



Bane

Amelia C. Gormley

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The weapon that nearly destroyed humanity may be their only salvation.

Rhys Cooper's unique immunity to all three strains of the virus that nearly annihilated humanity has brought him the unwanted attention of Clean Zone scientists. They've summoned him for testing—ostensibly in the hopes of finding a vaccine—but Rhys's partner, Darius Murrell, has good reason not to trust any government. He and his comrades in Delta Company were unwitting test subjects for Project Juggernaut, the military experiment that gave them superhuman abilities and unleashed the pandemic. Doubting the government's intentions, Delta Company refuses to let Rhys go alone.

Fear of infection has kept Zach Houtman and his lover Nico Fernández apart for a decade. They meet rarely, just long enough to coordinate their spying on the head of the government's virus research division. Secretary Littlewood is a vicious predator, and they suspect he's trying to acquire the strain of the virus that would make him superhuman. To stop him, they need the perfect bait: Rhys.

For Rhys, helping them might cost him his relationship with Darius—or his life. For Zach and Nico, even if their plan succeeds, they still face the ultimate question: can infected and uninfected people ever live together safely?

- See more at: <http://www.riptidepublishing.com/tit...>

Bane Details

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From Reader Review Bane for online ebook

Veronica of V's Reads says

This is the third book in the STRAIN world and should absolutely be read after JUGGERNAUT and STRAIN. It picks up the story where both JUGGERNAUT and STRAIN left off, bringing their romantic pairs (Rhys and Darius from STRAIN and Zack and Nico from JUGGERNAUT) in direct contact to save what is left of the world.

This series of books is set approximately 100 years in the future after a military-developed supervirus decimated the population. People left on the planet? Estimates are in the ten thousands--the majority of them uninfected survivors living in small-to-large enclaves, the largest a settlement in Colorado Springs. The others are experimentally-treated soldiers, Jugs, who help comb the country to kill the lingering revenants--ravenous, Bane Gamma infected zombie-like persons.

Rhys is a survivor who is likely to be immune to all three strains of the Bane virus, and the scientists who remain in Colorado Springs want to test his blood and determine if a vaccine can be developed. Rhys' partner, Darius, is a Jug who will not leave Rhys to the whims of the scientists. The Jugs are outcasts, and rather bitter about it, due to their lethal blood. He and several other jugs travel from the Seattle area to keep Rhys safe.

They encounter Zack in Colorado, as he is a health worker for the scientists--this meeting is scarring for Rhys who was the subject of abuse from Zack's father and brother for nearly half his life. Over the course of testing, however, they build a rapport, and Zack confides in Rhys, Darius and the other Jugs about the disappearances in the compound, and how he knows that there are real scary things going down--likely due to the machinations of the sadistic Secretary Littlewood.

There are lots of political issues with the still developing society in Colorado, not least of which is a forced breeding program. Zack enlist Rhys's cooperation to help discover the secret lab of Littlewood, and the chase--quite literally--is on.

If you were hoping Zack and Nico would work things out, they do, but it's not pretty--for a long time. I just marveled at the deft plot twists and fantastic use of character in this book. I could honestly see and feel the scenes unfold. The love between Rhys and Darius is as harsh as their world, and it's erotic and delicious, too. Expect extreme monogamy. Yay! Also, expect the Jugs to save the freaking day, yet again. I hate to say it, but this book is frighteningly on-point with contemporary issues (think: corporations buying up the natural park lands) and with the supramilitaristic response when faced with the viral outbreak.

Rhys was a child when the outbreak occurred, and his adult insight--as he travels past burned out hospitals and tenements where the infected were locked down and incinerated alive--is poignant. Darius' constant love is engaging, Zack's commitment to his purpose (to remain Bane Alpha-free) is as noble as it is frustrating. Nico has known for years that he could sexually transmit safety to Zack, but Zack feels called to remain unprotected. His faith has a surprising reward and gave me the ability to breathe again--after holding my breath so long in fear that Zack would become infected and turn revenant.

The series is phenomenal, and I cannot love it more. I received a copy of this book via NetGalley.

Tracy says

3.5 stars

This is the sequel to Strain. It was a pleasant surprise to see a prequel and sequel released for Strain. Strain was released last year and worked as a standalone. I remembered thinking the premise of Strain was a bit extreme and seemed more an excuse for gratuitous sex, but the author was pretty thorough about developing the premise, characters, and storyline that she made the story work. Strain had the shock value with starting right in the middle of a world gone wrong. The prequel, Juggernaut, is the backstory of how that dystopian world came to be with a set of new characters, and Bane brings both storylines and sets of characters together.

