ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Cure
Michael Mills
Trafford Publishing
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Two Stars (out of Five)

Haemalogist Andrew Ryan of Britain's National Health Service is a champion for patients who believes in holding the government to its lofty campaign promises of access to the best grade of care. The first fifty pages of this hospital suspense drama are practically a plot-free platform for his incessant complaining. The character has a moral core but his professional reserve and political navigation skills are about on par with those of Patch Adams.

Ryan rarely considers holding back his opinion on national health initiatives reducing them to blanket dismissal as "…idiotic ill-conceived incredibly costly schemes bearing some other senseless jargonistic fancy name specially chosen to hoodwink the poor unsuspecting public!" Of course he rightfully despises the bean-counting ghouls in hospital administration (with the exception of a reasonably humane chief executive) given their inherently reprehensible goals of saving more pounds than lives. They're natural villains.

Eventually it emerges that young and middle-aged patients afflicted with only moderate maladies are dying without clear cause. The deaths which Ryan comes to see as crimes aren't a particularly integral portion of the story until late in the action. Motivation for criminal behavior isn't is as clearly defined as it could have been or as inevitable as is expected; urgency is strangely absent. The story willfully resists the conventions of its chosen genre.

The strongest passages concern a developing romance between Ryan and an alluring but slightly hesitant pharmaceuticals sales representative named Victoria. As perpetual jousting falls away the tentative humanity visible in these characters reflects a higher plane of prose. Ryan is also rather sympathetic when dealing affectionately with his nearly adult children.

This stressed physician who lives alone following a divorce fluctuates between moderately substantial and heavy drinking (sometimes on lunch break) for purposes of general decompression. The drinks are usually accompanied by Beethoven in the background. Each chapter is headed by an applicable quotation from wits such as George Bernard Shaw Oscar Wilde and Woody Allen; the generally zippy Ryan has a penchant for injecting the words of

other cultural icons into his conversations and enjoys identifying sources when his colleagues do so. Chess metaphors appear to positive effect including: "'Every time you think you're beaten with no way back with all the infinite possible moves available to you it's more than likely that there must be a winner there that you haven't seen.'"

Michael Mills is a retired haematologist with interest in jazz music golf and health policy reform. His occupational experience ensures authenticity of *The Cure*'s medical procedures. The obvious primacy of patients' welfare is a laudable priority but sustained embittered grousing almost completely inundates a storyline of substantial promise.

Todd Mercer