



# Vitals

*Greg Bear*

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## Vitals Greg Bear

Blending fierce, fast plots with vivid characters and mind-bending ideas, Greg Bear has mastered a powerful alchemy of suspense, science, and action in his gripping thrillers. *Darwin's Radio* was hailed across the country as one of the best books of the year. His newest novel, *Vitals*, begins with a harrowing descent to a netherworld at the very bottom of the sea—and then explodes to the surface in sheer terror.

Hal Cousins is one of a handful of scientists nearing the most sought after discovery in human history: the key to short-circuiting the aging process. Fueled by a wealth of research, an overdose of self-confidence, and the money of influential patrons to whom he makes outrageous promises, Hal experiments with organisms living in the hot thermal plumes in the ocean depths. But as he journeys beneath the sea, his other world is falling apart.

Across the country, scientists are being inexplicably murdered—including Hal's identical twin brother, who is also working to unlock the key to immortality. Hal himself barely eludes a cold-blooded attack at sea, and when he returns home to Seattle, he finds himself walking into an eerie realm where voices speak to him from the dead . . . where a once-brilliant historian turned crackpot is leading him on a deadly game of hide-and-seek . . . and where the beautiful, rich widow of his twin is more than willing to pick up the pieces of Hal's life—and take him places he's never been before.

Suddenly Hal is trapped inside an ever-twisting maze of shocking revelations. For he is not the first person to come close to ending aging forever—and those who came before him will stop at nothing to keep the secret to themselves. Now every person on earth is at risk of being made an unsuspecting player in one man's spectacular and horrifying master plan.

From the bottom of Russia's Lake Baikal to a billionaire's bionic house built into the cliffs of the Washington seashore, from the darkest days of World War II and the reign of Josef Stalin to the capitalist free-for-all that is the United States, *Vitals* tells an astounding tale of the most unimaginable scientific secret of all—exposed by the quest for immortality itself . . .

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## Vitals Details

Date : Published April 1st 2003 by Ballantine Books (first published 2002)

ISBN : 9780345423344

Author : Greg Bear

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Thriller

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# From Reader Review Vitals for online ebook

## Betty BoomBa says

I like Greg bear, and although this is okay, it is not one I would read twice.

More of a bio-medical spec fic thriller, it didn't click any of my buttons. And first person doesn't do it for me anymore. (yet I keep picking 1st person novels. Sigh).

So it's okay. Not earth shattering.

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## Michael Pryor says

Tense, thrilling, tapered.

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## Kristin Cicciarella says

If I could give this book 5.5 stars I would. It's a lot like Darwin's radio but less dense. It has the same technomedical sci-fi slant but you could easily finish it in a few days.

Instead of discussing human evolution, Bear using genetics as a weapon for espionage and a great freaking story.

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## Daniel says

Passed the fifty page rule. Failed the hundred page rule.

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## Chris says

Ok, I didnt get as far as finishing this book. While the idea was ok in theory, I found the execution dull and lacking in real emotion.

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## Carl Alves says

Vitals sets itself up as a novel about a scientist researching how to extend life through the use of certain bacteria, which is an interesting enough premise. Unfortunately, the book turned out to be a complete and utter mess, disappointing in so many ways. Hal Cousins is a scientist who seeks the favor of the super wealthy to fund his projects but things go haywire after his twin brother is murdered and his life begins to

crumble around him. Ultimately the story becomes about this ancient scientist who was around in pre World War 2 Soviet Union and discovered bacteria that can mysteriously brainwash people and put them under his control. At least that's what I think it was about, since it was so all over the place that I'm not even sure.

This novel is so utterly convoluted and hard to follow. It was almost as if the author was intentionally trying to confuse the reader, and after a while it caused me to lose interest. There is absolutely not a shred of believability to the novel. The premise is neat but the mechanics of the plot is groan inducing. The characterization in the novel is weak. There were loose plot points that were never resolved. It was solid for about the first quarter of the book before it became dreadful to read. I kept holding out hope that this novel would right itself and get better but that never came to fruition, and toward the end I just wanted it to be over. This was the first and last book by Greg Bear that I will read.

Carl Alves - author of Reconquest: Mother Earth

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### **Megan Baxter says**

In this one, Greg Bear has kind of abandoned the ideas for the thrill of the chase. It's much more technothriller than science fiction, although I suppose the science is enough out there it could sort of qualify. But it's the speed at which everything happens, the plot racing by too fast for there to be real consideration of the ideas, that I find a pity. I know he can do better, and I'd much prefer a novel of ideas.

Note: The rest of this review has been withdrawn due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at [Smorgasbook](#)

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### **Gendou says**

In this book, bacteria cause aging and are used for mind control!  
This is why I hate Greg Bear: he perverts science fiction.  
He's forcing nature to fit in his weirdo fantasy world.  
This makes for especially poor science fiction.  
The end is confusing and vague.

