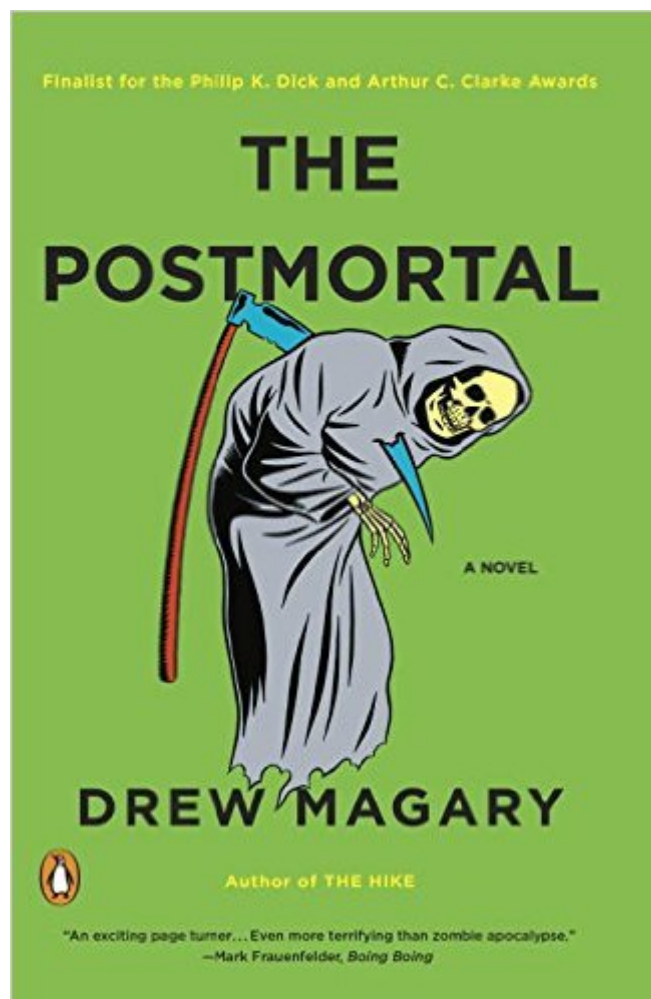


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The Postmortal



Synopsis

â€” Finalist for the Philip K. Dick and Arthur C. Clarke Awardsâ€” â€” The gripping first novel by Drew Magary, Deadspin columnist, GQ correspondent, and author of *The Hike* "An exciting page turner. . . . Drew Magary is an excellent writer." *The Postmortal* "is . . . even more terrifying than zombie apocalypse." "Mark Frauenfelder, *Boing Boing* John Farrell is about to get "The Cure." Old age can never kill him now. The only problem is, everything else still can . . . Imagine a near future where a cure for aging is discovered and-after much political and moral debate-made available to people worldwide. Immortality, however, comes with its own unique problems-including evil green people, government euthanasia programs, a disturbing new religious cult, and other horrors. Witty, eerie, and full of humanity, *The Postmortal* is an unforgettable thriller that envisions a pre-apocalyptic world so real that it is completely terrifying.

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Customer Reviews

In 2019, the "cure for aging" -- gene therapy -- is legal in only four countries, but immortality can be purchased on the black market. The issue is divisive: gene therapy's opponents use terrorist tactics to attack the black market while protests in favor of legalizing the cure turn ugly. The desire to cheat death ultimately triumphs. John Farrell takes the cure without devoting much thought to its downside: If you stop aging, retirement isn't an option and you can forget about social security. If your parents don't die, you don't inherit. If you live forever, you never experience eternal respite from annoying relatives and politicians, it's less easy to ignore future threats like global warming, and the escape

