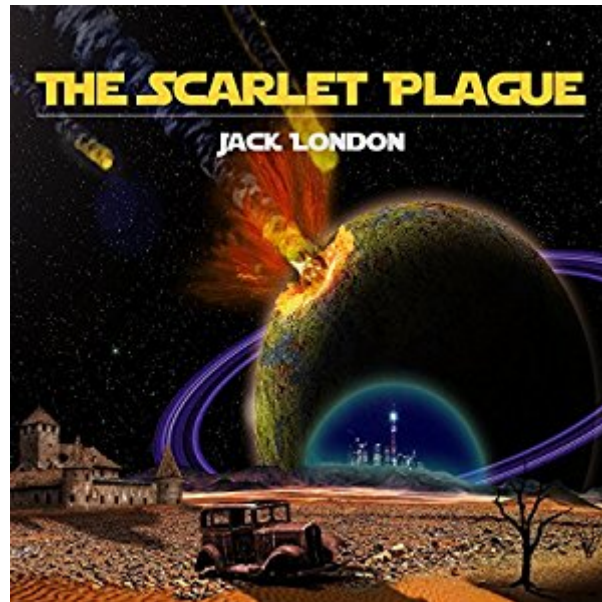




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# The Scarlet Plague



## Synopsis

The Scarlet Plague is a post-apocalyptic fiction which takes place in 2073, after an uncontrollable epidemic has infiltrated the planet. Follow along as James Howard Smith, along with his three grandsons, are a few of the only survivors of the pre-plague era left alive in San Francisco!

## Book Information

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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## Customer Reviews

Love the book. I have the Spanish version in cartoon form also from Mexico City 1977 or so. This is a weird edition; the book was always called THE Scarlet Plague. The missing article seems odd, like writing Odd Couple instead of The Odd Couple or Grapes of Wrath instead of The Grapes of Wrath. We are warned that this copied novel with the incorrectly printed title may not be reproduced (in its current format) without the permission of the "publisher" who may be contacted at an email address--this as if there is anyone who would seek to steal the valuable two-spaces-after-a-paragraph format used by the "publisher" who seems to have simply typed the work up for sale on CreateSpace or wherever. I for one pledge not to steal this valuable formatting. :)

1) This is a novella, not a short story; if you are expecting a thick book, don't go for it, but it's just as long as many published books. 1b) I was shocked to discover that Jack London had written what we'd now call postapocalyptic fiction. The frisson was stronger to realize that the apocalypse was now! 1c) I'd highly, highly recommend this to anyone who enjoys postapocalyptic fiction. I don't know if it's the origin of some of the tropes we often see, but it's definitely an early instantiation of them,

and it's kind of heartbreaking.2) This edition in particular is a beautiful edition of a text that is available online, proofed and corrected. I would much rather read this than any of the free editions for that reason: I find errors distracting and this version has none.2b) I'm looking forward to the rest of the Radium Age series!

This short novelette of Jack London's, is a radical departure from his usual "he-man" expostulations upon brutal Nature, brutal men, brutal institutions, and, brutal oceans. He had manged Science Fiction, with as much adroitness, just as well, as he did with his usual genres. It was fascinating to see how he made projections upon the progress of technology, 100 years ahead of his time. Wireless radios being used for routine communications between regular folks; monorails to transport the masses overland; and private luxury zeppelins, for the wealthy to travel. After this pandemic had culled humanity, by at least 95%, there was an irrevocable descent by humanity into savage barbarity, once they lost their comforts, technology, and institutions, and that is the common thread--of brutality--that this story has, with the rest of London's works. One should also read George R. Stewart's "Earth Abides" alongside of "Scarlet", as they are both very complimentary to each other.

"The Scarlet Plague" is a novella by Jack London that I'd never heard of before searching for recommended books available for free on Kindle. It was listed under science fiction and I thought "Whoa!" London's story was written in 1912, predicts a deadly plague in 2012, and is "narrated" by one of the few survivors--an 87-yr-old former English professor--60 years after civilization's collapse. The world of 2072 is completely feral, with scattered groups of stone-age humans perhaps only numbering a few thousand worldwide. The old professor tells his 3 grandchildren about the world before the plague, and the total collapse of everything. This work is vivid and profoundly pessimistic. If there's a fun part, it's London's portrait of Earth, circa 2012. A population of 8 billion, gross inequities of wealth and power, monorails, dirigibles, wireless communications: not bad for guessing a century ahead. It screams to be adapted to the big or small screen, shooting in today's world and tweaking the story to match. 75 years before this book, Mary Shelley wrote "The Last Man," which some consider the great-granddaddy of post-apocalyptic novels. I'd never heard of that one before reading reviews of "The Scarlet Plague." I wonder if Kindle has it for free...

How did I not read this sooner? I enjoyed this one better than Call of the Wild and I can see how the elements of this story are present in so many stories that have moved me. London's Scarlet Plague

clearly influenced Michael Chrichton's *Andromeda Strain*, Mattheson's *I am Legend*, and *The Walking Dead* series. I also put this short novel down wondering how much it influenced Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. Framed around a campfire on the beach, a scholarly grandfather who lived before the plague tells his less refined, unschooled teen grandchildren the tale of how he survived long enough to see generations of immune human beings survive to form families again. Through his eyes, you see the descent of humanity back to a fearful, primal state with just enough uptick that there is hope for humankind to re-establish civilization. London makes his observations of humanity, including the reshifting of social status, through the elder who was once a professor at the height of society and now a frail old man in animal skins. I'm astounded that London foresaw cellular phones and the future prevalence of airplanes and cars when this was only published in 1915. The simplicity of his focus and potency of his words make this a book that will be enjoyed for another 100 years, at least.

Fine book with many dark passages including "Some will fight, some will rule, some will pray; and all the rest will toil and suffer sore while on their bleeding carcasses..." , "Man will increase, and men will fight. The gunpowder will enable men to kill millions of men..." and "No sooner was a person dead than the body seemed to fall to pieces, to fly apart, to melt away even as you looked at it. That was one of the reasons the plague spread so rapidly." Book will not be for everyone's taste, but have to say it certainly leaves an impression!

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