



The Cure

S. N. Little

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Enigmatic and sensual, the thriller The Cure focuses on a kidnapped college student who's imprisoned by an unethical researcher.

S. N. Little's twisting thriller *The Cure* finds the elements of suspense in medical ethics.

Rae, full of love and grief in equal measure, navigates romance, her college studies, and her lingering grief over her father's death. She conveys her feelings in metaphorical terms, drawing on nature, the weather, and the feeling of clothing against her skin, making her pain palpable. Then she is ensnared by a mysterious professor whose area of study is the same rare infection that killed her father. The professor's charm has a menacing edge; feelings of discomfort and attraction battle within Rae. As more is demanded of her, Rae becomes a shell of her former self.

The book builds tension via manufactured mundanity. Rae deals with continual confusion and uncertainty until the story is upended by the professor's decision to kidnap her and hold her hostage until a cure is found. Thereafter, the novel documents Rae's imprisonment from her perspective. This is done with enigmatic forcefulness; she cannot track where she is or how much time has passed. Locked underground, feeling isolation and fear, she infuses the scant objects in her cell with potent symbolism. Her thoughts and feelings become ferocious in a way they were not before: Once coasting through grief, she now has to make an escape plan.

However, Rae's attraction to the professor does not disappear when he becomes her captor. Eroticism courses through their dynamic, subverting the book's clinical subject matter. When she is forced to help him in the makeshift lab in her bunker, there are detailed descriptions of the chemicals and medical tools they use; her paradoxical desire for him makes the anatomical language flower.

During Rae's imprisonment, there are some perspective shifts to cover her friends and what's going on in the outside world. This results in dimensionality where the story could have become too internal. The circumstances of her kidnapping are also covered in revealing pieces as the story continues.

But the repetitive, limited manner in which people are first introduced compromises the book's realism somewhat, limiting initial engagement. Rae and her best friend, Jade, aren't physically depicted much beyond their haircuts, for example, nor the professor beyond his mesmerizing eyes, making them flat presences until the novel's further development of them as individuals.

The Cure is a suspenseful mystery novel about a woman's survival against all odds.

ANNA KARNEDY (January 18, 2025)

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