

The Hotel Neversink

Adam O'Fallon Price

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Across the whole of the twentieth century, one glittering and palatial estate looms over the Catskills: the Hotel Neversink, host to presidents and movie stars and the exclusive domain of the immigrant Sikorsky family. Adam O'Fallon Price's *The Hotel Neversink* is a historical microcosm, a family saga, and literary mystery—all elements that work together to engrossing effect.

The story of the Hotel Neversink may technically begin with a high-flying lumber baron, but really it begins on a Polish mountainside, as the Sikorskys, with eldest daughter Jeanie overseeing everything, pack their failing farm in and head for America. They wind up in Liberty, a town nestled in the Catskills, where Asher purchases a sprawling mansion in foreclosure. So the Hotel Neversink is born: the grandest among a grand generation of Catskills resorts, begrudgingly accepted by the locals who never asked for, or wanted, this influx of Jewish neighbors.

And then, in the midst of the hotel's most storied years, a visiting child goes missing.

In the years to come, more children disappear from Liberty, culminating in the near death of a family member and the discovery of a body in the hotel basement. The hotel's fortunes wane, but the Sikorskys press on: one family member develops a mania; one grandson clings hard to Asher's vision; the survivor grapples with their trauma, screaming into literal tornadoes in the process; and Jeanie works to gild a reputation that's always concealed dark secrets. All the while, the killer advances.

In its focus on the personalities that keep the hotel going, Price's novel is riveting and sensitive. Their foibles and fears, dramas and dreams propel the book's pages. Though their Judaism sometimes feels filtered, it dictates their persistence, and it's no minor feat that third-generation Len remains devout in an area that isn't a flourishing Jewish center—at least, not in the hotel's lean years.

As much about a place as it is about a people, *The Hotel Neversink* is worth checking into—so long as you lock your door tight.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July/August 2019)

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