



The Encounter

K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

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When Tobias, Jake, Rachel, Marco, and Cassie were given the ability to morph, they were also given one very important warning: *Never* stay in a morph for more than two hours. It seemed a small price to pay, since the kids know that humans everywhere are being forced to let slimy, spineless creatures creep into their brains. And the only way the kids can fight back is not to be human.

But Tobias stayed in his morph too long. And now he's a hawk -- with a boy's mind -- forever. Tobias knows they can't give up. That they all made a promise. So now it's four kids and a hawk against a force that's determined to destroy them. Or die trying...

The Encounter Details

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Author : K.A. Applegate , Katherine Applegate

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From Reader Review The Encounter for online ebook

mindy says

Be happy for me, and for all who fly free.

Natalie says

This book takes us into the perspective of Tobias, the animorph who stayed in a hawk form for too long. This character stood out to me because it showed the consequences of staying in a morph for too long. You're in that animal body forever and there are some things you can't do because you're an animal.

The guilt he feels of not being able to always participate on a mission and the joyous freedom he experiences as a hawk is really interesting to read. The readers get to take a peak in his mindset and see his struggle between keeping his humanity and his animal instincts.

The way the book demonstrates this to us is by having a female hawk that Tobias encounters and his animal instincts causes a desire for him to fly with her. But then his human instincts kick in and he goes back to resisting his hawk instincts. Another demonstration is when Tobias almost eats a live rodent. He thinks about how it's natural for the hawk but unacceptable for the human.

There's also tension between him and the rest of the animorphs. He does feel left out and useless and the rest of the group feels pity on him because he's a hawk and there's nothing they can do to change that.

The end of the book is kind of bittersweet. Tobias doesn't get a happy ending but he decides to live with the situation he's in and make the best of it. Even if it means that he has to change some things about himself to adapt to the life he has as a hawk. It's nice to see a 'not-so-happy' ending where the character has to face the harsh reality that not everything is alright but they will do what they can to make the most of it.

Anyways, I really like Tobias. This character is pretty cool and the series does find creative ways to get him more involved with the missions. But that will be discussed in later reviews.

Well, that's all for now folks!

robbie pryde says

Love, love love LOVED this book. Such a great insight on Tobias and his exponential growth in just around 150 pages. Much more entertaining than Rachel's first book, but less exciting than Jake's. Loved it so much.

Ashley says

I never cared as a kid, but as an adult, wow; this book is bleak.

Well, I shouldn't say "bleak," because ultimately, the book does have a relatively uplifting ending, and I tend to associate bleakness with a lack of hope or optimism, which isn't this series at all, no matter how dark it goes. But I think this book and what it's willing to do with Tobias's character is an example of one of the many reasons I loved this series so much when I was growing up. Kids don't live happy-go-lucky lives where darkness or confusion never touches them, and even if they don't have personal trauma, kids see a lot more of what's going on in the world around them than adults like to believe. It would be unhelpful for children's literature of any kind to portray a world where kids don't have to occasionally deal with some pretty terrible stuff, not least because reading a book about a character like Tobias would be helpful for a kid going through similar emotional confusion. This series is not afraid to Go There.

For much of *The Encounter*, Tobias (our third POV narrator, after Jake in book one, and Rachel in book two) is caught in the middle of a rather unique identity crisis. Back at the end of book one, Tobias passed the two hour limit in his red-tailed hawk morph, and is now stuck as a bird of prey, permanently. His presence in the first two books was mostly used as a way for Applegate to show that her world was one that had consequences, but here she takes the time to flesh him out, and to explore just exactly how something as far-fetched as suddenly finding yourself transformed from a thirteen year old boy to living full time as a hawk would affect Tobias psychologically, and how it would change his character.

