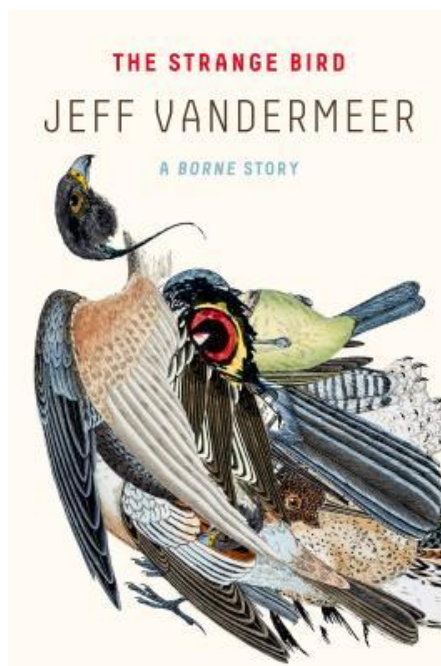




The Strange Bird: A Borne Story

Jeff VanderMeer

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***The Strange Bird*--from *New York Times* bestselling novelist Jeff VanderMeer--expands and weaves deeply into the world of his "thorough marvel"* of a novel, *Borne*.**

The Strange Bird is a new kind of creature, built in a laboratory--she is part bird, part human, part many other things. But now the lab in which she was created is under siege and the scientists have turned on their animal creations. Flying through tunnels, dodging bullets, and changing her colors and patterning to avoid capture, the Strange Bird manages to escape.

But she cannot just soar in peace above the earth. The sky itself is full of wildlife that rejects her as one of their own, and also full of technology--satellites and drones and other detritus of the human civilization below that has all but destroyed itself. And the farther she flies, the deeper she finds herself in the orbit of the Company, a collapsed biotech firm that has populated the world with experiments both failed and successful that have outlived the corporation itself: a pack of networked foxes, a giant predatory bear. But of the many creatures she encounters with whom she bears some kind of kinship, it is the humans--all of them now simply scrambling to survive--who are the most insidious, who still see her as simply something to possess, to capture, to trade, to exploit. Never to understand, never to welcome home.

With *The Strange Bird*, Jeff VanderMeer has done more than add another layer, a new chapter, to his celebrated novel *Borne*. He has created a whole new perspective on the world inhabited by Rachel and Wick, the Magician, Mord, and Borne--a view from above, of course, but also a view from deep inside the mind of a new kind of creature who will fight and suffer and live for the tenuous future of this world.

Praise for *Borne*

"Jeff VanderMeer's Southern Reach Trilogy was an ever-creeping map of the apocalypse; with *Borne* he continues his investigation into the malevolent grace of the world, and it's a thorough marvel." --Colson Whitehead

"VanderMeer is that rare novelist who turns to nonhumans not to make them approximate us as much as possible but to make such approximation impossible. All of this is magnified a hundredfold in *Borne* . . . Here is the story about biotech that VanderMeer wants to tell, a vision of the nonhuman not as one fixed thing, one fixed destiny, but as either peaceful or catastrophic, by our side or out on a rampage as our behavior dictates--for these are our children, born of us and now to be borne in whatever shape or mess we have created. This coming-of-age story signals that eco-fiction has come of age as well: wilder, more reckless and more breathtaking than previously thought, a wager and a promise that what emerges from the twenty-first century will be as good as any from the twentieth, or the nineteenth." --Wai Chee Dimock, *The New York Times Book Review*

The Strange Bird: A Borne Story Details

Date : Published February 27th 2018 by MCD/Farrar Straus and Giroux (first published August 1st 2017)

ISBN : 9780374537920

Author : Jeff VanderMeer

Format : Paperback 109 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy, Novella

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From Reader Review The Strange Bird: A Borne Story for online ebook

Jamie says

Wow.

I am blown away by how beautiful and atmospheric this was. I truly felt the despair and it makes you venture into the madness with this bird-seriously had left me feeling anxious multiple times throughout the book.

This is a little side story to Jeff VanderMeer's story Borne. We follow The Strange Bird in this novella; however, past characters like The Magician and Wick show up as well. I will say, I truly despise the Magician even more than before, and absolutely love Wick. When you read this, you will understand fully.

