Clarion Review

Christian

The Inn of Ten
Lynmar Brock Jr
CreateSpace
978-1-4819-5065-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

The Inn of Ten is a meditation, in novel form, on the way that sin spreads from person to person and event to event.

"We rejoice for those who keep the commandments. We weep for those who transgress." These are the observations of innkeeper Hooper Forwich, an average man, one could say. Yet, his life and the lives of his nearest and dearest are tied to the Ten Commandments in both positive and negative ways throughout the winding course of this fascinating, gently told morality tale. Lynmar Brock Jr.'s fourth novel, *The Inn of Ten*, will draw his readers in for a closer look, like an intricate tapestry.

Forwich runs the historic George Inn ("it could have been named after King George or George Washington") where, underneath the ordinary exterior, extraordinary issues arise almost daily. When Forwich carelessly wrecks his car, one of the victims of the crash will convince the injured and weakened innkeeper to hire him by an illegal arrangement, thus setting off a chain reaction of infractions of the Ten Commandments.

Forwich engages a hyper-jealous portraitist to paint his wife on canvas even as the artist's lusty Swedish wife is cavorting in the woods around the inn with the avaricious butcher (who is selling Forwich kangaroo meat as low-price beef); Forwich's assistant, the lonely wife of a glib local politician, covets the innkeeper's contentment; the inn's bookkeeper is a brooding gun-toter who hates the pontificating politician. All the separate atoms eventually unite, forming a demonstration of how a small sin can grow, multiply, and ultimately destroy the sinner or simply fill the heart with potent regrets. But the opposite is also revealed: sometimes evil can be a vehicle for good.

The Inn of Ten is a meditation, in novel form, on the way that sin spreads from person to

person and event to event. The author has obviously given the matter much thought, and if readers occasionally feel there is a too-heavy hand turning the wheel of fate, it must be said that the plot has its charms. Punctuation errors, especially the overuse or lack of quotation marks, do stand out, but the grammar is sound and the words flow pleasantly.

The setting is one that is familiar to the novel's creator: Brock is the longtime CEO of a family food business. The greatest strength of the story is the interplay of each character's sinful (or saintly) proclivities; even when the personalities seem a bit contrived, the reader still wants to know what will happen next. There is a nest of snaking subplots that keeps the pages turning toward a resolution.

This is a quiet book, as befits its central character's Quakerism, and it may not jump off the shelves with its subtle approach to the subject matter. But it is a well-plotted and well-intentioned read, worthy of a place in the vacation basket.

Barbara Bamberger Scott