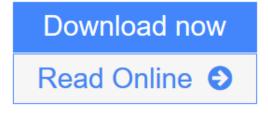


# The Judas Strain

James Rollins



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New York Times bestselling author James Rollins returns with a terrifying story of an ancient menace reborn to plague the modern world . . . and of an impossible hope that lies hidden in the most shocking place imaginable: within the language of angels.

ju-das strain, n. A scientific term for an organism that drives an entire species to extinction.

From the depths of the Indian Ocean, a horrific plague has arisen to devastate humankind--a disease that's unknown, unstoppable . . . and deadly. But it is merely a harbinger of the doom that is to follow. Aboard a cruise liner transformed into a makeshift hospital, Dr. Lisa Cummings and Monk Kokkalis--operatives of SIGMA Force--search for answers to the bizarre affliction. But there are others with far less altruistic intentions. In a savage and sudden coup, terrorists hijack the vessel, turning a mercy ship into a floating bioweapons lab.

A world away, SIGMA's Commander Gray Pierce thwarts the murderous schemes of a beautiful would-be killer who holds the first clue to the discovery of a possible cure. Pierce joins forces with the woman who wanted him dead, and together they embark upon an astonishing quest following the trail of the most fabled explorer in history: Marco Polo. But time is an enemy as a worldwide pandemic grows rapidly out of control. As a relentless madman dogs their every step, Gray and his unlikely ally are being pulled into an astonishing mystery buried deep in antiquity and in humanity's genetic code. And as the seconds tick closer to doomsday, Gray Pierce will realize he can truly trust no one, for any one of them could be . . . a Judas.

#### The Judas Strain Details

Date: Published July 2nd 2007 by William MorrowISBN: 9780060763893Author: James RollinsFormat: Hardcover 464 pagesGenre: Thriller, Fiction, Adventure, Mystery, Action

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# From Reader Review The Judas Strain for online ebook

# Kendra says

I'm a little bit embarrassed to give this book a 4, but there you go. It's a guilty pleasure, I guess, because the book is kind of ridiculous in a testosterone-fueled Indiana-Jones-meets-Mission-Impossible kind of way. If this tells you anything, I nearly downgraded it to a 3 because of the cannibals. (Yes, cannibals.)

I was about 60 pages into the book before I realized that it was part of a series. Some of you know that reading a series out of order is one of my BIGGEST PET PEEVES EVER, so I think it represents a therapeutic breakthrough that I kept reading. (Really, it's just the book was borrowed, and I didn't want to keep it for an unusually long time while I tracked down and read all of the books that came before it.)

Very basic plot summary: Secret military-ish agency must stop end of the world by figuring out the connection between Marco Polo and a strange bacterial outbreak on Christmas Island. There's some codebreaking and historical speculation that will appeal to the Da Vinci Code enthusiasts out there. And did I mention that there are cannibals?

# Freda Malone says

Marco Polo's 2 year journey in 1292 from China is described in this novel. It is mysteriously eerie and puzzling but also intriguing and compelling. He starts out with 14 ships and over 600 warriors, only to be wiped out by a mysterious plague that wipes out all but 18 men including himself, and a betrothed princess bound for Persia. There is talk of 'angels' and a 'map', cannibals and pirates. This secret must be kept hidden at all costs but what is it?

#### Christmas Island - centuries later

A husband and wife, leisurely enjoying a day diving along the coast of Christmas Island becomes overcome by a phenomenon that quickly engulfs the water. A neon green algae glowing substance has suddenly surrounded their yacht. As the wife boards the boat, she is immediately covered in a blister like rash that confounds them. Soon they realize the sea creatures are floating, dead. Dolphins, fish, and sea turtles. DON'T GO IN THE WATER!

SIGMA force is back and it is up to Dr. Lisa Cummings and Painter Crowe to save the world from a pandemic. This virus isn't just any virus. Marco Polo's mysterious secret has left clues and the race begins. SIGMA's rivalry, The GUILD, has plans for the virus and they try to prevent SIGMA from getting their hands on the cure which is beyond the scope of normal scientific understanding.

