

**АРТУР ХЕЙЛИ**

# ОТЕЛЬ

**ARTHUR HAILEY HOTEL**

ЭКСКЛЮЗИВНОЕ ЧТЕНИЕ  
НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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**Arthur Hailey**  
**HOTEL**

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Артур Хейли — один из самых популярных писателей современности.

Романы автора признаны классикой мировой беллетристики. «ОТЕЛЬ» знакомит читателей с миром роскошного отеля в Новом Орлеане. Каждый персонаж романа, будь то горничная или постоялец, полон надежд и амбиций. В этом, казалось бы, ограниченном пространстве произведения происходят самые разные события: там совершаются преступления, у героев зарождаются новые чувства, а их судьбы круто меняются. Устроенный в стенах отеля роскошный вечер «золотой молодежи» никак не предвещал беды...

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# **HOTEL**

**by Arthur Hailey**



# MONDAY EVENING

## 1

If he had a chance, Peter McDermott, the assistant general manager of the St. Gregory Hotel, would have fired the chief house detective long ago. The ex-policeman was again missing when he was needed most.

Christine Francis, who had left her own office a few minutes earlier, glanced at her wrist watch. A few minutes before eleven p.m. "He might be in the bar on Baronne Street."

Peter McDermott nodded. He took out cigarettes and offered them to Christine. She accepted one and McDermott lit it, then did the same for himself. She had been working late and was about to go home when she saw the light under Peter's door.

"W.T. allows Mr. Ogilvie to make his own rules," Christine said.

"You're right. I tried to make an official complaint against him once, but W.T. declined it and warned me not to do it ever again."

She said quietly, "I didn't know that."

“I thought you knew everything.”

And usually she did. As personal assistant to Warren Trent, the owner of New Orleans' largest hotel, Christine knew all inner secrets and its day-to-day affairs.

Christine asked, “What’s wrong?”

“We’ve a complaint from the eleventh floor about a sex orgy; on the ninth the Duchess of Croydon claims her Duke has been insulted by a room-service waiter; somebody is moaning horribly in 1439.”

He spoke into the telephone and Christine went to the office window. She suddenly realized how very tired she was. Looking at the city, she could see into the tight, crowded rectangle of the French Quarter, where lights in front of late night bars, bistros, jazz halls, and strip joints would burn into tomorrow morning.

The rain would be welcome, suddenly thought Christine. For three weeks the city had suffered from heat. This afternoon there had been another complaint about the air conditioning from the chief engineer.

Peter McDermott put down the telephone and she asked, “Do you have a name of the room where the moaning is?”

“Albert Wells, Montreal.”

“I know him,” Christine said. “A nice little man who stays here every year. If you like, I can help you with him.”

He hesitated.

The telephone rang and he answered it. “I’m sorry, sir,” the operator said, “we can’t locate Mr. Ogilvie.”

“Never mind.” Even if McDermott couldn’t fire the chief house detective, he would do some hell raising in the morning. Meanwhile he could send someone else to the eleventh and handle the Duke and Duchess incident himself.

He asked the operator for the bell captain and recognized the nasal voice of Herbie Chandler, one of the St. Gregory’s old-timers. McDermott explained the problem and asked Chandler to investigate the complaint about an alleged sex orgy. “That is not my job, Mr. Mac, and we’re still busy down here.” As McDermott had expected.

McDermott instructed, “I want you to take care of that complaint now. And something else: send a boy with a pass key to meet Miss Francis.” He replaced the phone before there could be any more discussion.

“Let’s go. Take a bellboy with you.” His hand touched Christine’s shoulders lightly.

## 2

Herbie Chandler stood thoughtfully by the bell captain’s desk in the St. Gregory lobby.

The bell captain’s post commanded a view of the lobby’s comings and goings. There was plenty of movement now. Two conventions were to take place in the hotel soon, and the conventioners had been in and out all evening.

Occasional new arrivals were roomed now by bellboys. The “boys” was a figure of speech since none was younger than forty, and several graying veterans had been with the hotel a quarter century or more. Herbie Chandler held the power of hiring and firing his bell staff. He preferred older

men. Someone who had to grunt a bit with heavy luggage was likely to earn bigger tips than a youngster. One old-timer, who actually was as strong as a mule, seldom earned less than a dollar from conscience-stricken guests. What they did not know was that ten per cent of their tip would go to Herbie Chandler's pocket with the two dollars daily from each bellboy as the price of retaining his job.

McDermott had just instructed him to investigate a complaint on the eleventh floor. But Herbie Chandler had no need to investigate because he knew what was happening there. He had arranged it himself.

