

= Halo : Cryptum =

Halo : Cryptum is a military science fiction novel by Greg Bear , based on the Halo series of video games . The book was released in January 2011 and is the eighth Halo book ( the seventh novel ) and the first in the trilogy of novels focusing on the Forerunners , called The Forerunner Saga . Cryptum was released in hardcover , e @-@ book , and audiobook following 2009 's Halo : Evolutions , a collection of Halo short stories . It is succeeded by Primordium , published in January 2012 , and Silentium , in March 2013 . Bear was given little restriction on the story of the novel ; the Halo universe had not yet been explored in that time period .

Set approximately 100 @,@ 000 years before the events of Halo : Combat Evolved , the novel tells the story of a young Forerunner 's adventure on prehistoric Earth and across the galaxy . The protagonist , named Bornstellar , awakens an exiled warrior , the Didact , who recruits Bornstellar and his companions , reveals the history of Forerunner @-@ human war and the existence of Halo superweapons , giant rings with the potential to kill every conscious being in the galaxy . The group is captured by the Master Builder , the most powerful individual Forerunner and creator of the Halos , but he is arrested and Bornstellar is called to provide evidence at the Master Builder 's trial . Before the trial begins however , a rogue artificial intelligence attempts to use the Halos to commit genocide against the Forerunners , and Bornstellar escapes to the Ark .

Cryptum received mixed reviews ; some critics liked the Forerunner culture and suspense that Bear created , but others disliked the characters , found the plot too slow and concluded that the novel was suited only to existing fans of the Halo series . Cryptum appeared on multiple bestseller lists after promotion on Halo Waypoint , a website that serves as a hub for Halo @-@ related information .

= = Background = =

Greg Bear was 343 Industries ' first choice to write a trilogy of books based on the history of the Forerunners and another mysterious race known as the Precursors . Bear had been writing a book entitled Hull Zero Three when he was approached to be the trilogy 's author . At the first meeting with Bear regarding the book , he was told that it should be a " classic Greg Bear giant ? in the vein of Eon , Anvil of the Stars and so on " , but inspired by Halo and its extended universe . The book and author were announced on April 6 , 2009 . 343 Industries ' General Manager , Bonnie Ross , stated that the back and forth with Bear made " the whole experience better " , and was preferable to assigning the author his task with no feedback . Halo franchise development director Frank O 'Connor stated , " The enigma of the Forerunners is really at the heart of the drama and mystery of the Halo universe ... in all the games and the books so far we 've only scratched the surface of the terrible events that engulfed the Forerunners and the Galaxy they protected 100 @,@ 000 years ago " . Although nothing was forced upon Bear in terms of story templates , he had numerous and comprehensive discussions about the history of the Halo universe and the major events of the Forerunner history had already been established through the information hidden in Halo 3 . O 'Connor said that the book is meant to have a " hard sci @-@ fi " feel with a " hint of space opera , in the mold of Banks , Reynolds and Bear himself . "

The book 's cover was designed by Sparth , an artist at 343 Industries known for his " futuristic vistas " . The artwork was taken directly from art made for Halo 4 . O 'Connor explained that the cover was intended to " capture the essence and scope of the book and more importantly , the Forerunner universe . " The art is supposed to convey " the sense of wonder that all our main protagonists feel at the scale and scope of Forerunner technology . "

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Cryptum takes place approximately 100 000 years before the present day in the Halo universe , telling the story of the Forerunners before their disappearance . It revolves around the journey of a young Forerunner , Bornstellar , and two humans , Chakas and Morning Riser , and how their lives change when they meet a Forerunner warrior , the Didact . The Forerunners are a type 3 civilization on the Kardashev scale ; they can build artificial planets and control stars . Forerunners are divided into classes by occupation , they are ( in order of rank ) : Builders , the architects of the Forerunners ' megastructures , Miners , Lifeworkers , experts in medicine and biology , and Warriors . Bornstellar 's family are politically important Builders and particularly wealthy , enabling them to own an entire planet . Warriors introduced in this book called Prometheans were later featured as antagonists in the video game Halo 4 .