I don't feel either have the strength of Strain or would stand alone as well without reading Strain first. Bane struggled with bringing both sets of characters and their stories together. The characters from Juggernaut seemed less developed compared to the characters from Strain. The spygame Nico and Zach have been playing seem a little flimsy, something to keep them busy until their storyline meets up with that of the Strain one. Zach's religiosity and acceptance did not seem as forced as in Juggernaut, where it seemed he was praying often to remind readers he was devout (though without the bigotry and hypocrisy of his brother). In Bane, it added to his character better, especially when he makes some key choices that affect his life and those around him. The sci-fi premise seemed somewhat less developed, with new ideas and developments thrown in, especially the final twist and complete new direction. I appreciated the story not going the expected route, even with the race against time plot with the scientists trying to find a vaccine for the virus plus the added pressure of one of the main characters needing it. Still an enjoyable read.

I read this title as an ARC through Netgalley.

Vallie says

Bane is sequel to Strain and boy did it not disappoint. Bane needs to be read after Strain and the prequel, Juggernaut. This novel is the culmination of all that has transpired in the previous books. Not that I had any doubts, but the author **delivered** everything that I was looking for.

The post-apocalyptic atmosphere is vivid as ever, especially with how well the author laid the groundwork in the previous books. By the time you read Bane, you will have a very clear understanding of what has happened and why, as well as who the main characters are and how far they've come. I was very impressed with how distinctive all the characters remained, considering that they were all thrown together in this novel. On the one hand, we revisit Darius and Rhys, who have a big age difference and a kinky as hell sex life. When I first read Strain, I felt a little short-changed in the character development department, especially for Darius. It seemed that Rhys was the axis around which Darius existed. He was concerned with all things Rhys and I felt as if I didn't really get to know who Darius was. None of that happens here. Darius and Rhys have been together for a while and throughout this book their relationship grows by leap and bounds. Rhys is growing up and his maturity bleeds into the way he deals with his partner and life after the infection destroyed everything. Darius shares a lot about his fears for the future as well, and the relationship development is very smooth and organic. It was truly something amazing to see and the author did a bloody fantastic job portraying all of it to perfection. If you enjoyed the raunchy sex scenes in Strain, you will get a kick out of this. It's all very monogamous, kinky, and emotional as well. Killer combo!

The second couple in this novel are Nico and Zach (*bonus!*). Their relationship is more tortured, considering they were separated for damn near a whole decade and they were always scared to death when having sex because of the virus. The events that started in *Juggernaut* come to a head in *Bane*, with Nico and Zach playing an integral part in the plot twists. Their relationship is more tender, more gentle, reminiscent of a different time almost. It served as a great contrast to Darius and Rhys' relationship and as testament to the author's ability to balance several very distinct characters in one novel.

I won't talk about the plot, as half the excitement is reading to see what's going to happen. I will say though that the way the author delivered the story was nothing short of competent and the HEA –for all involved, was magnificent.

If you've read the previous novels, I can't imagine you'll need much prompting to pick this up. If you haven't, go back to the prequel and the first novel, because this series is top notch.

Highly recommend!

ARC was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Vivian says

You say you want a revolution...

Well, this is a more main stream post-apocalyptic story than *Strain* was. It dialed back the intensity and "questionable" aspects of Darian and Rhy's relationship. I hate to say it, but the rawness is gone and white picket fences are looming.

I haven't read *Juggernaut* and I'm wondering if that might have helped a little bit with some of the characters met in the Clean Zone. And yes, that name is suppose to sound as offensive as it is.

While the controversial sexual aspects, dub con/ rape, have been eliminated and overall it is toned down, there are some notable exceptions: masochism, public activity, and bloodplay. Flashpoint words have been added to provide the edge and sometimes they are just launched and then not followed up on.

"And traditionally, when white people decide that they're afraid of brown people, it doesn't go well for the brown people."

Now I don't have a problem with opening issues for discussion, but just lobbing fire grenades like that and then letting them fizzle out is provocative for no reason.

The plot of this story revolves around Rhys, and his offer to assist efforts to the counteract the Bane strain by undergoing testing. The Jugs have legitimate reasons for not trusting the powers that be and walking in with Rhys has everyone a bit cagey. Then, a surprising coincidence sets them on high alert.

We meet a new couple: Nico and Zach. Their relationship is longstanding, but the issues surrounding Bane have kept them separated more than together. Again, the greatest weakness of the story are the villains. Villains more caricature than character as with Littlewood, and McClosky is a burnt husk of a person.

There's an interesting discussion of Rhy's masochism and the extremeness of it demonstrated via bloodplay. I liked this exploration a lot. The characters do more introspection.

