



Drop by Drop

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In this first book in the Step By Step trilogy, global catastrophe occurs as all plastic mysteriously liquefies. All the small components making many technologies possible?Navigation systems, communications, medical equipment?fail.

In Sycamore River, citizens find their lives disrupted as everything they've depended on melts around them, with sometimes fatal results. All they can rely upon is themselves.

And this is only the beginning . . .

Drop by Drop Details

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Author : Morgan Llywelyn

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From Reader Review Drop by Drop for online ebook

Jodie "Bookish" Cook says

Book Review

Title: Drop by Drop (Step by Step #1)

Author: Morgan Llywelyn

Genre: Sci-Fi/Dystopian/Thriller

Rating: ****

Review: The premise of Drop by Drop was very interesting, so I requested it on NetGalley. I used to read a lot of dystopian novels but have been on a real fantasy kick lately. The opening to Drop by Drop was quite interesting, we are introduced to a variety of characters including Nell, Bea and Dwayne as the incident begins. The incident itself is that all plastics mysteriously begins to melt, at first nothing seems amiss as ATM's swallow bank card but when pens and other devices containing plastic begins to melt too it seems a little odd. However, we are also introduced to a suspected murder of Lila Ragland and this has a very strong connection to Dwayne.

As we approach the ¼ mark in the novel, the incident is limited at first to small plastic items like pens and bank cards, but pretty soon larger things are being affected like Bea's dishwasher. So far, we haven't got much going on other than introducing the characters and the incident, but I can wait to see how the characters will react when all the technology stops working as they rely quite heavily on it especially in the form of AllComs which are laptops, phones and tablets all rolled into one and everyone has one. After a little while the incident is dubbed the Change and not every characters who are scientists understand what is going on as it is impossible for plastics to melt at such low temperatures but that is what they appear to be doing. I was really enjoying the relationships between the characters and I also liked the theories some of the characters were developing about the change especially the industrial espionage theory.

As we cross the ¼ mark in the novel, the Change is spreading to larger items and it seems to be happening all over the world and no one seems to be concerned until the technology stops working. This is a problem for Bennett and his company, but it also seems that Nell, their children and the dogs have gone missing as well.

As things like computers and the AllComs start dying panic is slowly beginning to creep in and you can feel the character's panic as they desperately try to maintain some normality as the world begins to fall apart.

As we approach the halfway mark in the novel, panic is spreading throughout the world especially in technologically advanced countries like America where the novel is set. As the ripple effect begins the evil side of panic is showing with violence rising. Those who can afford it are buying alternative to plastics in anything they can and smart people like Jack are trying to find permeant solutions. However, this becoming increasingly difficult when the world wide web drops out and any form of communication outside old fashioned methods is virtually impossible.

As we cross into the second half of the novel, the novel despite the slow start is quite interesting and we see the change spreading and how the host of characters are trying to cope and adapt to it. As the world descends further and further into chaos with no one having a suitable idea about what is causing the change or how to stop it most people are left to their own devices. However, things are going to get worse as most money is kept in banks run by technology which is literally crippling the world. However, there is a small group of people who are moving back to old school technology for example, using horse and cart instead of cars as only older models of car can be used anyway.

As we approach the ¾ mark in the novel, I must really commend Edgar as he is the first person to voice the fact that if all plastics are being affected sooner or later the munitions and nukes will be affected too. People seem to be adjusted to life with the change, but violence is on the rise, with fights, stabbings and shootings become a more common occurrence but life goes on babies are born and people move forward. However, there is a lot of speculation about the change, whether it is natural or man-made and whether or not it is an

experiment of some sort. I agree with the experiment theory, but this novel doesn't seem to be about the change itself, it seems to be more about the characters and how the change affects them and their lives. As we cross into the final section of the novel, nothing seems to be progressing just the world dissolving further and further but nothing external seems to be happening. However, the changes seems to be slowing or stopping altogether as it has been 3 to 4 weeks for some since things have dissolved. Life seems to be getting better for the characters, but the escalated violence is still a problem. The ending of this novel leave an opening for the sequel, but I felt this makes a nice story by itself and could have made better if there was more explanation about the change itself. But I still really enjoyed Drop by Drop.

Glitterbomb says

DNF.

Interesting concept. Poor execution.

