



The Man of the House

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Clyde Carmichael, the novel's homosexual narrator, is a part-time lecturer at a Chautauqua-like non-degree-granting institution, The Learning Place, near Harvard Square. Clyde has drifted from graduate school to graduate school, from field to field, never finishing any coherent program. He shares his digs with Marcus Gladstone who, ten years beyond his doctoral course work, has yet to begin his dissertation despite frequent false starts.

Into their lives come Louise Morris, a novelist, and her twelve-year-old son, the product of a liaison Louise had with Marcus years earlier. Marcus, unaware of Ben's paternity, learns the truth and vows to discuss the matter with Ben. True to form, he puts off the discussion, resolving finally to undertake it only to learn that the Morrises have left town for parts unknown.

Meanwhile, Clyde, rebounding from a gay relationship that spanned nearly three years, wants to build his relationship with his inscrutable, selfish, boorish father, who lives in a basement room in the condominium of his divorced daughter, Agnes. The old man has problems communicating and avoids communication by playing his television at full tilt.

McCauley unfolds a warm, humane tale of how Agnes and her father resolve their own problems, Agnes by falling in love with Clyde's neighbor, the old man by marrying his mistress, Diana. Marcus muddles along, as usual, heading nowhere; Clyde, acknowledging irreconcilable differences with his father, tries to change his life but finds his path blocked, even when a friend arranges for him to have the inside track for a teaching job in a private school. The strongest, most forthright characters in the novel are the two juveniles—Ben and Barbara, Agnes' daughter.

Sources for Further Study

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