"That maybe one day the Alpha strain would just . . . take hold. Then I'd really be one of you. I wouldn't just be your 'pet civvie.'"

Also again, there's the grand decision which is convoluted and the solution simple, which they ignored in the first place to set up grand conflicts, so that didn't work for me. Essentially the characters make some decisions which are illogical, and it's not due to emotion overriding judgment. Either I'm missing something or there are issues with the characters' reactions to the virus and possible infection. The epidemiology is confusing,

In contrast to that there is a bizarre impotence regarding medical treatment, a fatalism espoused as we watch Nico and revisit Rhy's experience with exposure. In some ways telling one not to worry, what will be will be, and expounding that it is out of one's hands--you can't do anything. Disturbing undercurrent. Nonetheless, it was entertaining and a nice wrap up for the Delta Company.

Overall, a testosterone fun-filled dystopia.

Favorite passage:

"You ever come to me and say you want my marks on you because it's what you want, I'll give you anything you ask for. But not if it's to make a point to anyone else. We ever do that, it's gonna mean something just between you and me."

~a copy provided by Netgalley and a review submitted~

Sarah says

This was an ok end to the trilogy. I think I enjoyed the most. I wasn't as invested in Zachs and Nicos relationship. Rhys and Darius were definitely more readable and Hot!

♣ Irish Smurfétté ♣ says

You know the drill - Prism Book Alliance® Reviewage Here

Oh, Rhys and Darius, how I've missed you! So... what's up? Besides revenants wanting to kill and eat you, fears of infection from multiple strains of Bane, and various other challenges in trying to stay alive, of course.

** to the audience **

Let's find out!

The intersecting of Rhys and Darius' story from Strain with that of Zach and Nico's from Juggernaut here in this book creates an immediately mature forest filled with possibilities for conflict, surprises, and maybe, just maybe, even some good endings. Or, at least, beginnings to a future that includes more than just death and loss and betrayal.

I'll do my best not to spoil anything here, as that is our practice here at PBA, but just know that if you haven't yet read Strain, book one of this series, you might see a few things beyond what's in the blurb for it, as well as Juggernaut, book two. All three books are connected in so many ways that it's a challenge to review this one without mentioning some characters and basic detail from the other books.

I found myself asking many questions as I was reading. I love when an author makes me do that. Would there ever be a way for the Jugs to have children? What would a meeting between Darius and Nico look like? Would there be another battle and, if so, who would be left standing? Who would end up in charge? And are we humans always doomed to revert to the very same mistakes we've suffered through before? Why can't we choose the better path, the one less littered by isolationism and the scramble for power at the expense of others?

If you can't tell already, reading this book makes you an active participant, not a passive viewer.

Promises are important. They're precious, yet sometimes treated like a commodity. Changes in value and follow through are inevitable. For Rhys, there's this...

Were they saying it to reassure Rhys that he wasn't being as foolhardy as he felt? Or did they really believe it?

Nearly every character in this book encounters this dilemma, most of those instances involving the difference between life and death. Oh yeah, the stakes are *high*, even higher than before, higher than ever. With knowledge comes decisions and choices, none of them easy for any of these people. The passage above goes on much longer but some of it refers back to what we learn in "Strain", so I'm not including it. Hopefully the impact is still significant. All of these people have lost so much. For some, practically everything.

The tendrils of emotion, mystery, fear, anger, desperation, desire, and danger continue to grow and weave together in tighter and more complicated ways. The points where one ends and another begins continue to disappear, fading and fraying and threatening to make all of the effort for naught.

Darius has become obsessed with wanting a real life for Rhys, whatever the cost. For his part, Rhys wasn't letting Darius off that easy. He was fighting for them to have that life together, he's fighting for everyone. So is Zach. And Nico? Lawdy, I was riveted.

Meanwhile, on the writing front, Gormley strikes a great balance in reminding us about past events and universe rules for this world without overdoing it: the Jugs and their strain of Bane and the ramifications, for them and for those in the future who could be forced with infection; the different strains and what they mean, if and how they're changing. What possible cures, if any, could there be? And what would that mean and for whom? For everyone? Or anyone at all?

Just as the physical stakes are sky high in this book, so are the emotional ones. And the surprises! They just

kept coming, clever without being cheeky or obvious. I was rubbing my hands together with glee about the implications. My heart truly started racing, especially during the last quarter of the book. What this all means is that the relationships and connections between these people are the backbone of this story. This fact is never forgotten, never traded on unfairly or cheaply, never allowed to lose its importance.

I never thought I'd say this, but I was brought to tears more than once, something that rarely happens to me while reading, especially by a story of this type.

