



The Second Cure

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Dark, thrilling and compulsively readable, *The Second Cure* is a provocative debut novel about control, courage and belief.

A pandemic is racing through our world, changing people subtly but irrevocably. The first sign for some is losing their faith. For others it comes as violent outpourings of creativity, reckless driving and seeing visions.

Scientist Charlotte Zinn is close to a cure when her partner becomes infected. Overnight her understanding of the disease is turned upside down. Should she change the path of evolution?

As Australia is torn apart, reporter Brigid Bayliss is determined to uncover the dark truth behind the religious response to the outbreak.

Brigid and Charlotte find themselves on the frontline of a world splintering into far left and far right, with unexpected power to change the course of history. But at what cost?

The Second Cure Details

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Author : Margaret Morgan

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From Reader Review The Second Cure for online ebook

Rob says

A dystopia (sort of) with an eye to today's latest scientific discoveries that questions the notion of rational self interest and reason as the only influence on individuals and society.

In the last 10 years there has been a steady build up of ideas about biological processes affecting more than just our bodies but what we like to think of as our minds, which in the Western tradition, we hold to be ethereal and somehow purer than our bag of meat bodies. For instance the influence of our gut bacteria on our behaviour and then there is the curious parasitic disease *Toxoplasma gondii*.

These ideas mixed with the pessimistic research which suggests that conservative and progressive brains are wired up differently and we have the basis of this book. What would happen if there was a species jump of a disease and what would happen if that disease changed our perceptions of the world in a dramatic and unexpected way? It has happened before with the Black Plague which profoundly changed the medieval world. World War One, while not a plague in the normal sense of the word, so changed the mass of individuals' perception of the world that it altered the whole consciousness of the world.

Jennifer Thompson says

Suspense in the science...

What a great read. I not only enjoyed the plot, the narrative, and the suspense. I also enjoyed learning about the science around us.

Peter Neale says

I have just finished reading this book. It is terrific. Margaret Morgan manipulates complex ideas with startling ease while driving her narrative along at a cracking pace. At once disturbing, humorous and highly intelligent, "The Second Cure" is compellingly believable and utterly contemporary. Do yourself a favour and dive into it.

Jocelyn (foxonbooks) says

There is so much plot packed into this novel! It's ambitious, clever, stunning in breadth and imaginative power. The writing is at once authoritatively scientific, and compellingly plot-driven. More of my thoughts are below (but they're a little disjointed).

Charlie is a scientist, concerned with finding a cure for a new plague affecting the world's cats. Bridgid is a reporter, watching her world change and trying to keep the truth in sight. These two remarkable women are embroiled in huge, world-shaking events and forced to make decisions that will impact generations to come.

The science in *The Second Cure* feels plausible, the political extremism even more so. And my word, did the pace ramp up in the latter half of the story! I thought this would be a tale about a point in time, but instead is covered decades of change. A really unique, fascinating book.

Nikki says

As soon as I read the synopsis for *The Second Cure* I was instantly interested! Whilst it's unlike anything else that I've read before I absolutely adored this book, the characters especially were so likeable and I quickly became invested in what was going to happen to them. It's one of those books that makes you stop and think because even though it's essentially fiction you can't help but wonder what yourself as a reader would do if you were faced with similar situations or environments. I loved the scientific/biology aspect of the story (science nerd here) and appreciated that it was all explained in a way that would be easy for anyone to understand. I can't wait to see what's to come in the future for Margaret Morgan as her debut novel has simply blown me away!

Claire says

4.5???? An extremely thought provoking read.

<https://clairesreadsandreviews.home.b...>

Theresa Smith Writes says

'The cure, she called it, did you know that? Not the cure to stop the plague. This was the second cure she said.'

