

The Demon in the Freezer: A True Story

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"The bard of biological weapons captures the drama of the front lines."

-Richard Danzig, former secretary of the navy

The first major bioterror event in the United States—the anthrax attacks in October 2001—was a clarion call for scientists who work with "hot" agents to find ways of protecting civilian populations against biological weapons. In *The Demon in the Freezer*, his first nonfiction book since *The Hot Zone*, a #1 New York Times bestseller, Richard Preston takes us into the heart of Usamriid, the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Maryland, once the headquarters of the U.S. biological weapons program and now the epicenter of national biodefense.

Peter Jahrling, the top scientist at Usamriid, a wry virologist who cut his teeth on Ebola, one of the world's most lethal emerging viruses, has ORCON security clearance that gives him access to top secret information on bioweapons. His most urgent priority is to develop a drug that will take on smallpox—and win. Eradicated from the planet in 1979 in one of the great triumphs of modern science, the smallpox virus now resides, officially, in only two high-security freezers—at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and in Siberia, at a Russian virology institute called Vector. But the demon in the freezer has been set loose. It is almost certain that illegal stocks are in the possession of hostile states, including Iraq and North Korea. Jahrling is haunted by the thought that biologists in secret labs are using genetic engineering to create a new superpox virus, a smallpox resistant to all vaccines.

Usamriid went into a state of Delta Alert on September 11 and activated its emergency response teams when the first anthrax letters were opened in New York and Washington, D.C. Preston reports, in unprecedented detail, on the government's response to the attacks and takes us into the ongoing FBI investigation. His story is based on interviews with top-level FBI agents and with Dr. Steven Hatfill.

Jahrling is leading a team of scientists doing controversial experiments with live smallpox virus at CDC. Preston takes us into the lab where Jahrling is reawakening smallpox and explains, with cool and devastating precision, what may be at stake if his last bold experiment fails.

On December 9, 1979, smallpox, the most deadly human virus, ceased to exist in nature. After eradication, it was confined to freezers located in just two places on earth: the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta and the Maximum Containment Laboratory in Siberia. But these final samples were not destroyed at that time, and now secret stockpiles of smallpox surely exist. For example, since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the subsequent end of its biological weapons program, a sizeable amount of the former Soviet Union's smallpox stockpile remains unaccounted for, leading to fears that the virus has fallen into the hands of nations or terrorist groups willing to use it as a weapon. Scarier yet, some may even be trying to develop a strain that is resistant to vaccines. This disturbing reality is the focus of this fascinating, terrifying, and important book.

A longtime contributor to *The New Yorker* and author of the bestseller *The Hot Zone*, Preston is a skillful journalist whose work flows like a science fiction thriller. Based on extensive interviews with smallpox experts, health workers, and members of the U.S. intelligence community, *The Demon in the Freezer* details the history and behavior of the

virus and how it was eventually isolated and eradicated by the heroic individuals of the World Health Organization. Preston also explains why a battle still rages between those who want to destroy all known stocks of the virus and those who want to keep some samples alive until a cure is found. This is a bitterly contentious point between scientists. Some worry that further testing will trigger a biological arms race, while others argue that more research is necessary since there are currently too few available doses of the vaccine to deal with a major outbreak. The anthrax scare of October, 2001, which Preston also writes about in this book, has served to reinforce the present dangers of biological warfare.

As Preston eloquently states in this powerful book, this scourge, once contained, was let loose again due to human weakness: "The virus's last strategy for survival was to bewitch its host and become a source of power. We could eradicate smallpox from nature, but we could not uproot the virus from the human heart." --Shawn Carkonen
Advance praise for The Demon in the Freezer

"Richard Preston has brought us another book that reads like a top-notch thriller. Would that it were fiction. As the movie unfolds in your mind, remember this: It can happen here."
-Laurie Garrett, author of The Coming Plague

"The Demon in the Freezer is fascinating, frightening, and important. It reads like a thriller, but the demons are real. Richard Preston has a 'black patent' on this kind of reporting and storytelling. He is the only writer on the scene who can make the inside story of biological weapons so darkly entertaining.
Read this book and pray that its heroes can lock the demon back in the freezer."
-Jonathan Weiner, author of The Beak of the Finch

Praise for The Hot Zone

"One of the most horrifying things I've ever read in my whole life. What a remarkable piece of work. I devoured it in two or three sittings, and have a feeling the memories will linger a long time."
-Stephen King

"A tour de force . . . Preston uses the power of simple narrative to drive deep his story's urgent truths."
-Los Angeles Times Book Review

"Utterly engrossing . . . Will make your blood curdle."
-The Washington Post Book World

Other Books

Data Resource Integration. Are you struggling with a disparate data resource? Are there multiple existences of the same business fact scattered throughout the data resource? Are those multiple existences out of synch with each other? Do you have difficulty finding the data you need to support business activities? Do the data you find have poor quality? If the answer to any of these questions is Yes, then you need this book to guide you toward

creating an integrated data resource. Most public and private sector organizations have a disparate data resource that was created over many years. That disparate data resource contains multiple existences of business facts that are out of synch with each other, are of poor quality, and are difficult to locate. The traditional approach to dealing with a disparate data resource is to perform periodic and temporary data integration to support a specific application or business activity. Those piecemeal data integration efforts may meet a current need, but seldom solve the underlying problems with a disparate data resource, and sometimes make the situation worse. Data Resource Integration explains how to go about understanding and resolving a disparate data resource and creating a compareate data resource that fully meets an organization's current and future business information demand. It builds on Data Resource Simplicity, which described how to stop the burgeoning data disparity. It explains the concepts, principles, and techniques for understanding a disparate data resource within the context of a common data architecture, and resolving that disparity with minimum impact on the business. Like Data Resource Simplicity, Michael Brackett draws on five decades of data management experience building and managing data resources, and resolving disparate data resources in both public and private sector organizations. He leverages theories, concepts, principles, and techniques from a wide variety of disciplines, such as human dynamics, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology, and applies them to the process of understanding and resolving a disparate data resource. He shows you how to approach and resolve a disparate data resource, and build a compareate data resource that fully supports the business.

❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ ❏ . New York: Back Bay Books, 2008. Sykes , Bryan . The Seven Daughters of Eve : The Science That Reveals Our Genetic Ancestry . New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001. Talbot, Michael. The Holographic Universe. New York: Harper Perennial,1991."