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Boom, Bust, Boom: A Story About Copper, the Metal That Runs the World

Bill Carter

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In following the time-honored journalistic tenet that the best stories are the ones you find in your own backyard, Bill Carter begins this account of the all-pervasive presence of copper in our lives and its cost on our health, economy, and our environment with a simple personal discovery: the presence of arsenic from leftover mine tailings in his backyard garden in the former copper mining town of Bisbee, Arizona. This revelation led him on a quest to find out as much as possible about the mineral copper, its wonderful and mysterious properties, its history in human evolution, and its omnipresence in contemporary life, being found in everything from toothpaste to cellphones. Carter explores several mining areas, past, present, and projected both in the United States and around the world, and details the environmental and health implications involved in open-surface extraction of copper ore. From boardrooms of investors in London to the mountains of Indonesia, Carter connects the dots from his humble backyard garden to the CEOs of the multibillion-dollar global copper industry, confronting a resource that is so vital yet which has the potential to cause horrendous and irrevocable damage to our planet and ourselves.

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