



# **The Headmaster's Darlings: A Mountain Brook Novel (Story River Books)**

*Katherine Clark*

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# The Headmaster's Darlings: A Mountain Brook Novel (Story River Books)

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## **The Headmaster's Darlings: A Mountain Brook Novel (Story River Books) Katherine Clark**

The Headmaster's Darlings is a satirical comedy of manners featuring the morbidly obese Norman Laney, an unorthodox, inspirational English teacher and college counselor for an elite private school in Mountain Brook, a privileged community outside of Birmingham. A natural wonder from blue-collar Alabama, Laney has barged into the exclusive world of Mountain Brook on the strength of his sensational figure and its several-hundred-pound commitment to art and culture. His mission is to defeat "the barbarians," introduce true civilization in place of its thin veneer, and change his southern world for the better. Although Laney is adored by his students (his "darlings") and by the society ladies (also his "darlings") who rely on him to be the life of their parties and the leader of their book clubs, there are others who think he is a larger-than-life menace to the comfortable status quo of Mountain Brook society and must be banished.

When Laney is summoned to the principal's office one day in November 1983, he expects to be congratulated for a recent public-relations triumph he engineered on behalf of the school. Instead his letter of resignation is demanded with no explanation given. Faced with an ultimatum and his imminent dismissal, Laney must outflank the principal at his own underhanded game, find out who said what about him and why, and launch his current crop of Alabama students into the wider world--or at least into Ivy League colleges.

In her debut novel, Katherine Clark casts a comical eye on southern society and celebrates the power of great teachers and schools to transform the lives of young people and lift up their communities. Surrounded by a colorful cast of his colleagues, his young protégés and Mountain Brook's upper echelon, Laney emerges as a heroically idiosyncratic character with Falstaffian appetites, an inimitable wit and intellect, and a boundless generosity toward his students that reshapes their lives in profound, unexpected ways.



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