While I personally didn't love Borne, I adored this novella. I liked how VanderMeer concentrated on one main character in this story, not like in Borne, that had several main characters, and I just really didn't connect with any one in particular.

Overall, I would recommend this to everyone.

I received a copy of this book through NetGalley for an honest opinion. My thanks to Jeff VanderMeer and Farrar, Straus and Giroux for the opportunity to read and review this book.

Donna says

What did she hope for? To find a purpose, and for kindness, which had not yet been shown to her. Where did she wish to come to rest? A place she could call home, a place that was safe. A place where there might be others of her kind.

The Strange Bird has lived in a lab all her life, enduring experiments that may have invaded her manufactured body, but not her spirit. Her resilience was due in part to a special bit of DNA in her unique make up and from something extra and very purposeful added to her by her creator. She lives in a post apocalyptic world in which technology and its misuse was humankind's downfall, and when people tried to correct the problem by backpedaling, they only made things worse. So when The Strange Bird is finally freed from the lab under tragic circumstances, she finds herself thrown out of the frying pan and into the fire in a world seemingly without rules or reason. She has never even glimpsed the sun before now and is certain it will burn her as it rises on her first day of freedom. But she soon discovers it is totally harmless, unlike most of the surviving humans and creatures she encounters as she searches for that elusive place called home.

This story is a novella and a companion piece to last year's excellent book Borne. It takes place in the same world and covers the same time period, but with that world seen through very different, avian eyes. You could read this as a stand-alone since the author seamlessly integrated his previous story and much world building into it to bring any new reader up to speed. But I'd recommend reading Borne first to get more out of this sad book. That was the overwhelming feeling I came away with after reading this story of endurance and perseverance, even though it had moments of grace.

I'm not sure if this additional story was necessary, and it was often gruesome. But the descriptive writing detailing that ugly world was often beautiful and so was the spirit of The Strange Bird.

Spencer says

This is an exquisitely written novella that acts as an addition to Jeff VanderMeer's novel Borne. The writing is beautiful, however the world is harsh and bizarre but grounded with emotion as you follow the strange bird and its journey across this extraordinary land. I love the imagination of VanderMeer and the unique stories he creates, this book is another brilliant example of this. I'd very much recommend it!

I received an ARC of this book from Netgalley in return for a fair and unbiased review.

Brad says

Stories in parallel

I love stories that reveal what was happening on the other side of a novel. The mysterious Magician from Borne is still a mystery, but this book provides a satisfying bit of overlap, and much more, a glimpse of a wider world.

Ivana Neši? says

Lepo i užasno i bolno i ?udno i SVE.

Uvek kad ?itam Vandermira pomislim da bih volela da budem on kad porastem, ali sada sam to baš onako jako pomislila.

Steve says

They were the creatures from the broken places.

The Strange Bird is Jeff VanderMeer novella-length return to the post-apocalyptic world of his previous novel Borne. I was so-so on that effort, but at the time I predicted a return to Borne-world, and here it is. I like this one much better. The story operates as a kind of weird sci-fi fairy tale. It is told from the point of view of a beautiful created bird (a "made thing"), that is both machine and living creature. It has escaped, during some sort of fire-fight, the labs of the Company (a sort of corporate CIA-like entity filled with lab coats, guns, and hybrid creations). The Strange Bird is little more than a child in what it understands. Its too brief moments of flight and freedom are followed with a harsh education on the world she (one character names her "Isadora") has escaped into. The story has beauty, evil, even atrocity, but its arc in the end is a satisfying one that speaks to the endurance of hope -- and love. Those familiar with *Borne* will again encounter various characters: the Magician, Mord, Rachel, Wick, even Borne (from a distance), all make appearances. *The Strange Bird* is a very well done return (I wouldn't call it a sequel). I don't think it's necessary to have read the first book, though I suspect many will want to. Highly recommended.

Daniel (Page by Page) says

Although this book is short I just couldn't get into it, and 40 pages in I just wasn't as interested as I should've been, so here we have another DNF. I know that the author and story is good, but it's just not for me right now.

