



# The Andromeda Strain

*Michael Crichton*

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## **The Andromeda Strain** Michael Crichton

The United States government is given a warning by the pre-eminent 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 Andromeda Strain Details**

Date : Published October 28th 2003 by Avon Books (first published September 1st 1969)

ISBN : 9780060541811

Author : Michael Crichton

Format : Paperback 327 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Thriller

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# From Reader Review The Andromeda Strain for online ebook

## Lyn says

Nine years before Stephen King's heavy, genre defining smackdown novel The Stand, intelligent tall guy Michael Crichton quietly blew people away with his own hard science Big Bang Theory epidemic story.

Similar to Andy Weir's brilliant 2011 mega success The Martian, this is hard science fiction told by an actual scientist. But whereas Weir stepped it down for the rest of us with some laugh out loud humor, the good Dr. Crichton put his best bedside manner forward and patiently explained his biological horror story in a way that – made it scarier.

Like a Jonathon Edwards sermon, his straight man delivery creates a technical tension that informs as it terrorizes.

True, some of the overly technical sections dragged and I recalled moments from HS when I daydreamed the lecture away; but Crichton never let his lesson stray too far from the subject at hand – scaring the Heeby Jeebies out of us.

Scared to death.

That's an actual line from the book and describes one of the hero scientists' attempts to come to grips with what was going on. Seems an alien organism is making folks die – immediately. An incubation period of a few seconds. A super team of science hotshots that makes Sheldon and Leonard look like middle schoolers takes it down to the line to pull us all from the brink. Or do they?

A +.

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## MightyA says

At least 4.25 stars, IMO. Great story format, superb writing, lots of character developments, yet still interesting enough to keep me on the book the whole time, even the background info of each scientist. To top it off. an excellent audio performance just make the whole experience the more exciting.

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## Annette says

liked the beginning, thought the end was unbelievably anticlimatic.

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## Terry says

Perhaps I'm influenced too much by my nostalgic love of the feel of '70's and '80's sci-fi and horror, but I did enjoy this. I'd watched the old movie many years ago, so there were no surprises, but I enjoyed it anyway. It helps that I read this as a real possible event as well, as I think it's highly possible that it will happen (or has already). Great classic sci-fi, in my opinion.

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## Apatt says

*“Recent theoretical considerations suggest that sterilization procedures of returning space probes may be inadequate to guarantee sterile reentry to this planet's atmosphere. The consequence of this is the potential introduction of virulent organisms into the present terrestrial ecologic framework.”*

That quote represents the basic concept of *The Andromeda Strain* quite well. A more sensational - and rather crude - short description may be “Bacteria from outer space”, but this makes it seem like a low-brow alien invasion sort of story when, in fact, this book is not strictly sci-fi. It was first published in 1969 and set around the time of writing (late '60s). This is the book that puts Crichton on the path of blockbusting bestsellerdom.

1971 movie poster

*The Andromeda Strain* is a medical/techno/thriller though it is also sci-fi in the sense that it involves an organism from outer space, not to mention various gadgets that seem to be ahead of their time. The plot is straightforward. A satellite falls near a small town called Piedmont in Arizona, most of the townsfolk immediately die of mysterious causes, and the ones that do not die immediately soon commit suicide in bizarre manners; except an old man and a baby who are strangely unaffected. A secret government's team of scientists and doctors called “Wild Fire”, assembled for such a contingency, is activated to investigate and prevent any more deaths. The Wild Fire lab is located deep underground with four levels, the deeper the level the more stringent the level of security and sterilization, including an anal probe by robots and such. As you would expect in a thriller, things eventually go south. Will this be the end of the human race? (view spoiler).

As mentioned earlier, this is the book that put Michael Crichton on the map, by the time he published *Jurassic Park* he is practically his own continent. *The Andromeda Strain* is very tautly written, thrilling and even educational! Crichton is very good at explaining scientific details without dumping the info in huge, incomprehensible blocks. If you are looking for lyricism and deep character development you had better look elsewhere. For the general reader, this is an immensely readable and gripping little novel.

## Quotes:

*“These considerations lead me to believe that the first human interaction with extraterrestrial life will consist of contact with organisms similar to, if not identical to, earth bacteria or viruses. The consequences of such contact are disturbing when one recalls that 3 per cent of all earth bacteria are capable of exerting some deleterious effect upon man.”*

*“Physics was the first of the natural sciences to become fully modern and highly mathematical. Chemistry followed in the wake of physics, but biology, the retarded child, lagged far behind. Even in the time of Newton and Galileo, men knew more about the moon and other heavenly bodies than they did about their own.”*

*“According to Lewis Bornheim, a crisis is a situation in which a previously tolerable set of circumstances is suddenly, by the addition of another factor, rendered wholly intolerable. Whether the additional factor is political, economic, or scientific hardly matters: the death of a national hero, the instability of prices, or a technological discovery can all set events in motion. In this sense, Gladstone was right: all crises are the same.”*

Unpopular 2008 TV series adaptation

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## **AH says**

This is a review of the audiobook.

