



Plague: A Story of Rivalry, Science, and the Scourge That Won't Go Away

Edward Marriott

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A riveting account, at once a reconstruction of the race to find a cure, a history of bubonic plague, and an investigation into the threat of plague today

Plague. The very word carries an unholy resonance. No other disease can claim its apocalyptic or mythological power. It can lie dormant for centuries, only to resurface with ferocious, nation-killing force. Here, with the high drama of a great adventure tale, Edward Marriott unravels the story of this lethal disease: the historic battle to identify its source, the devastating effects of pandemics, and the prospects for the next outbreak.

Through a range of primary sources, Marriott takes us back to Hong Kong in the summer of 1894, when a diagnosis of plague brought two top scientists to the island—Alexandre Yersin, a lone, maverick Frenchman, and his eminent rival, the Japanese Shibasaburo Kitasato. Marriott interweaves his narrative of their fierce competition to discover the plague's source with vivid scenes of the scourge's persistence: California in 1900, when plague arrived in the United States; Surat, India, in 1994, where torrential floods drowned millions of rats, causing the worst epidemic in seventy years; and New York City, some time in the future, where there is a rat for every human being, a diminishing budget for pest control, and an emerging strain of plague that is resistant to antibiotics.

A masterly recounting of medical and human history, *Plague* is an instructive warning, a gripping account of history, and a chilling read.

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