In the Halo universe , humans had advanced to a comparable level of technology to the Forerunners but , after losing a war with them , all human technology was destroyed and their intelligence reduced , leaving them in a subsistence economy with measures to prevent redevelopment of electronics . Humans are aware of the other , space faring races , but their interactions are limited to visits from Forerunners as they do not have the technology to make contact themselves , they live in wooden buildings and have only primitive steam engines . The San 'Shyuum ( or Prophets as they are referred to in the Halo games ) were also defeated by the Forerunners but their technology was not destroyed ; they were instead confined to their home solar system and forbidden to manufacture weapons .

Much of the story takes place on Erde Tyrene , the Forerunner name for Earth , although characters also visit the San 'Shyuum homeworld , Bornstellar 's family 's planet and the Forerunner political centre , a planet sized space station .

== Characters ==

The protagonist of Cryptum is a young Forerunner named " Bornstellar Makes Eternal Lasting " although he is more commonly referred to as just " Bornstellar " . He is from a long line of Builders , but he is disgruntled with the Forerunners ' status quo . Bornstellar 's curiosity leads him to prehistoric Earth where he meets the humans . Chakas is a human youngster of a species known as Chamanune , one of many varieties of the genus Homo . Morning Riser ( full name : Day Chaser Makes Paths Long stretch Morning Riser ) is a Florian ( Homo floresiensis ) about half the height of Chakas but of similar intelligence .

Bornstellar and the humans awaken the Didact , a Warrior class who was one of the commanders of Forerunner military in the Forerunner human war . He was exiled to stasis after coming into conflict with the Master Builder , the leader of the Forerunners . The Master Builder is responsible for the creation of the titular Halo superweapons . The Didact is married to the Librarian , one of the most powerful and influential Lifeworkers to have lived . She is a Lifeshaper , the highest rank a Lifeworker can achieve , and is responsible for indexing every species in the galaxy in the Ark .

== Plot summary ==

The story starts as Bornstellar makes his way to " Erde Tyrene " where he meets the two humans Chakas and Morning Riser , who serve as his guides . Bornstellar is seeking Precursor artifacts , relics from an extinct but technologically superior civilization . The humans lead Bornstellar to a ring island where they find and activate the cryptum of the Didact . The cryptum preserves the Didact in an indefinite sleep . Bornstellar begins to suspect that the artificial intelligence in his suit of armour has conspired to bring him to the island , and that the humans held subconscious knowledge allowing them to aid in waking the Didact . After the Didact recovers from his slumber , he conscripts Bornstellar , Chakas , and Riser , taking them on a quest given by the Librarian who has provided them a state of the art space ship , hidden for thousands of years beneath the island . Aboard the ship Bornstellar learns about the Forerunner war with humankind 10 000 years prior . Forerunners went to war with humans and San ' Shyuum when their expansion began encroaching on Forerunner worlds . After their defeat the Librarian saved the human race from

extinction and planted a genetic command known as a "geas" in them, the cause of Chakas and Riser's subconscious knowledge. It is later revealed that the humans and San 'Shyuum were united against the Flood, a parasitic alien species that controls its host, and attacked only the Forerunner planets with Flood infestation.

The Didact and his makeshift crew travel to an ancient Precursor planet, Charum Hakkor, where humans had once also settled. The Didact is disturbed to find that many of the Precursor structures on the planet have fallen into ruin; Precursor structures were thought to be completely indestructible. The Didact also discovers that a prisoner, ensconced in both Precursor and human containment methods, has escaped. They travel to the nearby planet of Faun Hakkor, another formerly human @-@ settled world, to find it stripped of all sentient life, its ecosystem in peril. The Didact sponsors Bornstellar's first mutation, a vital part of Forerunner growth, imprinting himself upon Bornstellar. The Didact's memories, tactics and experiences are shared with Bornstellar, giving him insight into the context of the Forerunner @-@ human war and the planets the crew had just visited.