I just can't get over how Rollins captures fact along with fiction in his novels! I always learn something new about the world as well as history and cultures, centuries before my time. Did you know that there are over 18,000 Indonesia Islands? Only slightly over 900 inhabited and over 8,000 unnamed. That is just wild! In a way I find Rollins books enchanting with the mysteries of treasures that might be hidden and buried as well as the deadly curses fictionally among them. I'm no Laura Croft though. Another great adventure, this one.

#### Barbara ★ says

This is the third book in the Sigma Force series that I've read and absolutely loved. James Rollins writing is historically accurate and amazingly detailed. It's one of those books that draws you in from the first horrific chapter and keeps you turning pages as fast as your fingers (and eyes) allow. Of course there are multiple things going on: a historical trail and a scientific trail which ultimately converges with dire consequences. I particularly liked the inclusion of Kowalski, an ex-military man who is now doing security for Sigma Force. He is included on the mission to provide muscle not brains but his one-liners are spot on and hilarious. He provided a much needed dose of comic relief.

Sigma has one major enemy in the war against terrorism...The Guild, they are a badass outfit that is usually one step ahead of Sigma but Sigma always wins the race. Guild agent Seichan, shot in the gut, ends up crashing her motorcycle in Commander Gray Pierce's driveway. Seichan and Gray have a past and it's not a friendly one. The historical trail involves Gray, Seichan, a Catholic priest and Kowalski reversing Marco Polo's historic journey from China and discovering the cure for a nasty bacteria that is currently killing people off the coast of Australia but which could eventually decimate the entire human population. Bad guy on this leg: Amen Nasser (Guild operative) who immediately kidnaps Gray's parents to get the upper hand.

The scientific trail involves Sigma operatives Lisa Cummings and Monk Kokkalis out on Christmas Island trying to find the cause of the recent plague-like outbreak. Bad guy here: Devesh Patanjali, Guild operative who has hijacked a cruise ship full of evacuees from Christmas Island to use as guinea pigs while looking for the cure so The Guild can use the disease for bio-terrorism. Fortunately both Lisa and Monk are on board and working against Devesh's evil.

# **Stephen says**

AN ANCIENT, PANDEMIC CAUSING, VIRUS whose origin and cure is linked to the ANGKOR WAT and the mysterious return voyage of MARCO POLO from the court of KUBLAI KHAN...yep, it looks like another job for SIGMA FORCE.

The SIGMA Force is one of the truly delicious concepts to be introduced into the popcorn-eating, pageturning, actiony, spy-guy, thrill-o-rama genre. PhD toting scientific brainiacs with Navy Seal kill skills and James Bond spy craft (minus babes and booze...damn).

SIGMA is a covert ops team working under the auspices of the DOD as an agency of DARPA (Defense Advance Research Projects Agency). SIGMA is charged with tracking down and neutralizing threats in the form of advanced technology, whether biological, chemical or mechanical. The threats are always large, the explosions are always loud and the pace (with a few exceptions I mention in my gripes) is always on turbo.

Now, in a less capable story-teller's hands, this Michael Bay/summer blockbuster sounding novel could get out of control quickly and begin to reek of cheese. Fear not because James Rollins is a very capable storyteller and maintains very good command of his plot. His novels are very well researched and incorporate fascinating real life historical events and mysteries, which he then extrapolates from to create a wild story with enough factual/historical background to keep suspension of disbelief possible. Despite my "not quite 4 star rating" for reasons set forth below, this is a series that I intend to continue to read as Rollins is a very compelling tale spinner and his plots are big, bold and very well thought out. Put simply, they are both smart and a ton of fun.

The Judas Strain is the 4th SIGMA novel and finds the team racing against time (as usual) to investigate an unusual and highly contagious viral outbreak in the Indian Ocean. The plague has the potential to be an extinction level event if not contained or if no cure can be found. Complications arise when SIGMA's evil counterpart, the GUILD, shows up looking to control the plague (and possibly weaponize it).