Lilyn G. | Sci-Fi & Scary says

Drop by Drop was a buddy read with Jess from Storytime in the Stacks. I started off liking it, she started off disliking it. **Unfortunately, by the time the book ended, I had come around to her way of thinking instead of vice versa.**

I try my best to only review the book and not the author, but I think in some cases you have to take who the author is into consideration. Morgan Llywelyn is well-known for her historical works (both fiction and non-) and for her non-fiction. The lady can obviously write, she's got the awards and the number of books sold to prove it. I think maybe even the writing style that *Drop by Drop* is written in works very well for her previous works. **So, for a leap into slightly futuristic, possibly apocalyptic, she didn't do too bad.** The story reads easily, and moves quickly.

However, "didn't do too bad" is not the same as "did good". **While the concept was interesting, the execution was bland.** While there is some effort made to try to explain why certain things are happening in the pattern that they are, it's done in such a laid-back, off-hand style that I could no more muster up the energy to care than I could convince myself to eat cold quinoa. (I hate quinoa.) The time skips could use some demarcation. The characters were either unlikable or completely forgettable. The setting might be quaint, but quaint is not a word I've used positively in recent memory.

However, that is my personal taste, and others may find it to be a breath of fresh air. **I admit I did like the lack of cursing. The way hormones only entered the picture very briefly was nice.** If you are looking for a laid-back read to melt some stress off instead of getting your mind going, this may very well be perfect for you.

James says

Awful. Potentially interesting premise: all the world's plastics start to melt back into a crude oily scunge. But the book itself is the same old end-of-the-world cliché fest, whereby a bunch of thinly drawn cardboard

characters you don't give a damn about plague you with their tedious backstories and bickering, as well as their plot-convenient obliviousness to the obvious, in a small town as everything falls apart. Plus it has clunky neologisms galore, like AllComs which everyone in the real world would just call phones. But they let you control your home's security system from miles away! Oh, you mean like a phone? Boring, badly written, and only the first in a trilogy.

Faith (BookSelf ~ You Are What You Read) says

I received this eARC from Macmillan-Tor/Forge on NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of this book in any way.

I dnf'd this book very early on, unfortunately. It was very promising, but ultimately read like a high concept sci-fi soap opera. When I expected science fiction mystery, I got small town drama. I really couldn't care less about any character or their stupid first world problems. Ultimately, this book was boring, but if you're more into contemporary and want to try something new, this might be your thing.

Jessica Hinton says

This just goes to show how I can be influenced by a short snazzy blurb and a beautiful cover design. This had all the hallmarks of being a book I would love - dystopian, slightly sci-fi, focussing on the impact on a small town.

And this **is** a great idea. We rely on man made substances in nearly everything we do, so if something like this truly happened we would be up the proverbial creek without a paddle (especially if it were made of plastic...)

But...and there's no fancy way to say this... this book is **not** written very well. It's clunky, confusing and full of half baked characters. You would expect in a plot where all the world's plastic is disintegrating, that there would be much more of an 'apocalypse' feel to it. You anticipate that there would be some momentous events as we watch the break down of civilisation before our eyes.

Errrr...nope. Two things sort of happen, and a few people die as a result, but these events are pretty much nothing to do with the dissolution of plastics. And the main characters that we follow in this story just bumble on without any real demonstration of emotion or any hint of having distinct personalities.

Unfortunately all this book will do is encourage your brain to melt out of your ears in the same way the plastics in the story do. Suffice to say I won't be reading the rest in the trilogy.

Thanks to the Publisher and Netgalley for this preview copy in return for an honest review.

Steve DuBois says

Drop by Drop shows the effects on a small town of a global event in which complex hydrocarbons break down into their component molecules, a phenomenon known to the book's characters as "the Change" (capital C, of course, in the tradition of recent dystopian fiction). This is an excellent story concept, variations on which have been executed by SM Stirling, Pat Frank, and others. You could even put certain sections of Stephen King's "The Stand" in the same category.

My main problem with this book is that there seems to be no internal logic to the mechanics of the global catastrophe. At any given time, for reasons unknown, the Change accelerates or decelerates, and affects different plastics or other petroleum-based products. The characters spend a great deal of time sitting in bars and restaurants ruminating as to what might be causing these near-random variations; from the distance afforded to a reader, the answer appears to be "the convenience of the plot." The suggestion that bacteria are involved merely raises the question of what's turning them on and off, or altering their dietary habits. The revelation which concludes the book doubles down on this problem in a major way; rather than wanting to read a sequel, it makes me feel like I'm being jerked around, and like my time would be better spent on other books.