When attempting to visit the San 'Shyuum home world, the four are captured by Builders, commanded by the Master Builder. The Didact and humans are held prisoner, but Bornstellar is returned to the care of his father because of his family's status and power. On his family's home world, he uses the time and peace to reflect on recent events, and allow the imprint of the Didact to fully assimilate into his thoughts. He overhears an argument between his father and another Builder, from which he learns that his father was one of the chief builders of the Halos. The Didact opposed the Builders' decision to construct such a weapon, hence his exile. It is soon revealed that the Master Builder is being brought up on charges and that the Halo weapons had been recalled, but one of the rings had gone missing. Bornstellar is called to a Forerunner core planet to testify against the Master Builder, who has been put on trial for crimes against The Mantle, a Forerunner philosophy that values the preservation of life over all else. Just as the trial is about to begin, an AI, Mendicant Bias, betrays the Forerunners and intends to use the combined power of the Halos to begin wiping out the Forerunner race.

In the ensuing battle to save the planet, several Halos are able to escape, their own AIs enacting failsafe protocols. Bornstellar manages to escape with the help of a young council member and a guard. They escape through the same portal as the Halos but lose power and drift for an unknown amount of time before being recovered by Lifeworkers. The portal has carried them to the Ark, the massive structure that serves as a construction site for Halos and also a haven for the Librarian's work. The trio are healed, and Bornstellar meets the Librarian, which brings up conflicting thoughts and feelings, due to his imprint from the Didact. She informs him that the Master Builder executed the Didact soon after Bornstellar was sent back to his family. With the news that the Didact is gone, Bornstellar resolves to take his place. The book ends with a narration from the Didact / Bornstellar, revealing that the escaped prisoner was the last Precursor, known as Timeless One. Through a conversation the Didact had long ago, it is learned that the Precursors created the Forerunners, only for the Forerunners to rise up and eradicate the Precursors, except this one, who now seeks revenge.

= = Release and reception = =

In the weeks before release, Tor Books released Chapter One for free, and Chapter Two was made available on the Halo Waypoint website. Tor also ran seven giveaways of the other Halo novels and action figures. An unabridged audio book, narrated by Holter Graham, was released alongside the print edition on January 4, 2011. Upon release Greg Bear did book signings attended by Frank O'Connor. Following its release, *Cryptum* reached number 22 in the New York Times Best Seller List in the Hardcover Fiction category. It also spent five weeks on the Los Angeles Times Hardcover Fiction Bestseller list, reaching number 17. Publishers Weekly noted that the book was a bestseller in the hardcovers category in early September 2011 at Borders.

*Cryptum* was met with varying reviews. Dr. Nigel Seel of sciencefiction.com called it tired, unoriginal and boring, saying, "It's hard to care about the flimsy characters, the plot is wearily over familiar, the hero is passive throughout and overall, not enough happens." He criticised the

characters as stereotypical and the plot being far too slow , concluding , " This is one for the die @-@ hard Halo fans . " Hilary Williamson of Book Loons also considered Cryptum appealing only to Halo fans , but praised Graham 's narration . The author of Artistic Gaming 's review of Cryptum found it difficult to like the book 's characters due to the condescending tone of Bornstellar , also concluding that it is only suited to diehard fans . Portland Book Review 's Missy Wadkins felt differently . She thought the characters complex and found it comparable to an interesting history lesson . Her review further contrasted Dr. Seel 's by recommending it to all science fiction readers , not just Halo fans . Jason Hamilton of Story Hobby also praised the novel ; he complimented Bear 's creation of a completely different culture to humanity and his balance of providing the reader with enough information to maintain interest without letting on too much and ruining the suspense .