, and Animals: Jake seems much more willing to go along on these little side missions when Cassie is the one coming up with them... When they're all morphed as parrots saying ridiculous things to scare off customers, Cassie comes up with:

"Squuaaakkk! We should be flying free in our native habitat!"

Because of course she does. She, along with Marco, proves yet again that she's one of the two more perceptive members of the group, quickly picking up on Tobias's lack of enthusiasm to morph dolphin and his fear of water.

E.T./Ax Phone Home: Marco's introductions of characters are always the best of all the narrators. With Ax, we first meet him when he's in human morph during the parrot mission, and Marco describes him and his food obsession thusly:

Ax would trade a Cinnabon for the Mona Lisa, straight across.

Ax also has a lot of knowledge about the Leeran race. He hacks the computer in the underwater compound to set it to auto-destruct, all while, of course, making many arrogant Andalite comments about superiority and such.

Best (?) Body Horror Moment: The bit when Marco starts morphing fly and experiencing head pain, only to see Rachel shrinking and the device pushing through her head. Ick.

Couples Watch!: Not a whole lot. Towards the end, when the group is split up in the underwater compound, Tobias is pretty stressed about the delay in accessing the computer, snapping at Ax to hurry up so that they can join Rachel and the others who they can hear fighting in their battle morphs. He's clearly worrying about her.

If Only Visser Three had Mustache to Twirl: The Visser drama continues! Visser One and Visser Three's ongoing bitch fight is always a joy. Here, Marco essentially describes the complete and utter bizarreness of the scenario in the underwater compound when these two run into each other. There's a massive battle going on all around them between "Andalite warriors" and their Controller underlings, but all they care about is sniping at each other in the middle of the room.

Also, when Marco is in is one-on-one with Visser One posing as a Controller computer technician, he claims that Visser Three killed the other three technicians who were supposedly meant to be accompanying him. Visser One is not at all surprised that this could be the case. Clearly, Visser Three has a bit of a reputation in this area.

Adult Ugly Crying at a Middle Grade Book: Marco books always deliver a big dose of the sads. For some reason, his mother being a Controller always strikes me as more tragic than Jake's brother. Probably because Marco already grieved her death, and then got her back in the worst way, knowing she's a Controller for Visser One. Here, when Marco is alone with Visser One, he has to fake being a Controller himself. At one point, the Visser comments that Marco needs to get better Control of his host body; her host is currently screaming and crying in her head, but she still has complete Control. This is so tragic because not only does poor Marco's mom have to deal with being Controlled by Visser One, but she now thinks her son has been taken as well. This just has to sap away whatever small bits of hope remain to her.

What a Terrible Plan, Guys!: It's not so much a terrible plan, as an "obviously flawed, but necessary course of action." This is the first time we're really seeing the challenges posed by Tobias's new morphing ability and the fact that he needs to acquire DNA as a hawk. So, the dolphin was always going to be a problem. What I don't get is why the hell they decided to go about this in broad daylight with a park full of people?? In the past, they've often snuck into The Gardens at night to get their morphs. So why they would choose to do this, the most obtrusive DNA acquisition they have ever attempted, in the middle of the day is beyond me. Actual quote from the book right as Tobias is dive-bombing the poor dolphin:

Cassie asked, way too late.

Favorite Quote:

This is a really long quote, but it's probably the one and only quote that I've always remembered from this series and even referenced a few times over the years. I knew it was in a Marco book somewhere, so I was thrilled to see it pop up here:

See, I've always believed that to some extent you get to decide for yourself what your life will be like. You can either look at the world and say, "Oh, isn't it all so tragic, so grim, so awful." Or you can look at the world and decide that it's mostly funny. If you step back far enough from the details, everything gets funny. You say war is tragic. I say, isn't it crazy the way people will fight over nothing? People fight wars to control crappy little patches of empty desert, for crying out loud. It's like fighting over an empty soda can. It's not so much tragic as it is ridiculous. Asinine! Stupid! You say, isn't it terrible about global warming? And I say, no, it's funny. We're going to bring on global warming because we ran too many leaky air conditioners? We used too much spray deodorant, so now we'll be doomed to sweat forever? That's not sad. That's irony. Note to Alanis: That is ironic. Humor kind of breaks down when the tragedy gets up close and personal.

On a more light-hearted and brief note, Marco had this to say to Erek in the beginning when he and Jake agreed to do something about the Yeerks' goals to capture the Leerans:

I shrugged. "We like to keep busy. It's either rescue entire races or play Nintendo."

Scorecard: Yeerks 3, Animorphs 7

A point for the Animorphs...I guess? I mean, they mostly destroyed the compound to simply undo the head implant situation that they foolishly got themselves into, but it was still a blow against the Yeerks.

Rating: Loved it! There was so much great character building stuff for Marco, and now the secret of his mother is out to the rest of the group, so it will be interesting to see how this plays out going forward.