While out coasting on the thermals one afternoon, Tobias notices a large absence in the sky heading towards the mountains. And it happens again the next day. The Animorphs soon learn it's a cloaked Yeerk ship on a supply run. Turns out the Yeerks don't have Star Trek level technology. The ability to create breathable air and clean water from nothing eludes them, and so they must rely on Earth's resources. The Animorphs hatch a plan to infiltrate the ship and bring its cloak down, exposing the enormous ship for all to see. They hope that in doing so, humans will be able to resist the Yeerks and stop the Yeerks before they get a real toehold on Earth. They believe this will work because the Yeerks are still taking great pains not to make their presence known, and conclude this is because they don't have the numbers to do more than a secret invasion of the planet.

Of course things go wrong. Don't they always.

But the real story here is Tobias, who is beginning to feel more and more isolated from the other Animorphs; he feels he is forgetting how to be human. He's drawn more and more to live life as a hawk, to leave his old life behind. As the line between Human Tobias and Hawk Tobias is smudged more and more, he doesn't know who "Tobias" is anymore. Near the climax of the book, (view spoiler)

By the end, though, there's as much to be thankful for as to regret. Even though (view spoiler) And even though Tobias still feels alone in his teenage hawk life, he is able to find the indispensable kernel of his selfhood that still exists as Tobias, separate from the hawk, and renews his commitment to fighting the Yeerks until the Andalites can arrive, hopefully bringing with them a way for Tobias to be human once again.

Up next: dolphins!

Capella says

Listened to as an audiobook courtesy of the Audiomorphs: An Animorphs Podcast.

Jen • Just One More Page says

[Well that was enjoyable!

And I know it was only book three, but I think this one is my favorite so far. Tobias is a very mature character, and has very real problems with his identity that are far more interesting for me to read about than most of the other individual issues the other characters could have.

Not much else has changed, opinion wise. I'm still annoyed to HELL by Marco, and want him gone - he whines, and complains, and brings down

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

Brought to you by The Moonlight Library!

Book #3 is Tobias' time to shine. I don't know why he was selected as the third character in our merry-go-round of narrators, but it's a good spot in the story. He's been a hawk for about a month, and he's struggling with the instincts that, to him, mean he is losing his humanity: namely hunting and the desire to find a mate. The animal instincts don't seem to be as well written as the previous two books because this one is more plot-driven than its predecessors, but we still see a lot of Tobias struggling with what he's become.

OK it's not gross or anything. It's still children's fiction. But he's inexplicitly drawn to a female hawk, with the feeling that he belongs with her. It's strange for a thirteen year old child in the body of a hawk to realise, but that's the mating instinct. It's weird to think that the child is trapped in an adult hawk body, and a sexually mature one at that.

In this book, Tobias's whole trapped-in-morph thing is the instigator of the plot and also the resolver of the conflict. Because he's a bird, he sees something he wouldn't have seen as a human: namely a Yeerk supply ship taking resources from the mountains nearby. Also, at the end of the book, Tobias is the only Animorph unable to morph and consequently as an outsider to the mission, he's the only one who can take the ship down.

The best thing about this book is Tobias' deepening relationship with Rachel. She's the one he turns to when he needs comfort, and she's always there to give it. She'll even lie to him, but probably understands that he can tell she's lying. And Rachel shows intense affection for the strange, lost boy in the body of a hawk. Rachel's also showing more of her trademark recklessness, and the others are beginning to realise that maybe she likes the fighting and the violence and the danger. Did I mention Rachel is my favourite character? I find her fascinating.

Tobias shines in the climax of this book, as he's the one who takes action and saves the day. It's disappointing that the other Animorphs aren't/can't be involved, but hey, every book has to end at some point and it has to kept relatively short. Tobias is a hero, and the others need him even though he feels useless just as much as he needs them to keep feeling human. Overall it's a great introduction to Tobias as a

character, plot driven by his unique position within the Animorphs, and resolves several issues revolving around his character.

Also, did I mention the cover art is about a billionty times better than the previous two?

Nikki says

I love this. Tobias is such a deeply emotional character and I love how this book explores what makes us human. I'm blown away by the maturity of this kids series.

