



Morehead

Jeffrey Hickey

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College student Dave Morehead is a “straight young man living in a gay old city” in Jeffrey Hickey’s candid coming-of-age story. Set in the 1970s and 1980s, *Morehead* follows the education of a twenty-one-year-old man who arrives at San Francisco State University with only one real goal: to seduce women. Dave Morehead’s college experiences challenge this single-mindedness and broaden his perspective immensely.

Hickey presents Dave’s story in the first person but avoids the exclusive use of journal-like musings that would become tedious after a few hundred pages. Instead, he illuminates Dave’s thoughts in a variety of formats that keep the reader engaged and entertained. Class assignments reveal Dave’s friendships and a 1970s culture that revolves around record albums and sound systems. His journal entries include not only self-reflection but also transcripts of intimate conversations that shine light on the other characters.

Some of the vignettes are poignant, illustrating the turbulent times. Dave’s visits to the flamboyant Castro District and his quiet talks with gay men in the early days of the AIDS crisis show his growth as a compassionate person. Other scenes are simply hilarious, such as the “Work in the Eighties” chapters. Here, Hickey drops readers into a day in the life of Dave at work. We find him at a movie concession stand, a car dealership, and in a series of temporary jobs, all of which he handles with varying levels of competence and a constant sense of humor.

The language used by Dave and his compatriots is often crude, with frequent profanities and references to sex. The swearing doesn’t feel gratuitous, however. Instead, it paints a realistic picture of the way guys might talk to each other. Additionally, the frankness allows Dave to ask a lot of questions, and get a lot of answers, about the burgeoning gay culture he finds himself living in.

Hickey provides fertile ground for character growth as Dave gets to know people who are very different from him. Initially naïve about homosexuality, Dave finishes his college years by writing a play about the struggles of the first Gay Games as they fought the US Olympic Committee over the use of the word “Olympic.” The script of the play is included and exhibits Dave’s signature sarcasm and humor.

Previous works by Hickey include multimedia productions like *Bats and Bones*, which combines stories and music; *Wages Creek*, a children’s book; and *The Coach’s Son*, a sports novel. Hickey’s versatility and comfort with diverse formats are revealed in the blend of styles he brings together in *Morehead* to take Dave from boorish freshman to promising young adult.

SHEILA M. TRASK (June 18, 2012)

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