The Second Cure hit me like a bolt of lightning. I went into this novel with a fair amount of trepidation; science fiction is not really 'my thing'. Or so I tell myself. But this year alone, I've read more science fiction than ever before and each of these novels has been brilliant. I've loved them. And so it is with *The Second Cure*, a genre blend of science fiction with dystopian themes written in a literary style. Utterly captivating, horrifyingly realistic and ultimately uplifting. I honestly can't recommend this novel high enough.

Margaret Morgan writes with exception. She presents a type of science that is not very basic in a very accessible manner, which was really lucky for me because my brain tends to become overwhelmed very quickly once anything becomes scientific. But I really knew what was going on all the way through this novel. Too bad Margaret wasn't my science teacher back in school. For anyone who has been contemplating reading *The Second Cure* but has held off because of a fear of the science themes, you can shelve those concerns. As well as writing with accessibility, Margaret has a way with words in general that seem to have them blending into the most beautifully atmospheric prose. I was gripped with a certain sense of place while reading *The Second Cure*. It's a very immersive novel.

‘As her eyes adjusted to the darkness, the bush remained invisible, no cloud present to bounce back the light of the city. On moonlit nights she could see down to Bujwa Bay, a tucked-away pocket of the river that ran into the vast Hawkesbury and out into the Pacific Ocean. But tonight there was no moon, and the stars were sharp against the night, the Milky Way looking like the smear of cream its name suggested. From the pond below she could hear the knock-on-wood call of a striped marsh frog and from across the valley was the two-toned hoot of a solitary boobook. Crickets and the metallic ting of microbats. There was no breeze.’

The Second Cure has several narrators but the main two are scientist Charlie (Charlotte) and journalist Brigid. These two women are almost sisters-in-law. Charlie lives with, and is the partner of, Brigid’s brother Richard. Another character by the name of Winnie also has an impactful presence in the first part of the novel. She is Richard’s and Brigid’s mother. So you can see that this story revolves to a certain extent around a family. I really liked both Charlie and Brigid. Very different from each other, but both equally as passionate about their cause. For Brigid, her cause is the truth. She’s in it for the long haul and she’s determined to unmask a proselytising politician who is rising rapidly by capitalising on fear within society – I know, they all do that! But this guy...well, you really just need to read it. As a Queenslander (the setting of the more extreme parts of the novel), my face was doing a good impression of that little shocked face emoji while my stomach was churning over the extreme right wing politics. It’s fiction though...right? Charlie, after years of research, is working on a vaccine as well as a cure for the cat plague that has the world within its grip. Why does it matter if cats are dying? Well, it matters a lot, because everything is connected. If cats don’t exist, the population of rats boom, as one example. But it’s not just domestic cats dying, it’s big cats too, the lions and cheetahs and every type of cat all around the world. It’s wrecking havoc on the ecosystem. Furthermore, even though it’s a cat plague, it’s infecting humans, because they have become the host. The virus manifests itself in different ways, depending on the individual, something Margaret skilfully demonstrates by way of contrasting the experiences of her characters. When Richard becomes infected, his symptoms force Charlie to regard the progression of the disease in a new light. The need for a cure, and a vaccine, becomes all the more focused.

As a side note, on the topic of Charlie and Richard, I absolutely love the way Margaret sums up their relationship in this moment of introspection by Charlie:

‘At its worst, she worried that their relationship was little more than an exchange of facts and orgasms. He told her things about music and art. She told him things about science. They had good sex. Of course there were other exchanges, too. He provided the accommodation (free of mortgage or rent); she earned most of their money. She paid for the food; he bought it and cooked it. Just another symbiosis, like fungi and algae in lichen. But she loved him, and she knew he loved her. That added a buffer against imbalances, perhaps. Or maybe it magnified them. Was it true that in every relationship one person loved the other more?’