Why do I punish myself by reading Greg Bear's books?

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### **Mark Schomburg says**

It's hard to stomach all the poor reviews of Greg Bear, especially for this book which is really great. I've found his angle on science fiction to be acutely amazing and convincing; probably closer to reality than most readers will admit. I guess he is just way over the heads of readers of typical sci-fi scenarios. With Bear, the science is not just a dumb prop or setting to write more crap, it's actually where the crux of the whole plot is centered. The fantasy is in thinking that the science just might be true - or pretty close to being true - might as well be true, since we live in a world of unknowns just as great. I pity the reader who finds these scenarios

unbelievable or too fantastic.

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## **Josh says**

As a huge fan of Greg Bear's various wonders of the universe, but I found this to be very dull and disappointing. I love science fiction that is grounded in biology, and Greg Bear has some fantastic biology-driven novels: Blood Music is my favorite, but see also Darwin's Radio, Legacy, and Hull Zero Three. Even in books that aren't primarily premised in biology, Greg Bear's biological references are usually well crafted and imaginative, and confer richness to the world of the book as well as depth to the plot. The galactic ecology described in The Forge of God, the living cities in Strength of Stones, and the transformed humans in Queen of Angels or Eon, may not be fully developed or very unique ideas, but at least they are fun to imagine and think about.

Vitals is not fun to think about. Unfortunately its central science fictional concepts, concerning microbial information transmission and immortality, seemed uninteresting and perhaps better explored by Greg Bear himself in some of his other books. In Blood Music, a plague of engineered microbes unfolds into the coldly beautiful destruction/transcendence of humanity, and in Slant, bacteria are the computational processors in a powerful organic artificial intelligence. Where does Vitals take you, with its mind-control bacteria and immortality intrigue? To a cruise-ship full of weirdos. Blah. Like the similarly uninspiring Dead Lines, Vitals just seems small in comparison to many of Greg Bear's other works, so I didn't care for it.

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## **K. says**

Plot summary: A bunch of people are searching for the secret to...not immortality, but living for a REALLY long time...in bacteria. Only then there's a big conspiracy, and they're running for their lives.

Thoughts: Look, it sounds really interesting. And when it starts with being in a mini-sub heading for the bottom of the ocean, it SEEMS really interesting. But then random people started going crazy, and they were on the run, and there was this whole 20th century Russian history thing going on, and I just couldn't cope any more. There didn't seem to be anything tying the plot together, it was just a jumble of topics that would periodically overlap.

Made it as far as page 183 and couldn't take it any more. DNF.

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## **Milele says**

This is a thriller set in a slightly more capable present-day setting. The best part of the book was recognizing one location after another in Seattle, Palo Alto and Berkeley. The book sets and keeps a fast pace.

\*\*\*Spoiler alert\*\*\* now as I talk about what I didn't like. It became horribly grating as each female character turned out to be one dimensional and untrustworthy. Sure, the book is about biologically induced paranoia and unreliable behavior, so there's some plot justification for everybody being untrustworthy, but the female characters were really bad. The worst was the wife of Rob Cousins, who, after Rob's death seeks out Rob's twin Hal, for the same reasons she initially married Rob: She's a beautiful spy! who can

biologically control men!! via sex!!! I mean, really. When the bad guys can control everybody by spritzing their food or just the air they breathe, why create this artificial seductress and send her out with her mind-control skin cream which she rubs on her body before rubbing her body all over her target? Really? That is a paranoid wet-dream, not a plot.

After that, I perfunctorily finished the book, but didn't really enjoy it any more. I can't tell if the cruise ship scenes and the ending were truly terrible or if I'd just lost all interest in the plot and characters.

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### **John Inman says**

A good read.

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### **Lowed says**

This one's good. What disheartened me was how Bear tried to put in so many great ideas, but left them behind as he tried to shift from being a really-good-sci-fi-book to a lousy-thriller-trash.

Still, this will not hinder me from picking up his other works.

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### **Spencer says**

Picked the book because I had heard the author was good. While the style was decent, and the readability good, the story itself was poor. It had a decent core premise, the engineering of bacterial strains released through the population which could later be triggered. Unfortunately, it failed to stop or at least reign itself in somewhere within the realm of possibility, and instead went completely off the deep end.

If the writer had managed to at least try to tie together the loose ends at the end of the book, I might have at least been able to give him two stars. Instead, he lets them accumulate at an alarming rate, only to leave you completely hanging in nearly every regard.

I will give at least one more of his books a try, based on the readability shown here, but I cannot recommend this particular book.

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