Richard Preston's Novel The Hot Zone: Characters' Analysis

In Richard Preston's novel, The Hot Zone, the story starts off in the year 1980, initially following Charles Monet. Charles past life was obscure, but lived alone as an expatriate. At the age of 56, him and an unknown female friend headed towards Endebess Bluff on their way to go camping on Mount Elgon on New Year's Eve. On New Year's Morning, they drove up the mountain and were headed towards Kitum Cave. They head in with a flashlight in hand and observe the scenery; elephant dung everywhere, fruit bats on the ceiling or even flying, mineralized logs, trees, and bones, and mummified baby elephant corpses. The cave had a supporting pillar that had a guano consisting of digested insects, which Charles Monet touching it.

On January 8th, Monet gets a headache so bad, his eyeballs and temples began to ache and wouldn't go away with aspirin to which he ended up getting a severe backache. Three days later, Monet spiked a fever, became nauseated, and began to vomit to where the vomit turned into dry heaves. His face became bare of any emotions or life. His eyes were red and seemed as if they popped out of their sockets, his skin turned yellow, practically looking like a zombie and had a personality change for the worse, becoming sullen and not remembering anything but not to the point of being delirious. His co-workers decided to pay him a visit, since he had been missing work. As soon as they saw Monet, they immediately took him to the hospital.Where there was no possible explanation and told him to go to Nairobi Hospital.

So Monet goes on the quickest plane to get to Nairobi. It was a Fokker Friendship. The plane ride goes normally until he gets nauseous. He proceeds vomiting, but it wasn't the average "you ate too much food" vomit, no, the substance is named vomito negro or the black vomit. Liquified flesh and virus infused vomit is all that comes out of the man for the rest of the trip. As soon as he arrives at the hospital, he gets a taxi and heads to the hospital immediately. He arrives but isn't taken to the E.R. or the I.C.U. but has to wait. It's all relatively quiet until he becomes weak. Charles Monet helplessly lay on the floor, unconscious and vomiting. He's taken to the I.C.U. immediately.

The unconscious man was seen by a young doctor, Dr. Shem musoke. Musoke proceeds looking for a pulse, and succeeds but finds a very weak pulse. Dr. Musoke entered a laryngoscope through Monet's throat without wearing rubber gloves. Monet's unconscious body vomits all over him before he died in a coma a few hours later. A week later, Musoke gets a backache, followed by red eyes and a fever. The backache spreads to his whole body so he helplessly took malaria pills, which didn't work. So he turned to Dr. Antonia Bagshaw. No possible diagnosis was made but Musoke was taken under exploratory surgery where they removed a wedge from his liver before he dies of kidney failure.Musokes physician, Dr. David SIlverstein withdrew musokes blood for testing in South Africa and Atlanta GA, USA.

This infection was presumably, the Marburg virus, the most gentle filovirus which was spread to monkeys also known as "the marburg monkeys". There were two other filovirus sisters: Ebola Zaire & Ebola Sudan. After the Marburg virus erupted, a man named Mr. Jones started inspecting the monkeys in Germany.

In 1983, the story follows Nancy Jaax, a veterinarian in the US army. Jaax worked in the USAMRIID where it specialized on protective vaccines and research. She wanted to see what was causing the monkeys deaths so she entered the Biosafety level 4 corridors, soon to get the information that she'd be dissecting 2 dead monkeys. Jaax would be guided by her superior, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony "Tony" Johnson. Jaax and Johnson dressed into ventilated Chemturion biological space suits before beginning.

They started by getting the carcass out of the cage then proceeded to collect the brain, eyes, and spine of the monkey. Moments later, Johnson told Jaax to look at her right glove. Blood. Blood got into her now ripped glove. She ran into the decontamination showers as she realized she'll be taken away if she's actually infected with a level 4 virus. The blood on her hand was hers, after that realization, she collapsed. Two weeks later, two healthy monkeys died of ebola, which was odd. That's when Jaax had the realization that ebola could travel through air.

A man named Yu. G., a salaried man who worked at a cotton factory mysteriously died of ebola. His body wasn't allowed to be used for research. The disease somehow spread to 2 other men. One of them named P. G.. A social man who was able to spread the disease to multiple other people. In a short amount of time, it spread through a whole hospital in Maridi. The fatality rate was similar to the Black Plague with a fatality rate of 50%. In a few weeks the virus would be spread to 6 completely different locations.

An unknown Yambuku school teacher went out with his friends on vacation. On their way back, he bought some antelope meat, which was soon made into stew. He didn't feel very well the next day so before work he stopped by a hospital for some vaccinations to make him feel better. Some patients often got 5 vaccinations a day to make them feel better, but unfortunately, the needles weren't washed after every use, causing blood to be shared and spread. He broke with ebola, causing another outbreak. A nun who worked at the hospital, sister M.E., died of l'epidemie or "the epidemic"spread the infection to sister E.R. who gave the disease to nurse Mayinga N. who knew she was sick but tried to ignore it as long as possible so she could still travel. It didn't take very long for her to check herself in, nor did it take long to spread the news and rumors. News spread all the way to President Mobutu Sese Seko who stationed armies around the hospital and Bumba Zone, as quarantine.

Before sister M.E. had passed, some of the dying woman's blood was sampled to C.D.C. being tested on by Patricia Webb and Frederick A. Murphy to find the Marburg virus in the blood, which turned out to be worms. The C.D.C. doctors had to spread the news to Geneva, and then to Africa. There was no news coming from Bumba so they were scared. Bumba's governor had informed the doctors that they were dying and not receiving any salt, sugar, or alcohol. The land became a mess due to the outbreak, with the hospitals disarranged while dying patients remain in the facility and citizens in isolation huts. Kinshasa was failed to be contacted due to the outbreak, leaving the doctors afraid and leaving Bumba ASAP.

Mayinga was treated by Dr. Margaretha Isaacson, to soon be pronounced dead due to a heart attack. Medical teams held funerals for Mayinga and the nuns after biocontainment pavilions were set up for 37 infected people.

One C.D.C. doctor presumed the Bumba doctors dead due to lack of communication and sent a hospital ship for the few survivors to evacuate. None of the 37 people was infected and many people passed the crisis.

1987, Eugene Johnson received a package from an unidentified man. Inside the package were 2 vials with blood from a 10-year-old named Peter Cardinal. Peter’s family went on vacation to Africa where he caught malaria and was rushed to Nairobi Hospital where he was pronounced dead by Dr. David Silverstein. Johnson found out that the boy had died of Marburg. When Johnson tried to find the source he got one answer. Peter Cardinal had visited Kitum Cave. An investigation was made around Kitum Cave to find that no blood samples were positive for Marburg.

The army didn’t know what to do with Nancy Jaax and her family, so they assigned them to live in Maryland to where Nancy and her husband, Jerry were promoted in their jobs and hadn’t heard any news of ebola since.