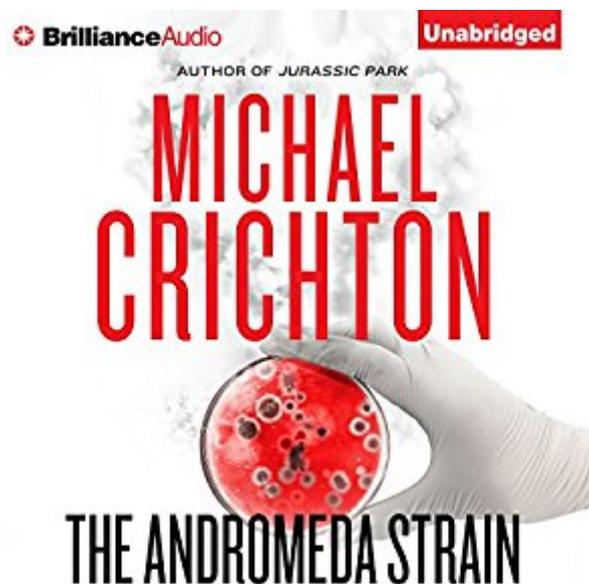


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The Andromeda Strain



Synopsis

The United States government is given a warning by the preeminent biophysicists in the country: current sterilization procedures applied to returning space probes may be inadequate to guarantee uncontaminated re-entry to the atmosphere. Two years later, seventeen satellites are sent into the outer fringes of space to "collect organisms and dust for study." One of them falls to earth, landing in a desolate area of Arizona. Twelve miles from the landing site, in the town of Piedmont, a shocking discovery is made: the streets are littered with the dead bodies of the town's inhabitants, as if they dropped dead in their tracks. The terror has begun....

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This isn't my first Michael Crichton book, but i think it's the best. I've read Jurassic Park, and the Lost World before this, and they were fairly good. But this book topped both of them. It was assigned summer reading for me this year, and i thought, "Oh great, another boring book that i have to read." But when i started reading it, I found myself reading for 2 hours just striving to complete the next chapter.(I'm a slow reader) The words that he uses are sometimes hard to read, and i pulled out a dictionary for all the ones that i couldn't figure out. I don't really like reading books, but this book has changed my mind on reading. It was so suspenseful in the end that i found i chewed my fingernails down to stubs when i finished reading. Anyone who loves suspense will be over powered by the amount of it generated by this book.

The back cover starts: "Five prominent biophysicists give the US government an urgent warning:

sterilisation procedures for returning space probes may be inadequate to guarantee uncontaminated re-entry to the atmosphere." Biophysicists, right? One can hardly find a more appropriate reading to read on the train, when I was travelling to the 3rd European biophysics congress in Munich earlier this month. This novel will teach you that the life on earth was in early February 1967 close to disaster comparable to the impact of Chixculub meteorite 65 million years ago. An US space probe, Scoop VII, brought with it a highly virulent and pathogenous alien life form from the orbit, before it crashed into the Arizona desert. After wreaking havoc in a small Arizona town, the space probe is transferred into the ultra-secret high-security US government lab in Nevada, built just a couple of months before to prevent dispersion of toxic extraterrestrial agents. Here, a group of five scientists led by a Nobel prize winner, bacteriologist Jeremy Stone, starts a race with time. What exactly is this alien life form? By which mechanism does it affect human body? Under what conditions does it multiply? How can we stop it before it wipes away the human population? The novel contains quite a bit of technical details - it's science fiction after all, right? - where Crichton will pause and explain with a patience and persistence of a good-humoured teacher. So in case you didn't know what proteins are and what they are made from; or how electron microscope operates; or what can cause blood acidity in a patient - you will learn it all here. It would be interesting to know how many scientists today were influenced by this novel to pursue a career in science. Because, after all, what Crichton writes is mostly how a scientific experiment is conducted. OK, the method in biosciences have advanced somewhat from the late sixties, but the spirit is still here. So while you are unlikely to encounter the situation when you have a few hours to save the humankind, scientific research never loses its share of excitement, either.

Michael Crichton must be a psychic. Thirty years before researchers discovered the effects of microorganisms, Crichton predicted a virus just as deadly. The Andromeda Strain is a classic, terrifying novel of biophysics. The way Crichton combines facts and fiction results in a masterpiece. With the exception of some intense scientific vocabulary, the descriptive language used by Crichton in this novel is brilliant. When an unmanned satellite returns to earth lethally contaminated, four American scientists are ordered to a secret lab to work against the threat of a worldwide epidemic. There are no villains in this novel - only the microscopic organisms of earth's extinction. This is a perfect story line, written with immense detail. Crichton does a superb job of setting the scene and describing the characters. He leaves his reader not wanting to stop, having great cliffhangers at the end of each chapter. The suspense builds inevitably to a heart-stopping conclusion. It is an intelligent and tightly plotted suspense-thriller. Many of Crichton's works masterfully combine fact

and fiction. The Andromeda Strain is no exception as the scientific elements are expertly interwoven with the fictional world of underground laboratories and secret agents. Crichton's facts about bacteria and viruses are right on - he goes as far as using quotes from professors and scientists as well as diagrams to support his arguments. When he switches to fictional mode, Crichton does not lose a step. His theories about government testing grounds and secret government projects, written thirty years prior, do not seem at all unrealistic in today's high-tech world. Although the novel grabs the reader's attention from the very first page with its crisp prose, there are some minor impediments in that this is a highly technical narrative, centering on complex issues of science. Even Crichton, in his acknowledgments preceding the novel, apologizes "...if the reader must occasionally struggle through an arid passage of technical detail." Fortunately, Crichton was also able to mix up his writing style. Here is an example of a beautifully written verse: "He often argued that human intelligence was more trouble than it was worth. It was more destructive than creative, more confusing than revealing, more discouraging than satisfying, more spiteful than charitable." This passage clearly shows how diverse Crichton can be in his writing. The metaphors he uses fit perfectly with the plot of the story at the time this passage is used. Crichton constantly switches from technical to figurative language as if to cater his novel to all of his readers.

This book is the best, and I could never put it down! It describes the search for an organism that is killing people. The way Crichton portrays all of his characters is magnificent, which is why I really connected with this book. I felt as if I was the missing scientist from the team! I sincerely liked the way Crichton concealed the identity of the person who deciphered the mystery. I genuinely enjoyed reading about the long hours spent down in Level V of the Wildfire base. This is where Hall took care of Mr. Jackson and the baby, where Burton performed his autopsies, and where Stone and Leavitt worked on finding the organism. The other part I thoroughly enjoyed was reading about Burton and Stone while they were in Piedmont, looking for the satellite. What they found was so startling, that you hardly knew what to expect next. I really believe you should buy this book, because it is such a wonderful scientific mystery!

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