Three hours earlier two youths, whose fathers were wealthy local citizens and frequent guests of the hotel, came up to him with a request. "Listen, Herbie. We've taken a suite." The first boy flushed. "We want a couple of girls."

It was too risky. Both were little more than boys, and he suspected they had been drinking. He began, "Sorry, gentlemen," when the second youth cut in.

"We can pay, Herbie. You know that. How much?"

The bell captain hesitated, his mind working greedily. Herbie remembered their fathers, and multiplied the standard rate by two. "A hundred dollars."

There was a momentary pause. Then one of the boys, Dixon, said decisively, "You got a deal."

"In advance, gentlemen. And you'll have to make sure there's no noise. If we get complaints, there could be trouble for all of us."

There would be no noise, they had assured him, but now, it seemed, there had been.

An hour ago the girls had come in through the front entrance as usual, with only a few of the hotel's staff aware that they were not registered hotel guests. Both should have left by now. The eleventh floor complaint meant that something had gone seriously wrong. Herbie was now wondering whether he should go upstairs or stay away.

### 3

The St. Gregory's largest and most elaborate suite had housed a number of distinguished guests, including presidents and royalty. The Duke and Duchess of Croydon, plus their secretary, the Duchess's maid, and five terriers occupied the suite now.

Waiting in front of the door, McDermott thought what he had heard about the Croydons.

Within the past decade, and aided by his Duchess — herself a known public figure and cousin of the Queen — the Duke of Croydon had become a successful ambassador for the British government. More recently, however, there had been rumors that the Duke enjoyed a little too much the company of liquor and other men's wives. Though many knew that the Duchess had the situation well in hand. After all, the Duke of Croydon was said to be soon named British Ambassador to Washington.

“Excuse me, Mr. McDermott, can I have a word with you?”

McDermott recognized Sol Natchez, one of the elderly room-service waiters.

“I expect you’ve come about the complaint — the complaint about me.”

McDermott glanced at the double doors to the suite. They had not yet opened, only the dogs were barking. He said, “Tell me what happened.”

Sol swallowed twice, “If I lose this job, Mr. McDermott, it’s hard at my age to find another. The Duke and the Duchess are not the hardest people to serve ... except for tonight. They expect a lot, but I’ve never minded, even though there’s never a tip.”

Peter smiled involuntarily. British nobility seldom tipped, thinking, perhaps, that the privilege of waiting on them was a reward in itself.

“It was about half an hour ago. They’d ordered a late supper, the Duke and Duchess — oysters, champagne, shrimp Creole.”

“What happened?”

“When I was serving the shrimp Creole, well... the Duchess got up from the table. As she came back she jogged my arm. If I didn’t know better I’d have said it was deliberate.”

“That’s ridiculous!”

“I know, sir, I know. After that there was a small spot on the Duke’s trousers.”

Peter said doubtfully, “Is that all this is about?”

“Mr. McDermott, I swear to you that’s all. I apologized, I got a clean napkin and water to get the spot off, but it wouldn’t do. She insisted on sending for Mr. Trent ... ”

“Mr. Trent is not in the hotel.”

He would hear the other side of the story, Peter decided. Meanwhile he instructed, “If you’re all through for tonight you’d better go home.”

As the waiter disappeared, the door was opened by a moon-faced, youngish man with pince-nez. It was the Croydons' secretary.

He introduced himself to the secretary.

The secretary said, "We were expecting Mr. Trent."

"Mr. Trent is away from the hotel for the evening."

"Why can't he be sent for?" the Duchess of Croydon appeared, three of the terriers at her heels. She silenced the dogs and turned her eyes on Peter. He was aware of the handsome face, familiar through a thousand photographs.

"To be perfectly honest, Your Grace, I was not aware that you required Mr. Trent personally."

"Even in Mr. Trent's absence I expected one of the senior executives."

Peter flushed. He had an impression, at this moment, of being on foot while the Duchess was mounted.

"I'm assistant general manager. That's why I came personally."

"Aren't you young for that?"

"Nowadays a good many young men are in hotel management."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-two."

The Duchess smiled. She was five or six years older than himself, he calculated, though younger than the Duke who was in his late forties. Now she asked, "Do you take a course or something?"

"I have a degree from Cornell University — the School of Hotel Administration. Before coming here I was an assistant manager at the Waldorf."

He was tempted to add: from where I was fired and black-listed by the chain hotels, so that I am lucky to be here, in an independent hotel. He would not say it, of course, because a private hell was something you lived with alone.

“The Waldorf would never have tolerated an incident like tonight’s.”

“I assure you, ma’am, the St. Gregory will not tolerate it either.”

The conversation was like a game of tennis. He waited for the ball to come back.

