



## The Treatment

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Life's "imponderables" and "brute circumstances" are among key words and phrases Jake Singer, novelist Daniel Menaker's maturing hero, applies to the lessons life (and his therapist) have taught him.

Menaker picks up Jake's story in the 1970's. At thirty-two, still burdened by the early loss of his mother and lately estranged from his cardiologist father and one girlfriend after another, the hero regards himself as trapped in mediocrity and futility. For four years he has been a deceptively reluctant client at the mercy of Dr. Ernesto Morales—bearded, Cuban, and cunning—whose prurient interrogations are usually on the mark. Jake's every move and mood must be monitored by Morales.

When Jake strikes up a tryst with a wealthy widow named Allegra, Dr. Morales becomes intrusive to a fault. A complicated subplot rings in Sarah Gibson, a star-crossed woman from the Berkshires—a character whose main function is to be the unwed mother of an infant named Emily whom the widowed Allegra has adopted. In his zeal to demonstrate Jake's often brilliantly expressed sense that in life the unexpected stifles the rational, Menaker relies on dubious ploys. Sarah marries a possessive young lawyer who convinces her she must reclaim Emily. Jake and Allegra unite in frustrating the once-again betrayed Sarah's half-hearted bid. A retrospective finale reveals happy endings for all but the lawyer whose settlement frees Sarah.

That THE TREATMENT does not sink is due to the wondrous Morales, D.M. (doctor of malapropisms). His presence, whether jousting couchside or in his patient's fevered mind, assures pleasurable reading.

## Sources for Further Study

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