Robert says

One of the best books in the series. Tobias is such a good character in the series and this book is a strong start to his character.

Full review at ReadingOverTheShoulder.com on Jun.26.2017

Ben Babcock says

One of the most important parts of designing a magic system, or a set of superpowers, or anything that allows characters to defy the ordinary laws and assumptions of our universe, is deciding what the costs will be. You can't get something for nothing, and if you break the rules, you have to pay a price. For the Animorphs, it's a two-hour time limit. If you stay in a morph longer, you're stuck there. No backsies.

The Animorphs run up against this in *The Encounter*. Our narrator this time is Tobias, who fell victim to the two-hour rule back in the first book. He is now stuck as a red-tailed hawk—an ordinary hawk, no morphing, nothing special except the mind of a human and the ability to telepathically communicate. So he's got that going for him. But his entire life has changed, and he's still reeling.

Tobias is a foil to the other four in so many ways. Setting aside his newfound place in the taxonomy, even as a human Tobias was different. He wasn't Jake and Marco's "friend" so much as a hanger-on whom the other two tolerated because they are nice guys. Tobias lacked the kind of stable family situation the other Animorphs mostly have; he gets shuttled betwixt an aunt and an uncle who don't have time for him. So he was already the outsider of the group before he become a hawk.

Tobias is also unique in having stuck around long enough at the construction site to hear Elfangor's dying words and receive a little more intel on the Yeerks. He doesn't talk much about that experience in this book. If I recall correctly, however, Tobias eventually discovers much more inner strength and comes to play a very important role, especially once Ax comes on the scene—Ax and Tobias understand each other, as outsiders do.

Stuck as a hawk now, Tobias is a living warning to the other Animorphs about the dangerous side of morphing. Applegate spares nothing as she describes Tobias' attempts to adapt to his new life—but not adapt too much. See, that's the problem: it would be so easy for Tobias to give in, let the hawk take over, hunt and

kill and live that life. He is trying to hold on to his humanity, and this entire book is him confronting the possibility that it is inexorably slipping out of his grasp.

The ways in which the other Animorphs react to Tobias' condition and try to help him say a lot about their archetypes. Jake, the leader, makes a home for Tobias in his attic, and brings Tobias human food stolen under the nose of his family. Marco, as the most reluctant Animorph so far, seems the most disturbed by Tobias. He hides behind humour, of course, but sometimes it is shrill to the point of cutting. Rachel and Cassie try to be compassionate and caring—but I think that Cassie, since she works with animals so much, has trouble separating Tobias the person from Tobias the animal.

It's Rachel who offers Tobias the most unconditional link back to humanity. He returns to her repeatedly, and she's the one who reminds him why he is still human, despite being a hawk:

"Because what counts is what is in your head and in your heart," she said with sudden passion.
"A person isn't his body. A person isn't what's on the outside."

Clichéd? Maybe. Maybe not for a young adult series. Regardless, this is why I love Rachel. She takes Tobias for what he is: a human in a hawk body, someone in both worlds. She accepts it unconditionally, uncritically, and is ready to support him. She backs him up—even when he has crazy plans, like freeing a caged red-tailed hawk.

Sorry, I know this is a Tobias book. But Rachel is just awesome.

Anyway, *The Encounter* features the Animorphs' first true action against the Yeerks. Infiltrating the Kandrona pool in *The Invasion* was kind of an accident, and in *The Visitor* they were always only gathering intel. This is the first time they agree to do something to strike back against the Yeerks, hopefully exposing them to the rest of the world.

And it goes horribly wrong, almost from the first step.

Once again, Applegate is not pulling punches here. We have to watch Tobias listen to Rachel saying goodbye because they are trapped aboard this Yeerk ship. No, scratch that—Rachel quite blatantly asks Tobias to somehow bring the ship down so that they will die before they are discovered and tortured or enslaved.

That's a lot of responsibility to put on one bird's shoulders.

It's also a very dark thing to have a kid consider: we don't want to be taken alive.