clause from your marital vows -- until death do us part -- becomes a nullity. Couples often say they marry so they can grow old together. Would they bother with marriage if eternal youth made possible an eternal choice of partners? On a more serious note, the pressures of overpopulation would dramatically increase the already unsustainable consumption of finite resources, a predicament that would initially lead to hoarding, then to war, and ultimately to a barren planet. Beginning in 2019, Farrell blogs about the impact gene therapy has on his life and the world. The introduction to *The Postmortal* advises us that Farrell's text files are discovered in 2090. Through Farrell's eyes, we watch the escalating disaster: the rise of pro-death pressure, the burgeoning prison populations resulting from life sentences that last forever, the harsh measures China imposes to assure that its citizens forego the cure, the glorification of suicide, the fracturing of society. Some blog entries reproduce news stories, political punditry, and advertisements (including a FAQ promoting a new religion). Some of Farrell's entries are observational, others are personal. *Postmortal* is not immortal; death still occurs from injury and disease, suicide and murder. Death is a frequent subject of Farrell's blog as people close to him are killed. After a few decades, Farrell becomes an end specialist (sort of a futuristic Kevorkian, except that the government not only approves of assisted suicide but rewards it with a tax rebate). It is difficult to fault Farrell's role in the postmortal future. Compared, at least, to the roving street gangs, organ thieves, and religious charlatans, Farrell's job seems both necessary and altruistic. Although Drew Magary describes a terrifying future, he keeps the tone light -- perhaps too light. *The Postmortal* works surprisingly well as a dystopian comedy (if there is such a thing), but the incongruity of laughter and disaster robs the story of its potential power. In the novel's third act, after an event called "the correction" occurs, the story appears to take a more serious course. The disconnect between humor and horror at that point becomes jarring; it is not a line Magary straddles comfortably. Viewed as a cautionary tale about the consequences of overpopulation, the comedy seems misplaced; viewed as a farcical take on the desire for immortality, the drama overshadows the farce. Those reservations aside, I have no qualms about recommending *The Postmortal* to readers who aren't put off by dark comedy. While I got a kick out of Magary's humor (his dialog is both realistic and insanely funny), I also enjoyed pondering the issues he raises. Magary obviously gave considerable imaginative thought to the consequences of a genetic cure for aging (including its impact on home run records). There were times when I thought the story went off course, but there was never a moment when my interest in the novel waned. In the end, Magary tells us, there is only the inevitable end. If you can accept that -- even more, if you can laugh about it -- I suspect you'll like *The Postmortal*.

I love the premise of this book - in our world in the not-so-distant future, a cure for aging has been discovered. The President has banned it in the U.S., but it is available on the black market. John Farrell, a bit of an Everyman who happens to be a divorce lawyer, has a connection and decides to take The Cure. Initially, mayhem and madness ensue, in the best possible ways. John's future world is one of snarkiness, dark gallows humor, Shocking Revelations, and more than a few unexpected twists and turns. At least, it is in the first handful of chapters. After that, well, it becomes a lot darker and the gallows humor becomes more gallows and less humor. Random acts of violence, bitterness, resentment, ennui, and the decline of all forms of faith, hope and love are apparently the name of the game in the future. If we really are in for that kind of future, I am in no rush to sign up - let alone to extend my stay with a late check-out. In other words, eek, she said. The book started out terrifically, laugh-out-loud funny. And then shifted, on a dime, to horrifically, cry-out-loud depressing. The subject matter is heavy - I get it. Issues of resource management, over-population, who "deserves" to be kept alive, and our obligations to one another in society are weighty topics. So is the concept of death. They deserve to be treated with respect - although I'm also fairly certain that they deserve to be treated with mockery and sarcasm because we don't want to take ourselves too seriously, now do we? There are a lot of take-home platitudinous messages in the book because of the weight of the topics covered. "Be careful what you wish for" is, obviously, prime among them. But "nothing good lasts forever," "to everything there is a season," and "only the good die young" have their places in the sun too. And for the most part, Magary uses them well - they serve to demonstrate the ridiculousness and hypocrisy of many characters and situations, and to provide a nice reminder every now and then about the dangers of over-thinking and under-feeling. There are also a lot of great lines and darkly funny situations. That's how the book was billed, and the author (Drew Magary) did deliver. This is what I expected the major focus of the book to be, actually, given Magary's other writing credits. I mean, hello, how can you not expect great things from a man whose other book is titled "Men With Balls: The Professional Athlete's Handbook" and who also writes for Deadspin, Maxim, and has contributed to Comedy Central, Playboy, and Penthouse? So humor - dark, odd, random, man-focused humor I expected - especially after reading Magary's own take on his book on Deadspin. But then he went off on a dystopian "the future is scary!" tangent or two (or six or twelve). And that I found a tad wearing after a while... Again, I get it. The book is a combo entertainment/cautionary tale. But the existential angst surrounding John Farrell and his family/friends was entertaining for a while, then it got a little heavy-handed to my tastes. Personally, I don't know that I see all that much appeal in a cure for aging. From the beginning, I rather fell in line with the pro-death traditionalists (and John's father) when they pointed out that everything good

must come to an end - and that this is not necessarily a bad thing or something to avoid, but just a necessary part of life and the appreciation of what we have. This is, ultimately, the message Magary sends us away with - and it's a good one. But frankly, I think he could have delivered it without quite as many participants in the parade of horrors that poor John Farrell had to deal with along the way...

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