Of course, those of you who have read previous SIGMA novels know that there is MUCH, MUCH more to the plot than that. The story of the plague actually begins with Marco Polo's 13th Century return from China after spending 20 years in the court of Kublai Khan. Marco left China with 14 ships and 600 men, but when he arrived in Italy was down to 2 ships and only 18 men. In his famous book of "travels," Marco hinted at a "mysterious" tragedy but refused to elaborate. This historical "mystery" forms the jumping off point for Rollins story.

From there, clues lead to a mysterious connection between Marco Polo and the Vatican, clues written in angelic script, the Hindu temple complex of Angkor Wat, cannibalism, piracy and lions, tigers and bears...OH MY!! Exciting, smarter than your average action thriller and containing highly engaging plot points. If you are a fan of this genre, you should definitely be reading this.

#### **MY GRIPES**

For all the love I heap on this novel, there are a few issues I have that keep me from giving it a 4th star (though just barely). First, as with many of these types of novels, it is very formulaic. You know pretty much what you are going to get when you pick it up. Good guys win, bad guy lose, world is saved, peace preserved and justice served. Nothing horrible about that, it just takes a bit of the tension out of certain aspects of the plot.

My biggest gripe is that I think the story should be about 150 to 200 shorter than its 550 pages by cutting out the "failed attempt" to flesh out the characters and provide quiet little family moments and bad romances. This is one thing Rollins does not do well and yet he spends too much time trying to make it work. His characters are two dimensional and for this kind of story, that is just fine.

If he were to cut out all of the attempts to round out his characters and show they have any life outside of SIGMA, he could trim this down to 350 to 400 pages of smart, high octane covert action mystery with great historical background and turn this novel into a 5 star thrilltastic joy bringer.

Alas, he doesn't and it is the extraneous stuff that Rollins does not do well that keeps me from giving this a higher rating. Still, the good parts are so interesting and I love the complicated, historical based plots so much that I will continue happily reading the series, hoping for more of the same good and less of everything else. 3.5 stars. RECOMMENDED!!

#### ???????? says

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#### Simone Kearney says

A friend recommended James Rollins to me as I like books by Dan Brown, and Steve Barry. I have read a couple of his books so far and am in complete agreement with my friend. I find that the books start off in a very exciting way and hold my attention throughout. In this book, The Judas Strain, I am learning about Marco Polo and the mystery surrounding his 24 year voyage that took him to the palaces of Kublai Khan in China. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a historical thriller.

#### **Robin says**

After finishing The Judas Strain, I remain a HUGE James Rollins fan! I think Map of Bones and Sandstorm are my favorite books in the Sigma Force series, but really, they are all superb adventures, and The Judas Strain is no exception.

After reading 4 books in the series, I'm completely invested in these characters. I have images of them in my head. I know and love or hate their personalities. I root for their success and worry at their failures and ultimately, I want them to save the world. I think that's something special about a series of books as opposed to a stand alone novel, you really become attached to the people you're reading about.

The Judas Strain has so much going on - pandemics, cannibalism, cruise ship hijacking, Marco Polo and lots more. It spans the globe from Washington DC to Christmas Island, The Vatican, Istanbul and finally the

ancient city of Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Do yourself and favor and Google the locations mentioned around the world in Rollins' books. He bases his adventures on real places, so it is fascinating to submerge yourself in the imagery of the locations by looking them up. Angkor Wat for example is incredible looking in photos, and it was so fun to really "see" what was being described in the book.

At this point, I feel like I really cant go wrong with Rollins' style.