He shuffled away, leaving Xolani pacing by the ruins. He was almost out of earshot when she called after him, "Rhys?"

"Yeah?" He glanced back at her, waiting as she shuffled her weight awkwardly from one foot to another.

"I've never been prouder of the fact that I argued to save your life that day at the monastery than I am right now. You've grown into an incredible man. I'm glad I got to see it happen."

The final chapters of this book are beautiful, each storyline deftly transitioning from one to the next and back again. Every difficult scene, and there are many, is worth suffering through for what we get in the end. The entire story is so well done, but the finale exists on another level, all its own.

Each book in this series has its own tone and style and yet they are clearly connected and work best when read together, like some mega-length super-novel. Gorgeously plotted, I know I'll be reading them again, in quick succession. I can't wait to see what I maybe missed the first time around, and experience some of the same emotions. To say I'm satisfied is the epitome of understatement.

Kat says

I only read this for those sowrongsoright Darius/Rhys scenes, that both repulsed me and kink-started my motor like whoa in Strain. It's all somewhat more established and tamer in Bane, which was to be expected but still a bit of a shame. On the bright side; the lack of gang-bang/c-dump in favor of one-on-one time with the boys was nice.

Vfields Don't touch my happy! says

Okay, the premise that this could be / should be read as a standalone book is ludicrous. You need to know and understand these characters' past to really connect with their future. I thought everything progressed in an agreeable and conceivable way. Rhys and Darius and the entire band of players are front and center. In fact, Amelia Gormley did an excellent job integrating Zach & Nico's relationship into the story. There's not much I can say that's not a spoiler so I'll say the pacing was good, questions were answers and all the characters developed well. I had a strong sense of place and ... I'm glad I read this bad boy!

MLE says

I received this book as an ARC though NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I really enjoyed this book. I liked seeing how the threads of Nico and Zach's story wove together with Rhys and Darius's. I liked that their meeting wasn't necessarily positive, and that their goals weren't always in sync. I appreciated that the author didn't use this as an opportunity to vilify anyone, and that by getting in different character's heads I was able to understand what happened, and why from all perspectives. It added a lot of richness to the story for me, and I appreciated that.

The plot was nicely paced, and it really brought together a lot of the loose threads from the previous two books. It took both story lines, and really melded them together without making one more important or central than another. It showed how much all these characters were connected before they even met. The resolution was well done, and it left me feeling satisfied. There were no miracles, and everything that happens felt supported by the story, and the world building. Another great addition to this series.

Paul says

5 HUGE STARS

I don't know if this is the final novel in this awesome series but for all lover of M/M dystopian hell AND romance, these books are a must read.

Adam says

This series has been an emotional rollercoaster from start to finish. I loved every second of it.

'Bane' is set two years after the events of Strain. Darius and Rhys are in a monogamous relationship, but they're far from set in stone. Which is understandable, given the circumstances under which they met and that Rhys' continuing health would always be questionable. But the two are taking it one day at a time, and having copious amounts of kinky sex in the mean time.

At the end of book 1, there was a big question mark over Rhys and Darius. It seemed almost impossible that they'd ever completely move beyond what Rhys had to do in order to survive, and the abuse he had suffered at the monastery. The author did an excellent job of bringing that all to the forefront and laying it bare, so that Rhys and Darius could finally begin a life that was truly their own, free of any burdens. Between the heartfelt talks and the visceral sex, Darius and Rhys kept me riveted.

On the other hand, Nico and Zach have spent the last decade apart. Zach's stubborn conviction and Nico's refusal to put Zach in harm's way have kept the two from one another. But they do meet for a few moments a year, just long enough to coordinate their plan to bring down Secretary Littlewood.

At points I really didn't like Zach. He was getting on my nerves. But I could still respect his dedication to doing what was best for the greater good. By the end, I was just glad that Zach and Nico finally got their

HEA.

The thing that stands out most in the book is the storytelling. Amelia C. Gormley weaves a tale that left me thoroughly impressed. All of the question I had from the preceding books were finally answered, and in a way that I couldn't have guessed. How the two couples stories' related to one another, the Bane virus, and everything that had transpired since the first outbreak. And how the four found a solution to a seemingly unsolvable situation. It was marvellous.

I'll be honest and say that I read this for Darius and Rhys' story more so than the other two. Which I don't think I can be blamed for, considering how book 1 put me through the wringer. I loved getting back to those two and seeing them get their closure and HEA. I'm really hoping that Gormley visits them again sometime soon!

The Strain series isn't for everyone. But if you're looking for something dark and edgy that's also action-packed, I'd highly recommend these books.