Mary says

In this novella's expansion of VanderMeer's Borne, the reader again is witness to his unparalleled imagination. The Strange Bird inhabits a desperate world where again we meet the mutant flying bear, Mord, the cruel Magician, Rachel the survivor and her lover Wick. "...the situation was extreme and the world was dying. So they had gone on doing the same things that had destroyed the world, to save it." The Strange Bird is a mutant creature comprised of human and avian genes, and technology. "What did she hope for? To find purpose, and for kindness which had not yet been shown to her. Where did she wish to rest? A place she could call home, a place that was safe." The Strange Bird bestows an aerial view of Borne's world laid waste by human inhabitants; devastated by mad scientists and uncontrolled technology. Impressive, unforgettable, The Strange Bird is highly recommended for all science fiction aficionados.

Crowinator says

Oh sure, go ahead and rip out my heart, Mr. VanderMeer.

Kate says

4/5stars

this was a BEAUTIFUL little short story from the "Borne" universe - but honestly it's pretty wonderful even on it's own. This story is crude, a bit gruesome, but also wonderful much in the same way "Borne" was. I'll never get enough of this world or VanderMeer's writing.

ashley c says

Poignant, moving, heart-wrenching, touching, I'm just throwing out synonyms because *it hurt me so much.*

Only VanderMeer has the ability to make me connect with, and feel sorry for, so far: a dolphin with 'strangely human eyes' (which, by the way, precedes my favourite line in the book. Also has anyone watched the movie? It was completely different from the book but it was amazing too. Heart-wrenching. Also I can't believe I never wrote a review for the book - going to re-read it soon), a blob of science-fictiony goo that's alive and that wanted to be human, and now, a bird that's not quite a bird and will eventually become a jacket. (Wait, what? You need to read and find out. Peta would be outraged. I was fucking crying.)

VanderMeer beautifully captured the intelligence of the creature in a way that doesn't dismiss animal intelligence by trying to make it like human intelligence. It was perceptive in its own way, it experienced things, and it trusted people, was hurt by them, and forgave them, and it felt love and belonging and despair and pain.

At the end of the book I felt like I had journeyed with her, I had lived in the wasteland and I had been captured and tortured, then released, then had my body and soul split into splinters. God, this was not good for my mental health.

Am totally going to read the Southern Reach again. Don't know why it took me so long.

Book Pairings (Laci Long) says

The Strange Bird is a companion novella to Jeff Vandermeer's Borne and is set during the same timeframe as the novel. Borne was one of my favorite books of 2017 so I was SUPER excited to read The Strange Bird.

The Strange Bird follows a creature that is the result of experimentation combining human and bird genetic material after she manages to escape the laboratory she was created in. We get to experience this strange world from the perspective of a creature who is completely alone and trying to understand what it means to be free and to know oneself. I am in awe of Vandermeer's ability to write such atmospheric and haunting stories. If you loved Borne, you absolutely have to pick up a copy of The Strange Bird.

Also rumor has it, Vandermeer is working on another story about the three astronauts from the novel! I cannot wait to read more about this strange and wonderful world he has created.

Jeff Raymond says

A short novella in the Borne universe, this is a fairly standard modern VanderMeer piece with gorgeous writing and a comprehensible story that gives plenty of nods and extras to the Borne story while also existing on its own. If you prefer your science fiction on the prettier side or really loved Borne, give this a read.

Sarah says

This was okay. It was an interesting new perspective in the world of Borne. It is very short and can be read in about 2 hours.

The Strange Bird is a piece of biotech, escaped from the lab of the Company. I would not recommend reading it prior to reading Borne as it would not make much sense.

I did enjoy seeing some of the old characters again, although there was no Borne who was my favorite character from the original book.

I did guess very early on what the Strange Bird's purpose was, but I didn't guess how we would arrive at that conclusion.

Content warnings: (view spoiler)

Mindi says

The Strange Bird is a story that takes place in the Borne universe during the same timeline as the original novel, but from the perspective of a different character called the Strange Bird. Part human and part bird, VanderMeer's world gets a different perspective as the Strange Bird escapes her laboratory prison and learns about the world outside its walls.

I don't want to give too much away about this story because it would lessen its impact, but I was definitely crying by the end. I will say that the Strange Bird encounters all of the characters from the original novel, and it's interesting to see that world from the perspective of a new character. I was so invested in her explorations of the cruel new world outside. The universe of Borne is not a kind one, and I was seriously on the edge of my seat for the majority of the story.

This story is heartbreakingly beautiful. If you enjoyed Borne and would like to revisit the world of Mord, Rachel, Wick, and the Magician I highly recommend it. It's a lustrous story from start to finish.
