



Games For Couples (Science Traveler Series Book 9) by J. L. Greger

Scientist Sara Almquist is asked to investigate a death of a participant in a clinical trial conducted by a biotechnology company making cultured meat—meat made in a test tube. She learns although the product may sometimes contain toxic components, the competition among biotechnology companies and bickering within the company may be lethal.

This is an example of science in fiction with a realistic description of the biotechnology necessary to make cultured meat.

5 Star Review Headline: The science is real and the mystery is compelling.

Games For Couples by J.L. Greger is book nine in her 'Science Traveler Series'. The Science Traveler Series of mysteries and thrillers can be read in any order, as each one stands-alone.

I think it is important to note Author J. L. Greger is a scientist (biology professor) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison turned novelist.

Games for Couples is masterfully written. Did lethal compounds in a cultured meat product—meat made in a test tube—kill a man in a clinical trial? Or did the toxic competition between biotechnology companies and spite of battling couples cause his death?

Games For Couples opens as Dr. Sara Almquist (the protagonist) is taking a meeting near Albuquerque, New Mexico with Mendel Lopez, the CEO of Miracle Foods and his associate Jim Jackson. The purpose of the meeting is to share Miracle Food prospectus with Dr. Almquist. The primes: "Cultured meat will meet the world's need for high quality protein in an ecologically sound manner. And Miracle Foods has the best cultured meat products."

Let me bring you into the story in CHAPTER 19: Sara in Colorado Springs:

....There wasn't much good to say about my drive from Fort Collins to Colorado Springs. No snow was falling when I began driving a little before noon. By the time I reached the motel in Colorado Springs at three, the windshield wipers could barely keep up with the snow. The drive should have taken a little over little two hours. It took more than three even though I never stopped.

....The last thing I wanted to do when I arrived at the motel was sit, but Bug changed my mind. He quickly tired of plowing through snow that was over his shoulders. Then I decided that plodding through a foot of snow while carrying a squirming dog wasn't fun either.

....I scanned my emails. I read the email Scofield had sent before I left the Fort Collins Police Department:

....Can you decipher anything from these student reports? We expect Pitkin won't cooperate unless you give us something to scare him.

....I expected the attachments to the email to be the internship reports by the two students who had worked at Miracle Foods last summer and Pitkin's report of his work during the fall semester. I was surprised that Scofield had also attached the reports by four other student interns who worked at Miracle Foods during the previous year.

....The answer to her question was no—well, not easily. I'd decided during my drive to extricate myself from my basically unsuccessful consultation with Miracle Foods. That meant ignoring Scofield's email, finishing my report for Mendel Lopez, notifying FDA I had quit as a consultant, and calculating the total bill for my consultation. To be honest, I thought it better to quit the project than to have Mendel fire me, which I guessed was imminent.

....I was surprised when my computer pinged and an email from Mendel Lopez appeared. I braced myself and opened it:

....I want to know who in my employ worked with my competitors to devalue Miracle Foods by ruining the clinical trial. The local police aren't up to the task. I will pay your hourly rate for your work with the police.

....He didn't add a thank you or further explanation.

This novel accurately depicts the production of cultured meat cells in large, closed, sterile vats and the formation of meat-like structures by applying the cultured cells to a biological scaffold. Researchers and scientists hope this method is the future of animal free meat. Unfortunately, many technical problems impacting the production of a meat-like texture at a reasonable cost remain. These products would have the same nutritional and allergenic properties as regular meat, although the fat content would depend on the additives used. For the purpose of this novel, the author uses histamine intolerance as a problem that emerges with this fiction food production source, called Miracle Foods.

I found this novel a fascinating read. I learned a lot about the food industry and the expanding development of animal free protein to reduce carbon footprint. Whether you like a hearty steak or a vegetarian meat patty this novel has something for everyone. There can be corruption in any industry and the mystery behind the science can quickly turn into a criminal investigation.

Interesting fact: Dr. Sara Almquist Japanese Chin dog character is based on the authors pet therapy dog 'Bud'.

I invite you to read 'Games For Couples' and see how Author J.L. Greger uses science and her travel experiences to educate and engage her readers. Her Award-Winning Science Traveler Series include 'The Flu Is Coming', 'Murder...A Way To Lose Weight (A Medical Mystery)', 'Ignore The Pain', 'Malignancy', 'I Saw You In Beirut', 'Riddled With Clues', 'A Pound Of Flesh, Sorta', 'Dirty Holy Water', and 'Games For Couples'. She has two other books titled 'Other People's Mothers (A Collection of Stories)' and 'She Didn't Know Her Place'.

Review by Theodocia McLean (Book Marketing Global Network)

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**WE REVIEWED THIS BOOK AS AN 'UNPUBLISHED' MANUSCRIPT ON JULY 5, 2021.
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