

Black Death Story

By Rosie KW

CRACK!

The spiked whip bites my bare back and I shriek for mercy from God. The whip has protected me from the deathly boils and mania.

My sister died after three days from the disease. Her humours must have been severely unbalanced: her body engulfed in oozing, black buboes and her speech comprised of groans.

CRACK!

I grimace, and see people snatching bread whilst inhaling sweet scents from posies. Eerie masks make doctors appear like bird-faced devils.

"25 million dead! Mercy, God! Mercy," I sob.

Stinking mass graves are filled, only to be heaped with more dead. Priests hop between houses and pray for the infected.

CRACK!

When will it stop? My footsteps pool with blood as still, I whip myself.

I stumble over a stone and face plant in the pebble-riddled mud. A diseased man walks zombie-like across my view. People recoil and dash away. He has a coughing fit and grabs my feet. I see the blood pouring from his fingers and the crazed the look in his eyes. I slapped him with my whip, horrified, and stride way.

CRACK!

The next village I passed through bars me from entering.

"No-one comes in," grunts the man. I turn and trudge to the next town.

Rats scuttle over feet and the air is black. It coats the lungs. Dead line the street in a gruesome path. My whip opens another wound and I cry out. Somebody joins my suffering with his own knotted cat-tail.

CRACK!

We whip each other and moan for mercy. We part ways at my hut.

My throat tightens as my mother places a frog on the black lumps on her body. She gasps with every breath. I back out and loop the village, cracking the whip fiercer than ever before.

CRACK, CRACK, CRACK!

On the way back, I buy a posy and greedily inhale the fragrance of dried dog roses - it may be too late for my mother, but not for me. I snag a priest to pray for my mother anyway.

I stand against the far corner whilst the priest mutters hymns in our hut. My mother looks feverish and the frog escapes. She has got the worst type of plague. Those who do die by morning.

CRACK!

I do not rest that night. Instead, I rip my back to pieces and trudge sullenly through the night. My whip is crusted with blood and sweat.

Most places have got the 'Black Death', as they're calling it. Europe, Asia and some of Africa as well.

People say it's caused by rats, some say bad smells, whereas others talk about the humours. I don't care how it's caused; I just want it to stop. Although I do try to avoid rats (even though I'm never 6 feet away from one); smell posies and keep my humours balanced.

"Mercy on us, God! Mercy!" I scream.

CRACK!