



The Spirit of the Place

Samuel Shem

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Notorious for its Rabelaisian comedy, and celebrated for its humanism, Samuel Shem's *The House of God* was hailed as "troubling and hilarious...brutally honest" (*The New York Times*), a "Catch-22 with stethoscopes" (*Cosmopolitan*). Now in his most ambitious novel yet, Shem returns to dissect the complicated relationships between mothers and sons, ghosts and bullies, doctors and patients, the past and the present, and love and death. Settled into a relationship with an Italian yoga instructor and working in Europe, Dr. Orville Rose's peace is shaken by his mother's death.

On his return to Columbia, a Hudson River town of quirky people and "plagued by breakage," he learns that his mother has willed him a large sum of money, her 1981 Chrysler, and her Victorian house in the center of town. There's one odd catch: he must live in her house for one year and thirteen days. As he struggles with his decision—to stay and meet the terms of the will or return to his life in Italy—Orville reconnects with family, reunites with former friends, and comes to terms with old rivals and bitter memories. In the process he'll discover his own history, as well as his mother's, and finally learn what it really means to be a healer, and to be healed.

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