



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 bio-weapons 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

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Author : James Rollins

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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 code-breaking 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, page-turning, 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 story-teller 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.

האם תוכלו לכתוב לי מכתב, בבקשה, וליידוע אתכם על כל מה שקורה?

אני מודת לכם מאוד על כל המעורבות שלכם, ואתם יודעים כמה אני מעריכה אתכם. אני מקווה שתוכלו לכתוב לי מכתב, בבקשה, וליידוע אתכם על כל מה שקורה?

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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 cortarles 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.

=====EXTRA STUFF

Rollins's site

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

Mancho283 says

?? Thriller ?? map of bones
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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?".