I first read *The Andromeda Strain* way back when I was about 12 years old or so. Back then the YA genre wasn't available for us precocious readers so we graduated from Nancy Drew straight to Stephen King, Micheal Crichton and the like.

There is nothing scarier than something we cannot see. Add in some alien elements and it becomes even scarier. Alien virus from outer space - freaky.

The audio version was not as good as the book, nor was it as good as the movie from what I recall. However, I did enjoy listening to it, it just didn't amaze me.

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## **Erin \*Help I’m Reading and I Can’t Get Up\* says**

3 stars. I’m sure in 1969 this was cutting edge, but it doesn’t quite stack up in 2018, either in terms of suspense, science, or inclusivity. This book fails the Bechdel test so hard, it reminds me of why the Bechdel test was invented. The only women I can remember are a switchboard operator, a nurse, and a (literally, I can't make this up) recorded voice that is described as sensual, almost sexy, UNTIL the male hearer realizes it belongs to a woman in her sixties, at which point he presumably loses interest. Ugh.

Still intriguing though! Read so I could thoroughly immerse myself in the Jurassic Park series.

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## **Joe Valdez says**

The sixth novel by Michael Crichton but the first published (in 1969) under his own name and the first in which he bent science fiction and suspense together in ways that would propel Crichton to the top of the bestseller lists and into cinemas for the next thirty years, *The Andromeda Strain* didn't retain many surprises for me, but in its own delightful way, reminded me of a science and technology museum exhibit and the docent giving me a tour: "And here we have a pioneering thriller of technology run amok, where mankind's hubris unleashes terror from a top secret laboratory which only white men can stop. Some of you may recall this theme in *Jurassic Park*."

Oooh! Aaah!

Divided into four sections representing four days--Contact, Piedmont, Wildfire and Spread--the conceit of

the novel is to document a scientific clusterfuck classified top secret. Outside the town of Piedmont, Arizona (pop. 48), an Army lieutenant and private have been dispatched to recover a crashed Air Force satellite. Observing no movement in the town, the men roll into Piedmont and report to Mission Control at Vandenberg Air Force Base lots of bodies in the streets. When Mission Control loses contact with the unit, a reconnaissance jet is dispatched to Piedmont and confirms the dead bodies but at least one civilian who seems to still be alive. Project Wildfire is put on alert.

Dr. Jeremy Stone, a thirty-six year old professor of bacteriology at Stanford and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, is retrieved by MPs from a dinner party he's hosting with his wife. The other members of the Wildfire team are: Dr. Peter Leavitt, a clinical microbiologist experienced in the treatment of infectious disease. Dr. Charles Burton, a professor of pathology at Baylor College of Medicine known as "The Stumbler" for his clumsiness. A Yale anthropologist is in the hospital for an appendectomy and unable to respond, so the last man on the team is Dr. Mark Hall, a surgeon and compromise candidate chosen by virtue of being a single man who fits something called the Odd Man Hypothesis.

An MP hands Dr. Stone a report on Project Scoop, brainchild of the Army Medical Corps tasked with sending satellites into near space to hunt for organisms that might exist there. Any scientific benefits of this project conceal the true aim of Project Scoop: to recover organisms which might be developed into biological weapons. Seventeen orbital satellites weighing thirty-seven pounds have been built and six launched. Scoops I-VI either burned up in the atmosphere or were retrieved with only standard earth organisms. Scoop VII, believed to have been launched February 5, 1967, leaves stable orbit after two and a half days and mysteriously crashes in northeastern Arizona.

Stone and Burton are dispatched to Piedmont by helicopter pilot who has orders, upon Stone and Burton's unlikely demise, to return to Wildfire installation in Nevada where his craft is to be incinerated in midair, with the pilot. Stone and Burton note that the corpses in the street died suddenly, clutching their chests. The victims didn't seem to be in pain. Recovering the Scoop satellite in the clinic of the town doctor, Burton performs a field autopsy on the physician and finds the victim's liquid blood has coagulated into solid. More interesting, they find two survivors: a one-year male infant crying in his crib, and a sixty-seven-year old drunk who collapses in the street.

Meanwhile, Leavitt escorts Hall into the Wildfire installation, a zero contaminant facility buried underneath a functioning U.S. Department of Agriculture station in Nevada. Each of the levels is more sterile than the last and requires extensive decontamination before the visitor is admitted to Level V, where the satellite and the two survivors have been moved. In the event of a containment breach, an atomic device will automatically destroy the facility in t-minus three minutes. Hall is given the only key to cancel the self-destruct sequence and learns the psychology behind the Odd Man Hypothesis, which holds that bachelors are less likely to chicken out and abort the self-destruct if worse comes to worst.