True, a last-minute flash of insight—*human* insight—allows Tobias to save the day. You didn't *really* think the four other Animorphs were going to die in book 3, did you? But it remains one of the more sobering moments in a series that, three books in, actually has quite a few sobering moments. From broken families to black ops gone awry, *Animorphs* balances a blend of reality and fantasy that somehow results in great stories.

Next review, I'll spend some time speculating about the Andalite morphing technology. And, oh yes, how *Animorphs* would work as a period drama.

My reviews of *Animorphs*:

← #2: *The Visitor* | #4: *The Message* →

Dichotomy Girl says

Wow, this was surprisingly depressing and dark. I can't say that I necessarily enjoyed it, but it was good.

Julie says

Tobias book! Cheer up, emo bird. I was really into him in the show (who wasn't?), and of course I was deeply into the OTP -- it gets gutting later, and there are already hints of it right here at the start, I forgot how early they set it up -- but he was never actually my favourite character.

I love that in these early books -- their first-ever POV books -- they're all sorting through their issues and discovering/deciding on their reasons for fighting this war. Because you need a motivation, you need that personal anchor. The big picture isn't enough; it's the personal stories that really drive home the point.

For Jake, it's his brother. Rachel, it's realising the personal impact of loved ones becoming Controllers. Tobias, it's realising that all hosts are trapped just like he is. (Marco's comes later, in his own book.)

Their adventure in this book goes terribly; these early ones are so jarring because their schemes are shambolic messes, always a hair's breadth away from utter failure and death. I'm not so into the plot of this one, but it's a necessary step towards Tobias' character development and coming to terms with his new life. I also love these early explorations into Rachel's characterisation, the fact that she gets off on adrenaline, that she's partially drawn to the danger & violence.

(I'm also terribly ashamed of myself because now that I'm rereading the series, I'm weirdly into Marco/Rachel??? Probably because boys being dumb & pester-y pigtail-pulling dynamics are some of my favourite tropes ugghhh. ALSO APPARENTLY THEY DATED IN AN ALTERNATE TIMELINE, SO I'M NOT TOTALLY CRAZY. I'm restraining myself from reading the plot summary for that AU though, because I can barely remember what happens in the later books.)

Favourite quotes below -- most of them aren't Tobias-centric but I'M SORRY I'M JUST REALLY INVESTED IN MARCO RN:

(view spoiler)

N says

From the way the others described Tobias in the previous books, I had him pictured as someone thoughtful and introspective. And well, I guess he is, but he also has a much less detailed style of narrating than some of the other kids. Although he's very frank about his feelings and rather clever in dangerous situations, at times he almost comes across as robotic. For example: "Chapman had joined the Yeerks. But he had done it in part to save his daughter, Melissa. Melissa would be at the gymnastics thing with Rachel. At the mall. Remembering the mall made me sad." It's all telling, and very little showing.

This is a cute book, but just not all that exciting. Of course none of the kids are in real danger, because it's only book three. Of course Tobias won't lose his sense of self to his animal brain, because he's the narrator. And of course they won't defeat the Yeerks, because then the series would be over. I'm still waiting for the plot of these books to get less meandering and more... sci-fi.

Z says

Ahh, yes, Tobias. The emo boy before emo was cool. This book explores his dilemma of being a human trapped in a hawk's body forever. Already, the Animorphs series is showing that it's going to tackle some tough subjects. And the band has another close call.

michelle says

I never read any of these books when I was a kid but this one made me rmmr what it was like to be eight years old and fully engrossed in a story, whether I was reading or writing it

the writing itself is just ok, gets the job done
but that's fine, I think
it reminds me of reading a screenplay

the cool thing abt this sort of YA is that it's really just all abt emotional world building
by which I mean it's not so much abt the technical aspects of the world but what humanity means in context
of it
and I think the genre should get more credit for that
kids are smart and figuring things out and that's what really matters to them

anyway I'm invested in tobias