“Your waiter poured shrimp Creole over my husband.”

It was obviously an exaggeration. He wondered what had caused it.

“I’m here to apologize for the hotel.”

“My husband and I decided to enjoy a quiet evening in our suite here, by ourselves. We were out for a short walk, then we returned to supper — and this!”

He was about to leave when the door to the living room opened fully. The Duke of Croydon came in. He was untidily dressed, in a white shirt and the trousers of a tuxedo. Instinctively Peter McDermott’s eyes sought the spot where Natchez had “poured shrimp Creole.” He found it, though it was barely visible.

“Oh, beg pardon.” Then, to the Duchess: “I say, old girl. I must have left my cigarettes in the car.”

“I’ll bring some.” With a nod the Duke turned back into the living room. It was an uncomfortable scene that had for some reason heightened the Duchess’s anger.

Turning to Peter, she snapped, "I insist on a full report and a personal apology."

Still perplexed, Peter left the suite. The bellboy who had accompanied Christine was waiting for him. "Miss Francis wants you in 1439, please, hurry!"

#### 4

When the elevator stopped at the fourteenth floor, Christine thought that if five years ago someone at the University of Wisconsin had asked what twenty-year-old Chris Francis would do a couple of years later, she would have never guessed she would work in a New Orleans hotel.

After the accident in Wisconsin, she had sought a place, where she could be unknown and which was unfamiliar to herself. Familiar things had become an ache of heart. Strangely there were never nightmares after that day at Madison airport.

She had been there to see her family leave for Europe. Her mother, her father, her elder sister, embraced Christine; and even Tony, two years younger and hating public affection, consented to be kissed. They all promised to write, even though she would join them in Paris two weeks later when term ended.

And a few minutes later the big jet took off with a roar. It barely cleared the runway before it fell back, one wing low, becoming a whirling Catherine wheel, for a moment a dust cloud, and then a torch. Finally, it turned into a silent pile of machinery fragments and what was left of human flesh.

It was five years ago. A few weeks after, she left Wisconsin and never returned.

Jimmy Duckworth, the bellboy accompanying her, noticed, "Room 1439 — that's the old gent, Mr. Wells. We moved him from a corner room a couple of days ago."

Down the corridor, a door opened and a man came out. Closing the door behind him, he hesitated, eying Christine with frank interest. Barely perceptibly, the bellboy shook his head. Christine, who missed nothing, supposed she should be flattered to be mistaken for a call girl. Herbie Chandler's list embraced a glamorous membership.

"Why was Mr. Wells's room changed?"

"Somebody else had 1439 and raised a fuss."

Christine remembered 1439 now; there had been complaints before. It was next to the service elevator and served as the meeting place of all the hotel's smokers. The place was noisy and unbearably hot.

"Why was Mr. Wells asked to move?"

"I guess it's because he never complains." Christine's lips tightened angrily as Jimmy Duckworth went on, "They give him that table beside the kitchen door, the one no one else will have. He doesn't seem to mind, they say."

At the realization that a regular guest, who also happened to be a quiet and gentle man, had been so awfully treated, fury rose inside her.

They stopped at the door of 1439. The bellboy knocked. At once there was a response, a moaning.

"Open the door — quickly!" Christine instructed.

The room, as Christine entered, was stiflingly hot, though the air-conditioning regulator was set hopefully to "cool." But then she saw the strug-

gling figure, half upright in the bed. It was the birdlike little man she knew as Albert Wells. His face was ashen gray, his eyes were bulging and his lips were trembling. He was attempting desperately to breathe.

She went quickly to the bedside, "Get the window open. We need air in here."

The bellboy said nervously, "The window's sealed. They did it for the air conditioning."

"Then force it. If you have to, break the glass."

She had already picked up the telephone beside the bed, "This is Miss Francis. Is Dr. Aarons in the hotel?"

"No, Miss Francis; but he left a number."

"It's an emergency. Tell Dr. Aarons room 1439, and to hurry, please. Ask how long he'll take to get here, then call me back."

The elderly man was breathing no better than before. His face was turning blue. The moaning had begun again.

"Mr. Wells," she said, trying to sound confident, "You might breathe more easily if you kept perfectly still." As if in response to Christine's words, the little man's struggles lessened. Christine put an arm around Mr. Wells. She put the pillows behind his back, so that he could lean back, sitting upright at the same time. His eyes were fixed on hers, trying to convey gratitude. "I've sent for a doctor. He'll be here at any moment."

The bellboy had used a coat hanger to break a seal on the window. And now a draft of cool fresh air entered the room. In the bed Albert Wells gasped greedily at the new air. As he did, the telephone rang. Christine answered it.