\* Helpful tip: When a scientist in a Michael Crichton novel assures you that some awesome new technology is perfectly safe, you don't walk, you run.

The flaws in *The Andromeda Strain* are numerous and easy to spot if you choose to dwell on them. In the days before integrated workplaces, the name characters are uniformly white and male. Worse, they're driven by archetype. Stone, the 36-year-old Nobel prize winning protagonist (Crichton was 27 years old at the time of the novel's publication) is a Gary Stu, a leader in his field who commands respect and adoration, keeps a steady hand at the wheel and was likely considered a bore by everyone except the author and his mother. The sterile work environment of the book doesn't inject any life into the characters either. For most of the story, I was rooting for the bacteria.

The reasons I enjoyed the novel were manifold. The conceit that extraterrestrials will visit earth in spaceships is turned on its head by Crichton with the eerie possibility that first contact could take place with a plague brought back by astronauts. This concept remains as potent today as it must have been in 1969 and is dealt with cerebrally, with the Wildfire scientists considering they may be destroying a highly advanced form of alien life in their petri dishes. A science dunce, I enjoyed Crichton detailing the various biological responses the human body undertakes to combat pathogens and how we co-exist with bacteria, 97% of which has evolved to pose no health risk to humans.

Crichton's dry, methodical take on the material (there's no room for flirting or even witty banter in the Wildfire installation) lends the book a sense of reality. This makes it more suspenseful and at times, terrifying. I find my inherent paranoia toward military research programs, the hubris of brilliant minds and the violence of scientific discovery to be well bred in Crichton's work. His high concept plots--involving space plagues, dinosaurs, time travel--are effective because I can imagine them being hatched in an undisclosed location where proper security protocols have been overlooked by the lowest bidder. Whoops. *The Andromeda Strain* is the book that started it all.

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## Alejandro says

**This book is a good example that sometimes the rating that one gives to one book isn't fault itself of the book but due the timing of when you read it in relation with having read other books of the same author.**

All that long introduction is to explain that my very reason to give only 3 stars to this very good book is because I happened to read it after of reading *Sphere* (see review of that book: [HERE](#)), that I find quite similar in the general premise.

Both books have the calling of a expert scientific team to deal with an alien threat.

Beyond that, both books deal differently with the story, it's not like that they are clone books or something.

But the only sin that commit this poor book was to be chosen by me right after of reading *Sphere*, that it was a book that I loved a lot and I still think very high of it, so when I started to read this other book by Crichton, I got an odd feeling that I was reading again the same book and that I liked more the other book.

I know that this book is older, but it's nobody's fault that I bought it right after *Sphere*.

I do think that if I decide to read it now, I may enjoy it more, maybe sometime I will.

Anyway, this book is very good, since it has all the right elements that Crichton used to include in his books.

Maybe my only advice here is that I recommend you to read this book, *The Andromeda Strain* and *Sphere* too, just please, don't read them one after the other, give them at least 6 months or so, and read something else in between.

**Recommended.**

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## Paul O'Neill says

There's a good story in here, somewhere. If Crichton tackled this idea later in his career it would have undoubtedly been a great book. There's just far too much science and not enough thriller.

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## Nayra.Hassan says

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## Richard says

This was probably one of the first science fiction books I ever read, and so far the only book by Crichton. My rating is based on my reaction over three decades ago -- I seem to recall there were some parts that felt awkward, like they were written by someone trying to leap across the so-called "generation gap". But my teen self loved the book, so it gets the five stars. I have no idea whether I'd still feel as generous if I were to re-read it, but then I seldom re-read books anyway.

*The movie was pretty good too.*

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## Emily (Books with Emily Fox) says

The writing was drier than a cracker in the desert...

But I loved the book anyway!

It definitely reads like a scientific/army report but this was such an interesting twist on the classic sci-fi (first contact?). I only recommend it if you already love sci-fi and diseases apocalyptic books.

Left me wanting more... I'll definitely read more from the author!



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## Jason Parent says

[ e.g., toward the end where Crichton introduces unnecessary commentary on some experimental disease treatment that is irrelevant to the story and seems awfully forced (hide spoiler)]

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## Russ says

This book is all about the tension, not the payoff.

As with most entertainment, this book pulls you in by asking some questions. "What is it?" "How does it work?" "What happened?" While those questions are still being asked, this book is a fairly thrilling read.

If you don't like books that get too technical about things, though, this isn't the book for you. It's full of pages from government documents, computer readouts, and the like. That only helps the book go by quicker, because I just skipped most of that stuff.

For the most part, the book lacks a main protagonist. Even the best candidate for main protagonist isn't given too much to do, and when he is, it's forced.

I guess this book works because of the fear of the unknown. Without that, it would be full of boring descriptions of scientific and medical procedures.

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