This novel spans a long timeline, more than fifteen years, but it’s split into two parts and jumps ahead in the second part, so it’s still very fast moving. It really is a novel for our times. It generated such a sense of unease within me, how familiar some of the themes seem when considered within the context of today’s society. I did not see the end result coming. I honestly had no idea what was going to happen with Charlie and Brigid. Were they going to pull off what they had each set out to do? And what is the second cure? How does it differ to the first cure and what is its purpose? It all ends in a way that is both devastating and uplifting at the same time. I was shocked and elated in equal measure. This novel is nothing short of brilliant. And the cover is absolutely gorgeous.

‘Charlie couldn’t endure listening. This was her work they were exploiting. Her work had built Capricornia. Without her cure, Effenberg would not have been able to build his regime and equally vile dictatorships across the world couldn’t have found their power. She’d been trying to stop extinctions, to do good science,

and she had indeed succeeded, but the price...the price made her want to vomit.'

Thanks is extended to Penguin Random House Australia for providing me with a copy of *The Second Cure* for review.

Blue says

The Second Cure is one book that you will read in 2018 and it will blow you away. As soon as I read the synopsis for this book I couldn't say no to a review copy. Let's just say this book is fantastic and I am shocked that I am not seeing it on everyone's book cases, their Instagram feeds and posting reviews on Goodreads. This book ladies and gentlemen was utterly fantastic.

Not only is *The Second Cure* unlike any book I have ever read, Morgan's writing style was captivating, the characters were compelling and delightful. With a mix of science (don't worry it's easy to understand), fiction and a thriller with a spin of politics involved. Amazing! I couldn't fault this book if you paid me to. *The Second Cure* is based around two main characters Charlie and Brigid. Charlie is a scientist who is focused on finding a cure for a new plague that is targeting the world's cats and I loved her sympathetic and energetic nature. Brigid is a report who seeks the truth and these two women were unstoppable as they took heed of world changing events and deciding fate that would affect generations to come. I even found myself questioning if I would have taken the same path as them?

Another aspect of the book I actually enjoyed was the science, mostly because I could actually understand what was going on. For someone that drew skulls and love hearts all over her science book in high school and actually didn't absorb any of the teachers would I found it easy enough to follow what the characters were talking about without scratching my head. Pretty much in my uneducated science background, the testing that was carried out seemed plausible and your heart raced as they tried to find a cure.

Have I also mentioned that I am a bit of a dark nut and this book completely satisfied my dark soul? If not, go back and start the paragraph again. There are scenes of torture, cruelty, and underground movement and riots. Need I say more?

Have I convinced you to buy it yet? Is it in your cart? No? Well, it should be. Like I said earlier, I couldn't fault the book. The characters were compelling, the writing was smooth and comforting (would even hold your hand through the torture) and overall it was just a masterpiece.

Cat says

If you like your science fiction extra sciency, contemporary and pandemic-infused, featuring a cast of engaging characters including all-too-plausible politico-religious whackjobs then this one is for you. Reminds me a little bit of Max Barry's fabulous thriller *Lexicon*, albeit with different subject matter. I'm tipping this novel for an Aurealis Award.

Carol Ryles says

Lots to love about this book, set in Australia, a science fiction book of our times. Great characters, compelling and believable story, thought-provoking science and politics. All packaged in an immensely enjoyable read.

Christina Houen says

Margaret Morgan's debut novel, *The Second Cure*, is published by Penguin. I went to the launch put on by Newtown bookshop, Better Read than Dead, at Leadbelly Bar in Newtown. The launch speech was given by Kerryn Goldsworthy, who said she had read the book twice and could read it twice again. I know what she meant, as I came to write this review; for it is such a complex plot that I did not feel I could do it justice on one read alone, and after skimming through it for the second time, I still don't. I am not a lover of plot-driven novels, or novels structured by an idea or a thesis. On the other hand, I don't want to slot this novel into a box of 'political thriller' or 'dystopian fiction' for it is both and more than that.