#### ???? ????? says

#### Shahjahan Shourov says

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Yelania Nightwalker says

Sumatra, año 1293

Marco Polo, su padre y su tío (Los Polo) fueron los primeros en hacer el viaje a China, a su regreso [a Venecia] contaban con una flota de 14 navíos y 600 hombres. En su viaje de regreso, una extraña enfermedad se extendió entre los viajeros y Los Polo se vieron obligados a quemar los navíos y a los enfermos, pues una vez contraída la enfermedad, todos los que la tienen, empiezan a presentar comportamientos erráticos, extrañas máculas en sus cuerpos, etc. Por eso Los Polo se juraron no decir nunca nada sobre la misteriosa cura que ellos tuvieron que tomar. La alternativa era demasiado horrorosa siquiera de pensarla, por eso, el secreto, prometieron, se iría a la tumba con ellos. Marco Polo, no obstante, estaba lejos de ser fiel a ese juramento y en sus últimos días, se dedicó a dejar un testimonio de lo acaecido en esos tiempos. Por suerte, porque de otro modo, la humanidad no habría encontrado la cura para El mal de Judas.

Mal de Judas: término científico para un organismo que lleva a toda una especie a la extinción.

#### Océano Indico, actualidad

Un extraña luz surgió de las profundidades del lecho marino. En poco tiempo, todas las formas de vida comenzaron a morir. Las playas de Isla de Navidad eran un cementerio. Hombres, mujeres, niños; todos fueron evacuados con distintos grados de infección: algunos estaban ciegos, otros presentaban pústulas o ampollas. Así que El Señora de los mares, un crucero de lujo que se encontraba en el lugar, se había convertido en un barco médico. La OMS había mandado a varios de sus mejores especialistas a investigar y controlar la infección. Fuerza Sigma, no se quedó atrás y envió a Monk y Lisa a hacer las investigaciones pertinentes. Van como agentes encubiertos a una misión de bajo riesgo, pero algo se descontrola y un grupo de bioterroristas se apoderan del barco. Todos los científicos tienen que empezar a trabajar para Guild y encontrar la "cura" para una enfermedad que ellos mismos van a encargarse de diseminar. Es así como descubren que por alguna extraña razón, todos los bichos han mutado haciendo que los que eran inofensivos se vuelvan patógenos. Y mientras ellos intentan descubrir por medios científicos lo que ha llevado a estos organismos a mutar y generar respuestas para los nada amigables terroristas, los enfermos siguen empeorando, si alguien no hace algo rápido, toda la humanidad podría desaparecer.

#### Washington, D.C., actualidad

Gray ha desaparecido. Hay un topo en Sigma. Lisa y Monk están en algún lugar del mar, a bordo de un crucero lleno de enfermos. Y el director Painter tiene que buscar a los padres de Gray que han desaparecido, de no encontrarlos pronto, es tan seguro como que no los encontrará con vida...

#### Difícil determinar ubicación, actualidad

Gray y sus tres compañeros van en busca de las pistas que Marco Polo dejó hace muchos años. Venecia-Estambul-Camboya. Pero no van solos, Guild les sigue los pasos, amenazando a Gray con hacer daño a sus padres si no le da los datos necesarios para resolver el misterio. Pero, ¿tiene Guild a los padres de Gray, o sólo lo están chantajeando? ¿Puede darles la información sin poner al mundo en riesgo? ¿Y si el equipo científico de Guild descubre antes la "cura", servirá de algo cortarle los pasos al equipo histórico de Guild? Gray se ve entonces entre la espada y la pared y con ayuda de una asesina de Guild, un sacerdote y un marine, irán armando el rompecabezas hasta que la ciencia y la religión colisionen en un punto donde, solo un misterioso ser luminoso pueda salvarles.

Este es el segundo libro de Rollins que tengo la oportunidad de leer y una vez más encuentro difícil pensar que los thrillers que lea de ahora en adelante, puedan superarle.

**James Rollins** sabe conjugar historia, ciencia, suspense, intriga... y hacer una novela tan bien armada que se vuelve complicada dejar de leer. Me encontré en la noche, diciendo sólo un capítulo más... pero sabía que si seguía, no pegaría ojo en toda la noche, porque al igual que "La Orden del Sol Negro", esta novela es igual de fenomenal y adictiva.