This phenomenon extends to other aspects of the plot as well. Why is a global war imminent? Why does character x fall in love with character y? By and large I can't find persuasive answers to these questions other than "the book needs them to."

The characters are a mixed bag; Tilbury pops, I think, and Bea to a lesser extent, but in general I think I would have preferred fewer characters and deeper revelations of their nature through dialog and events, as opposed to authorial monologuing.

It's well-researched, with an interesting core concept, but ultimately not immersive. If I wanted to explore a world with no rules, in which random things happen to people for no explicable reason, I'd just visit Detroit.

Cathy (cathepsut) says

"In this first book in the Step By Step trilogy, global catastrophe occurs as all plastic mysteriously liquefies. All the small components making many technologies possible—navigation systems, communications, medical equipment—fail."

A great premise with potential for lots of catastrophic scenes and society as we know it breaking down spectacularly. Alas, the apocalypse unfolds very slowly, over a longer period of time and slowly dissolving bits and pieces. Not necessarily a bad thing, albeit lacking suspense.

It is told from the changing view of a group of people all living in the same town. Unfortunately, it is done by showing instead of telling and making the reader live through what happens. By the middle of the book that apocalypse is picking up speed and things get considerably worse—sadly lots of it in the off. That continues to the end of the story—any climactic event, any high point of the story happens in the background and the reader is treated to a bland recap of events. Very unsatisfying.

There is not a lot of world building in general and some things simply aren't explained enough, do not really make sense or the author actually contradicts herself.

On top of that it is a book full of some very unlikeable people. The characters are all very stereotypical and although this is set in the near future, they are all white, middle class, old-fashioned people with dated attitudes. We have a token black couple and another couple with an alternative lifestyle, that shows up maybe twice. The women all have about two brain cells between them. Well, Nell actually develops into an almost likeable and not too stupid person by the end.

Worst of all, this book full of the patriarchal world of the last century was written by a woman. Albeit an over 80 years old one. And that certainly shows in the dated writing with its old-fashioned attitudes.

I did not actively dislike the story, despite my misgivings it was pretty readable. However, it is very unlikely that I will read the rest of this trilogy or pick up something else by the author.

I received this free e-copy from the publisher via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review, thank you!

Amie's Book Reviews says

"Drop by drop, the change came to Sycamore River. Slowly and quietly in the beginning, not enough to cause a ripple on the placid surface of the town. Few people noticed at first. Change can be like that."

This Speculative Fiction novel is a completely unique idea of how change can begin without most people noticing.

This is the first book in the "Step By Step" series which promises to be not only one of a kind, but also one that will challenge the idea that we need technology to survive.

The small town of Sycamore River and its inhabitants will get under your skin and readers will find themselves actually caring about what happens to them.

Set in the not too distant future, Drop By Drop is a unique look at one possible future ... And a scary one at that.

Morgan Llywelyn has an amazing ability to create people who are so realistic they could be your next door neighbors. She also describes the many different ways people react in a crisis. Some step up and others fall apart. Her writing will grab your attention and you will be unable to stop reading... literally. I read the entire book in less than twenty four hours and I was wishing the next book in the series was already available. I predict that DROP BY DROP will be on many Bestseller Lists and I rate it as 5 out of 5 Stars ?????.

Thank you to NETGALLEY for providing me with a free copy of this book.

Betty says

In the small town of Sycamore Falls, strange things are happening. ATM cards, pens, and various other

plastic items have begun to dissolve. Before long, the word is out that "the Change" is affecting plastics worldwide. Initially regarded as a curiosity that would sort itself out, alarm spreads as vital items—phones, computers, tires, engine parts, and even asphalt roads—becomes puddles of ooze. Technology has become useless, and crime is on the rise as unemployment soars. As people speculate on the cause of the Change and governments scramble to find ways to fix the problem, the threat of war is on the horizon.

What I Liked

I loved the concept of this story! Think about it for a moment: how many things do you depend on for normal, everyday life? Did you know plastics are petroleum products? It's a little shocking, how many things are made from petroleum that you may not know about. That's what makes the premise of this book so intriguing—it would have a major impact on everything you can think of, and a whole lot more.

I liked seeing how different characters responded to the catastrophe. Some people responded well, looking to the past for ideas on how to survive this new normal—for example, horse-drawn carts and carriages. Others didn't adjust very well to the Change, and it brought out the worst in them. A group of friends gathered regularly to consider things that might have caused it, as well as ways they could adjust now-obsolete technologies with new, non-plastic materials.

