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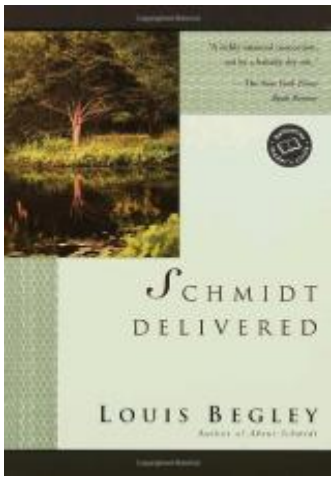
Schmidt Delivered

by Louis Begley



About the Book

Recently widowed, Albert Schmidt has triumphantly rediscovered domestic bliss in the Hamptons with Carrie, the Puerto Rican waitress who is younger than his daughter. Schmidt is content with keeping his own hours and steering his own course, even as he becomes entertained--and increasingly ensnared-- by the odd billionaire Michael Mansour. Among Schmidt's other heartbreaks and delights is the scandal engulfing his detested son-in-law. Where will it all lead? Is Mansour a true friend or just a big cat playing with a WASP mouse? Can May and December remain on the same calendar as the sun sets? Through it all, one thing is clear: Schmidt has found a new life far beyond the deck chair. With the elegance and mordant wit readers have come to expect of him, Louis Begley has created a magnificent story of how virtue may be rewarded.

Discussion Guide

1. Why won't Carrie marry Schmidt? Do you believe she loves him?

2. In the first chapter, Schmidt considers the scene at Sesame, the local grocery store. What does his vision reveal about his neighbors, and about him?

3. What do you make of Schmidt's anxieties preceding Charlotte's arrival? What worries him the most? Why isn't he more pleased that she is turning to him in her difficulties?

4. How do Charlotte and Carrie compare in Schmidt's mind? What is revealed about these two women as individuals in the way they treat each other?

5. What do you make of the way Schmidt is treated by his former law partner?

6. What does Schmidt remember about life with his parents? How does it color his relations with Charlotte?

7. What do you think of the arrangement Schmidt proposes for investing in Charlotte's business venture? Is Charlotte justified to be upset? Is one or the other to blame for letting money come between them? Compare Schmidt's reaction later to Carrie and Jason's business proposal. Is there a double standard at work? If so, why?

8. What kind of man is the billionaire Michael Mansour? Why is he so eager to be Schmidt's friend? What do they have in common? What does each value about the other? Why do you suppose Schmidt takes Mansour into his confidence?

9. Is Carrie guilty of bad behavior when she visits Mansour in New York City? How do you judge her relations with men other than Schmidt?

10. Why does Schmidt draft his letter of bequest? Do you think he is treating Charlotte fairly?

11. Schmidt resists following Mansour's advice about how to handle the conflict with Charlotte. Do you think Mansour's tactics make sense when applied to family relations?

12. How do you understand Renata's motivations in her lunch with Schmidt? What tactics does she employ and how effective are they? Is there a winner in this duel?

13. "Generosity begins and ends with gratifying the giver," the novel tells us. Do you agree? Why does Mansour offer Schmidt the job as head of the Mansour Life Institute? Why does Schmidt hesitate? What does his initial reaction reveal about his view of human nature?

14. For what reasons did Schmidt as an undergraduate try to cheat the shop girl in Cambridge? Why does he now remember that story, and the one about Laverna Daly, whom he recruited and bedded as a young partner? How do these recollections inform his view of his son-in-law's behavior?

15. Do you think Mansour has encouraged Carrie and Jason's relationship? If so, how do you explain his motivations?

16. How does Schmidt react to Charlotte's reconciliation with Jon? How does he react to Jason and Carrie's coming together? What can we learn by comparing his reactions to these two developments? Where do they leave Schmidt?

17. In the last few chapters, what change occurs in the way Schmidt views Carrie? And what corresponding change do you detect in his view of himself? How would you describe the transformation his life undergoes?

18. What was your reaction to Schmidt's final meeting with Charlotte in the novel? How much has been resolved between them? In what ways have this father and daughter each found substitutes for the other?

19. In the conversation with Louis Begley preceding these questions, the author suggests the title may be understood in at least three ways and leaves it to the reader to decide. In what sense do you understand Schmidt to be delivered?

20. How do you imagine the life ahead of Schmidt?

Author Bio

Louis Begley?s novels include KILLER'S CHOICE, KILL AND BE KILLED, MEMORIES OF A MARRIAGE, SCHMIDT STEPS BACK, MATTERS OF HONOR, SHIPWRECK, SCHMIDT DELIVERED, MISTLER'S EXIT, ABOUT SCHMIDT, AS MAX SAW IT, THE MAN WHO WAS LATE, and WARTIME LIES, which won the PEN/Hemingway Award and the Irish Times/Aer Lingus International Fiction Prize. His latest novel, THE NEW LIFE OF HUGO GARDNER, was published in 2020. His work has been translated into 14 languages. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Critical Praise

"A richly nuanced concoction, cut by a lethally dry wit, about the way we live now. "

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