I would not normally choose to read a novel of this kind. But I did enjoy it; it kept me turning the pages, and I have great respect and admiration for the complex structure and the convincing unravelling of a scientific quest for a cure for a pandemic of toxoplasmosis, which has mutated from the strain that is hosted by cats to one of plague proportions, hosted by humans. The virus is spreading through the world, and its effects are both devastating and in some ways, liberating. Charlie Zinn, a biologist, and her colleague, Juliette, have isolated the genome and are close to finding a cure.

Meantime, the world's domestic, wild and feral feline population is disappearing. The emphasis of the novel is on the human, not the animal; not on the loss of an entire biological population, but on the divisions in Australia between the general population, the far left, and the far right; the latter are represented by Song of Light New Apostolic Church. In Queensland, where church and state are not separate, their Pastor and leader, one Jack Effenburg, effects a leadership spill and becomes premier, then leads a secession from the Australian Republic to set up the independent nation, Capricornia. Jack and his wife Marion profess to be on the side of the light, and convince the population of this, but are in fact from the dark side.

The key characters in this tale are two scientists, Charlie, and her former partner in love and science, Shadrack; Brigid, a fearless investigative reporter and sister of Charlie's present partner (when the story opens) Richard, who is a musician and a painter. There is a love triangle at the centre of the plot, between Charlie, Richard and Shadrack.

The plot is so complex I won't attempt a summary. There are riots, there is torture, there is cruelty, blood is shed. There is an underground movement against the cruel, secretive, hypocritical, repressive rule of Capricornia. Charlie, with Shadrack's support, develops a second cure for the mutated virus, which offers release from the toxic effects and the prospect of a shift from capitalism to a more humane, caring and concerned society. Empathy and connectedness versus power, cruelty and corruption.

I think this book will do very well. When I visited Better Read than Dead bookshop in Newtown, they were featuring it as their no. 1 bestseller, even before it was launched. The author has woven together strands of science, speculative fiction, romance, political thriller, and more, to create a convincing, disturbing and entertaining vision of how our society might develop when humans exploit biological mutations for power,

and thinkers, scientists and artists refuse control and seek ways of living in a more connected, empathic world.

Deborah says

Gripping. The science is fascinating and I cared a lot about the characters - biologist Charlie Zinn, her artist/composer partner Richard, their lovely dog Goblin, Richard's gentle mother Winnie, and his acerbic sister Brigid.

Biology - specifically parasitology and epigenetics - mixed with religion, politics, and the arts, makes for fascinating near-future world-building.

Very accomplished writing, particularly for a debut novel.

The style, plotting, and characterisation are all great.

I was occasionally confused about the timeline in the first part of the book, but other than that, everything worked smoothly.

Catch the Second Cure!

Georgina Ballantine says

What a cornucopia of diversity and variety I found in *The Second Cure*!

The book's artful blending of genuine and speculative (but convincing) science, religious and political isolationism, gender politics, sexuality, intriguing characters and cats had me hooked. An Australian setting too — huzzah!

It's also one of the few fiction books I've read that include characters with synaesthesia, a fascinating neurological trait that causes a merging of the senses e.g. hearing colour or seeing sound.

Highly recommended, *The Second Cure* is a 5* star novel, thought-provoking, thrilling, informative and a joy to read.

Gaby Meares says

Unputdownable!

Margaret Morgan's vision of Australia in the grip of a pandemic is too close for comfort. As I read of religious zealots taking over Queensland, outlawing gay marriage, abortion, and just about every advance made in the last 100 years, I kept thinking - oh yeah - this could sooo easily happen.

JFK nailed it: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

But the characters in Morgan's novel do do something - and you just want to cheer!

This novel won on all fronts for me: it's plot is original, not just another grim unrealistic dystopian book; the characters have real depth and although flawed, you can't help but empathise with them all (well not quite all of them!).

The science (and be warned, there is quite a bit of it) is well explained without sounding like Biology 101 and I think I understood most of it, which is quite an accomplishment!

This is Margaret Morgan's first novel and it's a cracker! Highly recommended.

