

The Mandel Files, Volume 2: The Nano Flower (Greg Mandel)

By Peter F. Hamilton

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Peter F. Hamilton's groundbreaking Mandel Files series concludes with *The Nano Flower*, a tour de force of unbridled imagination and cutting-edge scientific speculation.

Greg Mandel is a psychic detective whose skills have been augmented by powerful but dangerous biotechnology. Those abilities have won him success and almost killed him many times over. Little wonder that he has settled down to the life of a gentleman farmer.

But Greg's former employer, the mighty tech company Event Horizon, needs him once more. After Royan, hacker-genius and husband to company owner Julia Evans, mysteriously vanishes, a business rival suddenly boasts an incredible new technology. Has Royan been kidnapped and forced to work for his captors, or is the truth far stranger? The answer may lie in a gift of flowers received by Julia—flowers with DNA like nothing on Earth. Greg already has his hands full with corporate killers and other unsavory characters. Is he going to have to add aliens to the list?

The Greg Mandel trilogy—which also includes *Mindstar Rising* and *A Quantum Murder*, available in Volume 1—set a new standard for science fiction when it first appeared in the 1990s. *The Nano Flower* is every bit as gripping today—and even more timely.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Review
“An immaculately imagined and executed near-future world, lush prose, crystal-sharp dialogue . . . unreservedly recommended.”—*Interzone*

“Brilliant . . . an epic of ultra-technology, alien contact, and a love story that literally spans the stars.”—*Locus*

“Gratifyingly complex and challenging—indeed, impossible to summarize adequately, what with battles, love stories, vendettas, imponderable aliens, and robust characters: a fine trilogy, sure, but [*The Nano Flower* is] in a class by itself.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author
Peter F. Hamilton is the author of numerous novels, including *The Temporal Void, The Dreaming Void, The Evolutionary Void, Judas Unchained, Pandora’s Star, Fallen Dragon,* and the acclaimed epic Night’s Dawn trilogy (*The Reality Dysfunction, The Neutronium Alchemist,* and *The Naked God*). He’s currently at work on his new novel, *Great North Road*. He lives with his family in England.

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Suzi crapped the Frankenstein cockroach into the toilet bowl, then pushed the chrome handle halfway down for a short ?ush.
She concentrated on the neural icon which seemed to hover at the periphery of her consciousness, and marshalled her thoughts into a distinct instruction sequence. Activate Sense Linkage and Directional Control, she ordered her bioware processor implant.
When she closed her eyes the ghostly image from the cockroach’s infrared-sensitive retinas intensi?ed to its full resolution. There was a moment of disorientation as she interpreted the picture being fed along the optical ?bre plugged into her coccyx ganglion splice. It was a hazy jumble of Mobius topology, shaded red, pink, and black, a convolution through which green moons fell. The cockroach was clinging to the bottom of the sewer pipe directly underneath a shower of droplets from the toilet down- pipe. Directional graphics superimposed themselves across the picture, resembling an aircraft pilot’s command display.
Suzi guided the cockroach up the side of the sewer pipe until it was out of the water channel, then set it walking. Optical ?bre began to unspool behind it, thinner than a cobweb.
Perspective was tricky. She allowed herself to believe she was walking through some baroque nether-world cathedral. The ?uted walls had a black-mirror sheen, carved with a fabulous abstract glyph. Above her, the curving roof was punctured by elliptical ebony holes, all of them spitting phosphene-green globules. A small river slithered down the concave ?oor, bearing away unidenti?able lumps of pale ?brous matter. She was suddenly very glad Jools the Tool hadn’t stitched any olfactory receptors into the Frankenstein cockroach when he was putting it together for her.
Pressure-sensitive cell clusters detected the rush of air, warning her of the approaching ?ush. She scuttled the cockroach right up to the roof of the sewer. The burst of water churned past underneath her. A turd the size of a cargo ship rode the wavefront, trailing ribbons of disintegrating paper.
She waited until the surge had gone, then brought the cockroach back down the curving pipe and carried on forwards. Fungal growths were blooming out of cracks in the concrete, moonscape mattresses of slime. The

cockroach clambered over the humps without even slowing, all the while spinning out its gossamer thread. Up ahead, where the pipe contracted to a black vanishing point, she thought she saw something move.

*

In a way, Suzi considered the Morrell deal as a vindication of the way she had lived the last twelve years. There was no violence involved, not even a hint of it. Violence had launched her into the tekmerc game after she got out of prison. Organized violence, deliberately and precisely applied. It was her trade, all she knew. Her teens and early twenties had been spent in the Trinities, an anti-PSP gang operating out of the Mucklands Wood estate in Peterborough during the years when the People's Socialism Party controlled the country, a long dark decade of near-Maoist dictatorship just after the Greenhouse Effect ran riot.

She had joined up the day after a squad of PSP Card Carriers ransacked her parents' hotel, stripping out the ?ttings, stealing the booze. Her father had been pistol whipped, a beating which left him partially paralyzed down his right side. Her mother had been gang-raped, a trauma she never recovered from. They were middle-aged middle-class suburbanite innocents, well-to-dos who couldn't believe what was happening to their green and pleasant England, and didn't know how to stop it.