Review copy provided through NetGalley.

Kazza says

More than 5 Stars

Having a squee moment. I don't allow it often, I'm too old to freaking squee, but I *loved* this book. God, how I enjoyed being back with Darius and Rhys. You guys are the reason I read...

Strain was a tough book with non-con and rough sex by many of the Juggernauts from Delta Company with a then eighteen year old virgin, Rhys Cooper. But it was always Darius who pushed him to save his life, and it was always Darius who Rhys would open for. Two years later and they are exclusively together. Their volatile sex life continues in Bane but there is love and a deep bond too. Rhys has been summoned to the Clean Zone so he can be "tested" for his antibodies to all strains of the virus that kills or turns people into revenants. But Darius is not letting his boy go without a fight. Xolani has become like a mother to him and she isn't letting him go anywhere either. None of the Jugs trust the civvies and there is bad blood between them.

Then there's Zach and Nico who are also fantastic. Zach is still deeply religious, not a zealot but a true believer in God. And he's still resisting the Alpha strain for his own spiritual reasons. Because he and God don't believe it's his calling to be infected.

It keeps Nico and Zach intimately apart for a decade but they are still in love. Still see each other twice a year. Still searching for the answers to a cure or immunisation to the Strain. Zach is deep inside the machinations of the Department for Pandemic Research and Prevention, headed up by Senator Littlewood,

only Zach is in the Clean Zone, not the secret lab. Nico searches for that lab and why people are disappearing from the Clean Zone. Most disturbingly, young men who are of a type that Nico understands all too well.

And there's slimy, vicious, agenda-driven Senator Littlewood. I wanted him nailed to a tree in Juggernaut, but he's still hanging around... and he's a bastard antagonist.

Bane is a fabulous (third) book. I don't know if more are coming - please let there be more - and while this is not exactly a HEA, it is a good ending as far as I'm concerned. If you haven't read any of these books and you think you might like to try, I recommend you start at Juggernaut and then go to Strain (heed trigger warnings) then on to Bane. *Pure. Awesome.*

Full NSFW review at

Toni FGMAMTC says

FGMAMTC Blog Review + New Strain Short Story

FGMAMTC Blog Author Interview Where is the Strain Universe headed next?

4.5 stars

Bane does an excellent job of tying up the Strain series. Separate storylines of characters from both of the previous books merge. The reader has witnessed the beginning and evolution of this pandemic. Now, the goal is to find a solution to combat this plague that would allow coexistence between all surviving members of the human race.

I like how there are different strains of the virus presented. It seems more realistic because diseases do mutate and adapt. Also, a tragedy of this magnitude is sure to bring out the best and worst in people. Nothing ever comes easily. It's a constant fight just to stay afloat.

The action and romance are great. The struggle is real. Elements of chance, karma, fate, luck, destiny, politics, religion, revenge, sacrifice and love are present. The mix of everything together keeps it interesting, and the end is satisfying.

I love this series and will look for more from this author.

*****Copy given in exchange for an honest review*****

toni

FangirlMoments and My Two Cents

M says

I have to say I was kind of bored with this. It brings together the story lines in Strain and Juggernaut. I actually reread Strain and that was as great as I recall, but this one kind of left me cold. I just wasn't feeling the Nico/Zach thing, though Darius and Rhys are still smoking hot. Plus, there were no zombies in this one. Pity.

Xing says

A nice continuation and conclusion to the Strain Universe, I felt Bane was definitely an improvement over its predecessor. Taking place two years after the events of Strain, we follow Rhys and Darius on another, more political adventure. Furthermore, we have the addition of characters from Juggernaut: Zach and Nico.

Despite skipping Juggernaut, I was able to read Bane and enjoy it despite the POV shifts to Zach and Nico. Did I like them as much as Rhys and Darius? No, I didn't. But their story was an easy one to understand. Amelia Gormley did a good job with not leaving me in the complete dark - yes, I know there was more to them than what was said. But I pretty just felt like I got the gist of it, enough to move on. (And if I was more curious of their backstory, I could always go back to read the prequel).

In terms of our main couple, Rhys and Darius did take a majority of the spotlight. Bane took their relationship onto a new level. It was more physical in Strain (what with all the sexing), but it definitely went to a whole new level of emotional in this sequel. And yes, there was less sex in Bane - and thank goodness! It was a bit much in Strain. Fortunately, the physical intimacy was restrained and allowed for more room exploring something a bit more.

Overall, Bane is every bit the successful sequel I was expecting. This dystopian world finally got the conclusion I felt it needed. I'm a little sad it's over, but I wouldn't have it end any other way.

