

All Inclusive

Christian Ytteborg

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The rich get their just desserts in this humorous tale of the upper crust.

An all-in-one rich man's exotic hotel attracts entitled malcontents in Christian Ytteborg's humor novel, *All Inclusive*. Ytteborg draws oddball characters from around the world, depositing them in an unnamed nation at a new resort—think surfer-wave generators and dolphin-attraction systems—to indulge their whims, which are primarily focused on lust and gluttony. If any have-not wants to toss stones at the haves, Ytteborg provides ample targets.

The author opens with an elaborate description of the new hotel, something he accomplishes adequately. He sets up its features, its pending grand opening, and its location on the outskirts of a dictator-ruled, oil-rich fiefdom with an oppressed population. The next one-fifth of the book introduces the rich guests scheduled to participate in the grand opening.

None of these characters are sympathetic, and all are caricatures. Among them are the local dictator, Mubasher, with rotating mistresses and an unlimited supply of erectile dysfunction pills, forced by riots to seek refuge at the hotel; Norway property titans Johan and Dagny, he with delusions of athletic grandeur and she his grossly overweight wife who believes she's movie-starlet attractive; and an obese German industrialist, Gunther, and his son, Jurgen-Gunther, whose dining exploits disgust. Others are similar caricatures: a famous soccer player, a renowned singer, a drug kingpin.

The novel lacks a developed plot and suffers from insufficient dramatic tension, in part because there is no protagonist or antagonist. Though the story amply foreshadows how justice will come to these unworthies, no narrative arc goes there. The setting is described fairly well, but its sole interesting distinction is the in-suite artificial intelligence. Ytteborg imagines the luxury suites remaining unnamed until the AI deduces the occupants' names, after which a label in Latin is imposed on the door. The eventual suite names are offered, but the author provides no translations.

There is little conflict in the narrative, other than interior tension between guests, mostly related as delusions and illusions about other guests, or perhaps the actions of the despotic hotel manager, a former trainer, Joselyn Hardfakk, who commits rape. Ytteborg explores the ills of greed and blind self-interest, exemplified first by the guests and then by the chefs participating in an international competition held as part of the hotel's grand opening. The chefs are on national teams, with actions in the kitchen reflecting national and ethnic clichés. Additionally, the novel is troubled by misspellings and minor syntax errors.

For those dismayed by the entitlement and foibles of the rich, Ytteborg offers a satisfying story of reassurance that greedy buffoons will be lured to their doom.

GARY PRESLEY (March 4, 2014)

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