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Hotel Angeline: A Novel In 36 Voices



Synopsis

Thirty-six of the most interesting writers in the Pacific Northwest came together for a week-long marathon of writing live on stage. The result? *Hotel Angeline*, a truly inventive novel that surprises at every turn of the page. Something is amiss at the Hotel Angeline, a rickety former mortuary perched atop Capitol Hill in rain-soaked Seattle. Fourteen-year-old Alexis Austin is fixing the plumbing, the tea, and all the problems of the world, it seems, in her landlady mother's absence. The quirky tenants - a hilarious mix of misfits and rabble-rousers from days gone by - rely on Alexis all the more when they discover a plot to sell the Hotel. Can Alexis save their home? Find her real father? Deal with her surrogate dad's dicey past? Find true love? Perhaps only their feisty pet crow, Habib, truly knows. Provoking interesting questions about the creative process, this novel is by turns funny, scary, witty, suspenseful, beautiful, thrilling, and unexpected.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For six days last October, 36 writers took turns writing a novel, live on stage, during an event organized by the Seattle7Writers called "The Novel: Live!" ~ you can see the list of authors on The Novel: Live! website. Each author had a two hour time slot during which they were to write the next chapter in an evolving novel. Author Jennie Shortridge wrote the first chapter, and Susan Wiggs wrapped it up six days later. In between, authors came and went, adding their layers to the story. At the end of the event, they had a complete novel: *Hotel Angeline: A Novel in 36 Voices*. I had heard about this event back when it took place in October, so when I saw *Hotel Angeline* available for

review on NetGalley, I jumped at the chance to read and review it. I'm so glad I did. While some reviewers have said it seemed rather seamless, I would say the change in author was pretty obvious at the beginning of each chapter. But that was okay. Because that's what made this such a cool book to read! It's a great way to get a taste of 36 different authors' styles, and to see how they built on the details that were written by other authors. As far as the story itself goes, I wasn't as crazy about it, but it was engaging and kept me turning the page. The story is about a teenage girl named Alexis who finds herself with complete responsibility for a residential hotel in Seattle after her mother becomes ill. The characters who live there are outrageous and fun. The situations they get into throughout the novel are suspenseful but quite unrealistic in many cases. However, the storyline does flow well from beginning to end, characters grow and change, mysteries are revealed, and everything is wrapped up well in the end ~ which is quite amazing with all the hands in the pot on this one!

The idea behind *Hotel Angeline*, brainchild of Garth Stein and Jennie Shortridge of Seattle7Writers, is as fascinating as the book promises to be: a cadre of 36 well-known writers gathering in Seattle in October of 2010 to write a complete novel in six days. Before a live audience. Each writer completing one chapter in two hours. How cool is that? As an experiment in literary creation, the book accomplishes three very ambitious goals: first, the rendering of a (mostly) cohesive story and, second, proving that the act of creative writing doesn't always have to be a solitary process carried out in private. The 60,000-word genre-spanning novel is remarkable for its uniqueness and for its display of (raw) talent. The final goal was to raise funds for literary organizations and, indeed, ten thousand dollars was collected to promote literacy. The story follows fourteen year old Alexis, who inherits the thankless job of running a residential hotel in Seattle when her mother falls ill. It's an interesting premise and one ripe with potential. One can imagine the storyline veering unexpectedly into any number of tracts. Unfortunately, it does, sometimes a bit jarringly. I'm not sure if the over-the-top feeling is a result of some unconscious need by the authors to infuse everything they think about the story and its characters into their one chapter (something normally spread out over the course of the entire book, or at least with greater restraint), but it felt a bit excessive at times.

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