

## **A House of Cranes**

James Walter Lee

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Reviewed by Stephanie Elizabeth Long for Reader Views (02/2024)

5\*- Art, sex, and unrequited love pepper the pages of this absorbing romance.

When eleven-year-old Lucius Cook unexpectedly loses both his parents in an accident, the newly orphaned boy's life changes forever. Kenneth Crane, a wealthy lawyer, graciously takes him in and introduces Lucius to a life of affluence in Hartfield, Connecticut. Despite his grief, the boy quickly becomes accustomed to the Crane family. He gets along well with Beatrice, Mr. Crane's daughter, and is captivated by his stunning wife—Eleanor Crane—who remains a beautiful mystery to Lucius. What begins as an innocent boyhood crush develops into an all-encompassing infatuation, and time only deepens his complex feelings for the much older woman.

In this coming-of-age romance novel, James Walter Lee explores themes of love, family, and identity as a boy struggles to find his place. Burdened with these new intense, but confusing feelings, Lucius has trouble articulating them. Lucius uses art to make sense of his thoughts when he develops a keen eye for photography. He deduces that life is most beautiful behind the lens of his prized Leica. Thrust into a family bursting with secrets and dysfunction; photography provides stability that is lacking in the Crane household.

“A House of Cranes” by James Walter Lee is exceptionally written. I’ve had the pleasure of reading Lee’s work before, and I hold this novel in the same high regard. The writing is immersive and connects the reader with profoundly absorbing characters. Lucius is a shy, peculiar young man who is wise beyond his years but still very much a child. Readers are quickly pulled into his inner thoughts, where he grapples with a deep sense of loss and a void filled by his unwavering obsession with Mrs. Crane. His evolution from a shy boy to an assertive man unfolds at the perfect pace—my interest never wavered.

The Crane family dynamic captured my attention from the get-go. To an outsider, Eleanor and Kenneth’s partnership was picture-perfect. But inside, the foundation of their marriage was cracking due to disloyalty. Mr. Crane was a shameless philanderer, and Mrs. Crane seemed aware of this but enjoyed the control she had over him. In the middle of this dysfunction were Beatrice and Lucius, desperate for love and attention. How would it all pan out? My curiosity had me fervently flipping through the pages!

Beyond character development and family eccentricities, the novel teemed with sensual moments. Lee has a talent for creating variety in amorous scenes and building palpable tension—a longing glance here and a heated touch there; he skillfully teases readers as they anticipate what comes next.

Readers drawn to character-driven romance books will undoubtedly fall in love with “A House of Cranes.” The author has crafted an intricately woven plot that is emotional, sensual, and, at times, achingly poignant—a true literary gem. I cannot wait to read more from James Walter Lee.