



Plaguewalker

Gemma Tarlach

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I was born of the Devil. That is what they said. I was a conjure of night and fog, and the grave was the womb from which I emerged.

Abandoned as a baby outside the cemetery gates and raised by the town's executioner, Marcus grows into a giant as unfeeling as Death.

Traveling fanatics arrive in his Bavarian town bringing not the Word of God, but the Great Dying. As plague consumes his world, Marcus searches for his missing daughter.

Following her tracks in the snow, he encounters the mad, the desperate, and the wicked-and a resourceful young child whose hope and resiliency infect him as the plague did not.

Plaguewalker is a dark but ultimately redemptive historical novel set in Bavaria in the mid-fourteenth century and told from the perspective of its protagonist, the amoral executioner Marcus of Ansberg. As readers journey through a world upended by the plague, they will experience both the brutality of the period and the awakening of a conscience in a man who had believed himself damned.

"A stunning and thoroughly satisfying debut...A riveting, moving tale of atonement and reconciliation, redemption and salvation. The author's audacious choices-a fearsome executioner and expert in torture as point-of-view character and protagonist; the Black Death as catalyst for this same anguished man's evolution and deliverance-pay off in a page-turner of a book that's near-impossible to put down. Tarlach's feel for time and place is authentic and evocative, her language crisp and poetic, and her characterization spot-on: Marcus, stoic and struggling, is an effective, affecting narrator, while bold little Brenna wins the reader's heart right along with her protector's. All told, Plaguewalker is one of the best novels I've read in years."

-Paul McComas, author of Unforgettable, Planet of the Dates, and Unplugged

Plaguewalker Details

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Author : Gemma Tarlach

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From Reader Review *Plaguelwalker* for online ebook

Ponder the Page says

I adore *Plaguelwalker* by Gemma Tarlach. It is a dark tale that blankets you in the fear, superstition, and ignorance of the Middle Ages.

Marcus of Ansberg lives a grim life as the town Scharfrichter (executioner, confession extractor, and ironically healer) in 14th century Bavaria during the Black Plague. He is despised and ostracized by all, forbidden from many normal things like walking in town or showing his face, and makes his living by committing heinous acts of violence against his fellow man, but he slowly finds redemption and new purpose as he pursues the *Plaguelwalker*.

This book is similar to *The Hangman's Daughter* by Oliver Pötzsch in that they are both about Bavarian executioners, but that is where the similarity ends. In my opinion, *Plaguelwalker* is infinitely better. I was hooked from the first line and captivated until the last. At 180 pages, this is a perfectly written short novel. There is nothing I would add or remove from the story.

Mike Stuchbery says

Who woulda thought: a gritty, *feelgood* novel about the Black Death? For a debut this is pretty stunning!

L says

I enjoyed every minute of this book, not to be compared with *Hangman's Daughter*; it's a wonderful story in its own class. Character development was delightful and I think I related to the main character a little. Between the plague, the isolation and the myriad of other struggles; the internal conflict of Marcus were the loudest. His transformation in the story is satisfying, and realistic. The what I find to be fascinating lifestyle of an executioner and his family is described in great detail; the sights, sounds, and feelings of this story (some disturbing) come very much alive. The paradox of a man killing or torturing his fellow man as a profession, one that apparently required skill and even respect; was one I had not previously considered. A must read for any historical fiction fan.

I'm editing reviews, and while I read this more than five years ago, it remains one of my favorite HF books.

Zeina says

A quick, but not necessarily easy read - by that I mean you'll find the protagonist, Marcus - an executioner in Bavaria escaping the plague - unlovable, unsympathetic and a tad inaccessible, but if you stick with him on his journey of redemption, it will be well worth it.

The writing is tight, painterly but not flowery (no flowers could grow in that snowy landscape hah!).

Karen says

This was told from a very interesting point of view. The plot itself isn't much new, but the journey was worth it. The ending was alright, but felt a bit abrupt -- the story was long enough, but could definitely have been a bit longer, it hadn't overstayed its welcome yet.

Ryan Finney says

This book is like a hidden gem. From the first sentence to the last the story is captivating in a unique way. I love how she made the protagonist an odd one, which adds a delightful feel of originality. The story follows Marcus, who's the town's executioner, and through certain circumstances, he finds himself in the odd situation of tracking down a girl who he just learned was his daughter from one of the prostitutes in a brothel he lived in during 14th century Germany amongst the Black Plague. For fear of spoiling anything, I will let the reader read the synopsis for a better description of it, but this is a story you will not regret reading. And I am shocked to find it with such few reviews. Great author!

Carol says

Definitely different. The author was able to convey the feeling of living in the middle ages. I enjoyed the story but don't think I will recommend it to my friends.

Kerry Olivetti says

Topically, it's similar stomping ground to The Hangman's Daughter but ten times better. Should be read after a good snow storm.

Adrienne says

Fifty pages in and I really don't like the main character, and neither the beautiful cover nor the Plague setting overcomes my distaste for multipage torture scenes.

Todd Roufs says

Really atmospheric and quietly disturbing. I recommend reading it at night, especially in the winter.

Karen says

Excellent.

Tim Lo says

Interesting concept. A little outside of the usual style of books I read, but I very much enjoyed it.

Rich Tate says

A fascinating look into the Black Plague told from a unique perspective. This book feels like a Poe story from start to finish.

Kai'l says

Well said Gemma Tarlach
