

## ***Taking the Cure***

**Sarah R. Taggart**

iUniverse, Lincoln, NE, \$10.95 USD, softcover (116p)

ISBN: 0-595-37890-0

Betsy has had enough of life in the hospital. Ever since she was diagnosed with tuberculosis at age fourteen, she's been stuck in the TB ward, forced to spend her days flat on her back staring at the ceiling. They won't let her out of bed, they've stuck her full of needles, and now they want to do a surgery that will leave her with a sunken chest. She's done.

With the help of some friends, Betsy engineers an escape. The law says that TB patients can be incarcerated, and she has no plans to go back. She relishes her freedom on the outside, but spending her teenage years in a hospital has made her less than streetwise. Betsy's unexpected pregnancy at eighteen could land her back in the TB ward; even worse, the system might take away her baby.

*Taking the Cure* places the reader squarely in the medical world of the late 1940s. Author Sarah Taggart based the story on her own experiences, lending a gloss of believability to the horrific hospital practices of the time. Patients are subjected to modern procedures that are worse than the disease and not allowed to move for fear of breaking open the lesions in their lungs. Betsy, whose family has more or less abandoned her to the medical system, takes a huge risk in leaving the hospital.

Despite the weighty adult themes of illegitimate pregnancy and involuntary commitment to a hospital, there is something comforting in the tone of Taggart's writing. Betsy's adventures have more of *Sue Barton Student Nurse* about them than *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Like those historical young-adult novels, *Taking the Cure* is about a headstrong heroine navigating what seems to us a hopelessly quaint health care system. She meets kind people who are willing to assist her, including a social worker in the hospital, and medicine holds out the hope of a cure. Her adventures, in the end, are neatly tied up, providing a satisfying sense of closure.

It helps that Betsy herself has not an ounce of self-pity. She tells her story in first person and from the vantage point of many years later, which provides distance from the less pleasant experiences she relates. Despite her cloistered life, Betsy is no pushover. Both she and her best friend Polly Jo are spirited and fun-loving. Although they are not the perfectly innocent girls that society would have them be, there's something wholesome about them. *Taking the Cure* is a cozy read; make some hot cocoa and settle in for an afternoon of Betsy's adventures.

*BookWire Review*

*July 12, 2006*