The story ended on one heck of a cliffhanger, and the cause of the Change was never disclosed, but I was fine with that. This *is* the first book of the series, after all, so I knew better than to expect the mystery of the dissolving plastics to be wrapped up in a neat, little bow, with all questions answered.

About that cliffhanger: I already knew I wanted to read book two in this series whenever it comes out. But with such a fantastic cliffhanger, it's going to feel like an eternal wait for the next book!

What I (Sort of) Didn't Like

I don't have any strong dislikes, but there is one thing I wished for, that I'll share in this space.

There were times I wished there were fewer characters involved, so that I could see more from the perspectives of the select few I was most interested in. This story is loaded with characters who each have alternating chapters dedicated to their perceptions. While I liked each character and was interested in their point-of-view, the down side is that there was far less time, overall, to be spent in each of their heads.

Final Thoughts

I found *Drop by Drop* to be a fascinating story, with a unique concept that was very enjoyable to read. It perfectly illustrates how heavily dependent we are on plastics and technologies in every area of our lives, and how lost society would be without all those creature comforts we're so accustomed to having. Llywelyn has created a cast of character that are easy to relate and believable in their reactions to the world being turned upside down—or melting away, as it were.

Fans of speculative fiction will not only be intrigued by the premise of this novel, but will likely find it hard to stop reading once they start.

As for me, I can't wait to read the next book in this series... may it be released *soon*!

I received an advance reading copy of this book courtesy of Tor Books via Netgalley.

The Captain says

Ahoy there me mateys! I received this sci-fi eARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. So here be me honest musings . . .

Well mateys. I have to admit that this was just an okay read. This book takes place in a small town in the U.S. with a varied cast of quirky if somewhat two-dimensional characters. Their problem is that plastics all over the world begin to melt and humanity has to deal with the consequences. No one knows what started "The Change" but the townsfolk love to speculate.

The small town seems to have relatively little problems overall with losing all the plastic. Part of the problem with this book is that the stakes seem so low and the town adapts in surprisingly good fashion. This just seemed unrealistic. In addition, the core group that ye follow is always poorly debating what caused the Change. It got old after a bit.

I did enjoy the character interactions and it was a quick read but in general I felt that the execution of the premise was lackluster. Too many old folk around who can do things like make horse-drawn carriages. Too much focus on townsfolk interpersonal relationships. Not really enough description of the plastic problem and the true impact losing it would have on the world.

A pleasant, if forgettable read but I will certainly not be reading any more of the series. Unfortunate because I liked the concept.

So lastly . . .

Thank you Macmillian-Tor/Forge!

Check out me other reviews at <https://thecaptainsquartersblog.wordpress.com/>

S.J. Higbee says

I enjoyed the fact that we followed the same small band of folks as this disaster unfolds – and the fact that they lived in a small community. I have a fondness for books depicting small-town America... Initially, we quickly jump across a number of folks as plastic starts to dribble, which had me groaning somewhat. I get awfully tired of the apocalyptic convention of jumping into someone's head, only for them to die in unpleasant circumstances due to whatever badness is coming to swallow the world. Thankfully, that wasn't what drove this book, which settles down into something else and I think is a problem, especially for fans of apocalyptic sci fi, as this is small-town USA dealing with disaster – except it often wasn't. It was more about the protagonists getting on with their lives, with the plastic issue sporadically causing a problem.

There is also an issue with narrative time – phones are now called Allcoms, so presumably this is set in a nearish future, which looks very much like right now. And the book was vague about the passing of time, so I couldn't get a real sense of how long the townsfolk were dealing with the problem and there are no dates accompanying chapter headings to help out the reader.

However, I don't want you to go away with the idea this was a trudge – I was able to settle down and enjoy most of the story, thanks to Llewelyn's smooth prose and economical style. I got caught up in the characters' lives and found the pages turning themselves – until it came to that ending... I don't like being bounced at the end of a book, which appears to be winding everything up satisfactorily – only to turn it into a sudden cliff-hanger in the final paragraph. While I understand why it was done, it didn't work. I shouldn't finish a book feeling so irritated, which is a shame because those issues notwithstanding, overall this was an enjoyable read. Recommended for readers who enjoy their disasters on a very human scale. While I obtained an arc of Drop by Drop from the publisher via Netgalley, the opinions I have expressed are unbiased and my own.