The only reason Suzi had been there when it happened was because the PSP had shut down Welbeck College, the British Army's of?cer cadet boarding school. A military career was all she had wanted for as long as she could remember. An ambition subtly reinforced by her slightly disreputable maternal grandfather who spun enticing stories of glory and honour back in the days when he'd served in the Falklands and the Gulf. Gaining one of the ?ercely contested places at Welbeck, despite her physical stature, had been the zenith of her young life.

She had wanted to ?ght that afternoon when the Party militia came, young struts with their red armbands and bright new cards that had President Armstrong's signature bold along the bottom to say whatever they did was of?cial. Fresh from her four terms of unarmed combat classes and ri?e shooting and square bashing she considered herself invincible. But her father, bigger and stronger, had forced her into a storeroom and locked her in. Suzi hammered on the door in rage and humiliation until sounds of the looting penetrated, the crash of breaking glass merging with anguished screams. Then she shrank into a corner, hugging herself in the dark, and praying nobody smashed down the door to ?nd her.

The police discovered her the next morning, all cried out. As she saw the wreckage that was once her home and her parents, rage turned to demonic hatred. She could have prevented it, she knew. If she'd just been given the chance, been given the weapons hardware to complement her determination and amplify her size. The Trinities were led by an ex-British Army sergeant, Teddy La Croix, called Father by the kids under his command. He put her to work as a runner.

Peterborough in those days had a raw frontier-town edge to it. Over ?fty thousand people had descended on the city, one step ahead of the rising sea that was slowly devouring the Fens, and more were on the way. The polar melt and thermally expanded oceans eventually sent the muddy water to lap at the city's eastern suburbs, turning the lush Nene valley into an estuary. This on top of an indigenous population still struggling to adapt to the year-round heat, the imminent collapse of public gas, electricity, and water grids, food rationing, and austerity economics.

Suzi ?ittered about the congested streets, soaking up the buzz of grim determination everyone seemed to possess. She watched the old temperate vegetation die in the steambath atmosphere exhaled by the Fens quagmire, only to be replaced by the newer more vigorous tropical plants with their exotic blooms. She walked entranced along the rows of stalls which sprang up along each road as the traf?c faded away, stealing often, eating well, and ?ghting with the barrow boys.

Nobody noticed her, one more kid running wild in a city teeming with thousands of her kind. She thrived in her environ- ment, but all the while she moved with purpose, keeping tabs on Party members, watching who went in and out of the town hall, acting as a sentry for raids on Party of?ces. At nights she would be there in the riots organized by the Trinities, an incongruously small skinny ?gure compared to the rest of her platoon,

which aimed for muscle bulk and favoured combat fatigues and leathers.
She learned tradecraft from Greg Mandel, another ex-Army man working with Father to overthrow PSP oppression; how to make Molotovs that didn't go out when they were thrown, how a platoon should deploy to jump a police snatch squad, what to use against assault dogs, the correct way to break riot shields, a long interesting list of tactics and weapons no one had ever mentioned at Welbeck.
She killed her ?rst man at sixteen; a People's Constable who was lured out of a warm pub on to a dark building site by a halter top, a mini skirt, and a smile that promised. The rest of her platoon were waiting for him with clubs and a Smith and Wesson. They were all blooded that night.
Suzi threw up afterwards, with Greg holding her until the shudders subsided.
'You can go home now,' he said. 'You've had your revenge.' But she glanced at the broken body, and answered, 'No, this is just the hand, not the head. They've all got to go, or what we're doing will be pointless.'
Greg had looked terribly sad, but then he always did when anyone talked about vengeance, or let their grief show. It wasn't until years later she found out why he always seemed to be hurt so much by other people's pain.
The next morning she cut her hair, spiked it, and dyed it purple. Standard procedure; a lot of people in the pub would have given her description to the Constables.
The Trinities taught her discipline and self-con?dence, as well as a hell of a lot about weapons, ?lling in all the technical gaps Welbeck had left. She was young enough to be good at it, and smart enough to use her anger as inspiration rather than let it rule her.
There were gangs like the Trinities in every town in the country, battling to overthrow the PSP. Suzi considered herself to be part of a crusade, making everything she did right.
Then they won. President Armstrong was killed, the PSP was routed, the Second Restoration returned the royal family to the throne, the ?rst elections gave the New Conservatives a huge majority, and everything suddenly became complicated. The PSP relics, their Constables and apparatchiks, banded together as the Blackshirts, went underground, and turned to ineffectual civil disobedience that petered out after a few years. The Trinities fought them, naturally. But it wasn't appreciated any more. They were too crude, too visible; people were looking to cut free from the past.
It ended as it had run on for ten years, in bloodshed. A two-day ?re?ght between the Trinities and the Blackshirts that left Mucklands Wood and Walton in ruins. The government had to call out the army to put a halt to it.
Suzi survived to be picked up by the army. Her barrister was the best available, paid for by sympathizers of the anti-PSP cause, of which there were plenty. She got a twenty-?ve-year sentence, because the New Conservative government wanted to demon- strate it was showing no favouritism. On appeal, held quietly and unpublicized by...

Users Review

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