ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Joseph
Albert D. Mason
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Three Stars (out of Five)

> *I've often thought that the main reason Joseph worked was that it gave him the opportunity to show off his wardrobe. It sounds a little bizarre or even silly, but to my surprise, a few other people I've spoken to had independently come to the same conclusion.*

These words, spoken by the unidentified narrator of Albert D. Mason's novel, describe Joseph Abbot very well. Joseph, although obviously intelligent, is indolent, self-indulgent, and addicted to the gratification of his ego. Loving to be admired, he values appearances over substance, and his need for personal comfort and easy routine has led him to create a life that, although it is envied by many, is actually quite dull; he is a man who was born to wealth and, having had no responsibility for its creation, takes little care for its maintenance.

The avuncular narrator draws readers in to a strange tale of a world gone missing and another world gained. Joseph has recently inherited his father's business but finds himself mysteriously transported to a world in which all his wealth, status, and prestige have disappeared, leaving him in need of a job if he is to survive. Strangely, certain aspects of his new life have already been prepared for him—he has a simple apartment in which to live, and a job is offered to him for which he has already interviewed, although he has no memory of having done so. As a result of this strange turn of events, Joseph must now call forth all of his innate abilities and strengths in order to make a place for himself. For the first time in his life, he must earn both his livelihood and a place of respect and love in the hearts of those who know him.

Mason tells his story with a certain amount of wit and grace; he understands the psychology behind Joseph's attitudes and behaviors, as well as the rationalizations that underlie corporate and social class structures and entitlement, and is able to portray them through compelling characterization. Readers develop respect for Joseph's father, Jacob Abbot, who

cared deeply for his workers and for the integrity of his business relationships; they also come to care about Joseph as he struggles with the complexities of his disorienting new life. Other characters are not treated as generously, and remain two-dimensional, allowing the author to reveal more about Joseph's attitudes.

Readers may find the dialogue somewhat stilted and lacking the easy flow of everyday speech. They may also wish for a more satisfying explanation for Joseph's sudden shift to a different world and the manner in which it had been prepared for him, but overall, this retelling of a common theme makes for enjoyable reading.