7/10

Mark Gardner says

Drop by Drop is an interesting concept: plastics all over the world start to liquefy, and anything depending on plastics stop working. The idea is very much like the TV show, Jericho, and a non-zombie post apocalyptic story is a fresh read, the problem with Drop by Drop is that there is no plot. The story just meanders through a few years without a solid understanding of the flow of time. I think that the entire story spans a few years, maybe as many as four? The time shifts are abrupt, sometimes happening in the middle of a chapter. The vignettes are interesting by themselves, but linked together with no apparent ending to the story, the whole thing is an exercise in futility, but excessive head hopping soils even the interesting vignettes. Often I had to re-read a page or paragraph to figure out whom the section was about. Any time this happens in a book, I'm knocked out of the narrative, and any time the reader is knocked out of the narrative, it's a chance that they'll stop reading. I think that this story would've been better as a series of short stories, or even following a particular character through out the ordeal, perhaps in some sort of repeated chronology to show how different people and couples handle the plastic apocalypse. Very few of the characters are relatable, and although some backstory is filled in, the origins of most of the characters are nebulous at best. One of the biggest sins I feel a writer can commit is a bad ending, and Drop by Drop does just that: nothing is resolved, and a new impending doom is introduced to entice you to purchase book two. It took me five days to grind through a book that's 336 pages, so you can imagine how frustrating it was to end in a cliffhanger. I kept hoping for a payout, but that wasn't the case. Overall, I'd give Drop by Drop three stars.

Kate says

Loved this! Hugely original and not at all what I was expecting. There is a resilience and hope here that is so refreshing. Above all else, this is character driven, and with characters that I was deeply interested in. A favourite book of the year for me. Review to follow shortly on For Winter Nights.

Donna says

Small town folks are appalled when plastic begins to disintegrate and their routines are disturbed.

So every now and then I'm at the library and I decide to take a chance on a book. Apocalypse - love it! That cover is gorgeous! And Morgan Llywelyn - she's been writing a long time so yep, I'll give this a try. I go to GoodReads to list it and - 2.64! Ugh! How can a book be that bad?! But by golly, I've got it so onward.

This is how a book can be that bad. This is the author's first attempt at science fiction. Sometimes, a writer who works in other genre, or in literary fiction, decides to come play in the SF/fantasy dogpile. And frequently, they're so obviously unaware of the tropes/phrases/frequent happenings in the field that they light up like a five-year-old. Oooh - look! Scientific paragraphs for a page to describe my idea of plastics breaking down. Yeah - let's throw some quantum physics gobbledygook on top of the chemistry to make it sound even better!

This particular book (by an author who typically writes historical fiction) also draws in these tropes and mannerisms (or at least I hope it's that the author is used to writing like this rather than that she's still comfortable with this type of mentality). The characters and relationships are jarringly 1950's (or maybe 70's or 80's in a small town). Men call their wives 'Cookie' and 'Muffin' while explaining oh so carefully some fact. There's the alpha male, jack of all trades, master of none, who can get any woman he wants. There's the grumpy bar-goer, the hermit who can make anything, the prim older woman, the bad girl returning to town. Every small town trope character is present. I couldn't keep them apart because they were all so bland. There were several times that I started a paragraph, went "Tricia? Do I care about her?" and then decided to just keep reading rather than flip back and figure out who they were.

Almost all of the action occurred off screen. We'd have our characters talking in the bar, then a sidebar about planes that had crashed. Murders by crazy townfolk - we'll mention it and then cut away. Seriously, if you're writing an apocalyptic book, there should be a sense of fear, and desperation. The author should have thought out how the destruction of plastic would have affected the world in much more detail. She throws in a few instances - ATM cards would melt (horrors!) - but doesn't come close to how screwed up everything would be.

Even the dialogue was stilted and forced. Have you ever, in your life, been chatting in a group and said something like "I'm reading a thought-provoking book on archaeology." Gag. You're reading a great book, or a cool book, or a book that makes you think about things, not a thought-provoking book. (Later that night, I was reading "Reader, Come Home" by Maryanne Wolf, and struggling a bit. It's not an easy book and it was giving me lots of things to stop and think about. And I turned to my cat and said "I am reading a thought-provoking book on archaeology." So at least I now have a brand new, built-in, laugh-inducing thought).

Seriously, this book is pretty bad. I give it two stars because it's easily readable. I kept reading because I kept thinking that all this was building to something. Nope. I'll definitely not be reading the sequel. If you're interested in the apocalyptic 'petroleum products are destroyed' scenario, read "Ill Wind" by Anderson and Beason. Still not great, but way better than this.