Los personajes se prestan solos, para que los ames, para que sufras con ellos, para que sientas su miedo y su desesperación. Me mordí las uñas y lloré con aquello que sucede en ciertas páginas. Me deja una sensación de esperanza el final, pero no quiero hacerme tantas ilusiones. De lo que sí me ilusiono es de tener el siguiente libro en mis manos y saber en qué lío se meterán Painter y su equipo de Sigma. James Rollins lo hizo de nuevo...

#### Mike (the Paladin) says

I truly hate being in this position. A friend here on Goodreads with whom I usually agree recommended that I try Rollins. Now admittedly this is not the first in the series and I don't often start a series in the middle, but I was looking for an audio that I could listen to as I was busy with "mindless tasks". (I'm straining not to make a joke here.)

I wish I could say I liked this book, I wanted to, but I just don't/didn't. I was relieved to reach the end. To give credit where credits due...the reader had his problems also. At one point he read "MI6" as M16" and he read the word "archangel" as "arch angel" as in "arch" villain. There were other miss pronunciations that bugged me.

Still, the "book" itself get's it share of the credit. We take a bit of historical fact and a smidgen of science and then we use it as a spring board here to launch off into total absurdity, at least that's how it hit me. I'm a big fantasy fan and I'm a big action fan so you'd think suspension of disbelief wouldn't be a problem for me, and it usually isn't. But there were things here on multiple levels that kept gnawing at me. From the protagonist's inability to get his parents (including his Alzheimer's suffering father) to simply stay behind, or go somewhere, anywhere but with him (isn't there an aunt Martha...or something) to the cliches we keep stumbling over I just didn't care for it.

Sort of major spoiler below.

(view spoiler)

I'd say try this one for yourself. As much as it bugged me others, including a friend here as I said (well I hope he's still a friend) like this book very much. With it's mix of strained science and metaphysics plus just the way the story goes it's not for me.

I will possibly give other Rollins books a shot, maybe it's just this one. Still, sorry if you love this book, but 2 stars is (are?) all I can give it. That's just my rating. It (the book that is) wasn't for me.

And believe me I know what it's like to share a book you love with someone only to have it dissed...so again, to each their own, see what you think.

#### ????? ????? says

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#### Will Byrnes says

The Sigma Force is back in action. (see Map of Bones). A deadly microbe has turned parts of the ocean into a toxic, flesh eating monster. What the hell is going on? Gray Pierce and the other fun folks of the Sigma Force team up with the evil Seichan to try to keep their nemesis, the Guild, from using this biological threat as a new form of bio-weapon. The action takes place with Grey and Seichan in one group and Lisa Cummings and Monk in the other, focused in the Indonesian Islands, where this threat to humanity has its origins.

#### James Rollins - image from World News

The formula for action/adventure these days seems to require some puzzle solving regarding ancient writings or artifacts, and a mystery that has been hidden through history. In this book, the mystery is what happened to Marco Polo during his return trip from China, that caused him to lose most of his expedition, a secret that is intimately linked to the bio-hazard of today? It entails having to figure out a secret code on an obelisk that has been stolen from the Vatican, and it goes from there. The organizations manage to effect whatever actions they need done with minimal dealings with the real world, but hey, this is pure entertainment. Why quibble? There is some payload here, the Marco Polo bit for one, angel writing for another, bioluminescence for a third, and an intimation that there are awful things lying much nearer than we might have supposed, that are not necessarily entirely dead. It was a fun, fast read, and would be a good book for summer reading. This is not book club fodder.

Rollins's site

I read and reviewed one other Sigma Force Book, #2 - Map of Bones

### Mancho283 says

#### Lorena says

James Rollins' novels generally remind me of some weird combination of Michael Crichton, Dan Brown, and Tom Clancy -- none of whom are among my favorite authors. Rollins is, though -- I love the combination of myth/legend, science, and intrigue. The Judas Strain starts with a viral outbreak, follows Marco Polo to Cambodia (via an ancient manuscript), and has the SIGMA team tracking terrorists on three continents. If that sounds far-fetched, it's only because you haven't read it. Rollins nearly always leaves me thinking "huh. What if ....?".