



Descent from Xanadu

Harold Robbins

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Judd Crane is ruthless, sexually irresistible, the wealthiest man in the world... and determined to conquer man's last frontier--eternal life. He pursues his dream on a dangerous, obsessive journey, from Yugoslavia to China, from his lush island to a secret atomic city in the Brazilian jungle. Crane is willing to spend billions, risk death, outwit foreign agents, lose his entire empire and the woman he loves...until, at the moment of victory, he discovers the most important secret of all.

Descent from Xanadu Details

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Author : Harold Robbins

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From Reader Review Descent from Xanadu for online ebook

Connie says

I didn't get it... .??

Gillian Baker says

Excellent read

Remember reading this when I was young and really enjoyed it and still did this time unable to put down

Laura says

tl;dr review: don't read this for the sex, you'll be bored out of your mind trying to find 'the good bits'. read it because it's funny, and when you're done imagine how it would have been different had it been written by Michael Crichton.

long review:

This is how I imagine Harold Robbins outlined Descent from Xanadu on scrap paper:

book: model on The Andromeda Strain but forget once in a while that you aren't writing erotica for personal use and shoehorn in some male fantasies and drug use.

plot: the quest of one man to live forever via injections/therapy/withholding orgasm and or release of life force(?). mostly science but also some stuff about meditation and indian yogis. the doctor who pioneered the research should be a sweet old lady with very, very tenuous links to nazis and their experiments. it should take place in the decadent(extra decadent!) 1970's and be crammed full of cold-war intrigue. worry about the details later. side story about a shifty asian guy who wants to deal in opium. maybe some spies go down to cuba to sell some secret codes and almost see a donkey show but then someone gets shot?? it should have no bearing on the rest of the story and the opium and asian guy will be forgotten. start the book with lots of humorously dated and misogynistic sex scenes but then have several chapters of dense faux-hard-science with no banging in sight....at some point go new agey and talk about chakras and life force, the main character should sleep under a glass pyramid and have a harem of teenage girls dressed in white. (note: *Howard Hughes fantasy stuff if he wasn't afraid of germs*) that won't last too long. maybe at some point the main character will sneak into Hughes' bedroom and see him in a coma? oh well, back to the spies and mercenaries!

hero: Judd. should be a mix of Bruce Wayne(ultra wealthy, private jets etc, head of a massive corporation his father left him), James Bond(studly, sophisticated but all action, women women women), with a dash of Howard Hughes(growing eccentricities given free reign because of endless wealth). Wants to live forever.

Favorite snack/pastime is a snort of lab-quality cocaine("a toot") chased with a cherry coke. Has this several times a day.

sidekick: small black guy named Fast Eddie who is only referred to by his full nickname("Fast Eddie") and his appearance(black guy). ostensibly a right-hand man but his sole function is to provide drugs and cherry coke to Judd and speculate about random women. he wears a vial of cocaine on a gold chain around his neck. Fast Eddie is "old Roscoe's grandson"...Roscoe was Judd's father's right hand man. This whole relationship and history should embody an amusingly dated and vaguely racist view of white & black. (picture Fast Eddie wearing a red leather jacket; a quiet Eddie Murphy)

main chick: 30 year old woman- Sofia Ivancich. attractive eastern european blank slate. establish early in the book(before page 10) that she "is always wet" and later explain that she has a "psychological" problem she wants to solve: she gets turned on instantly, all the time, the result being multiple orgasms. apparently this male fantasy is unwanted and it opens the door to lots of private jet sex with drugs between her and Judd- also some sexy time with a female stewardess but who knows what lesbians do with each other so it will just get mentioned in passing. she begins as a sex object and possible spy but gets less sexy and more boring and matronly as the book progresses. also, this astoundingly bizarre scene: Sofia needs to be snuck out of a Japanese hospital so they perform cosmetic procedures and apply makeup to make her look like a black woman. a giggling Japanese nurse will recommend buying "ass falsies" at Frederick's of Hollywood because "Black girls' asses have a bigger shelf that makes them move differently." cut to Fast Eddie, who approves. Really.

the last few chapters should gel into a breakneck plot jumble about nuclear facilities and the kidnapping of a character who has only been mentioned twice. also there's the indian yogi guy again and a secret document is *recorded onto a reel* from a supercomputer. it's a race against the clock!

this book is gonna be great.

All in all this was fun and occasionally weird, when I wasn't faintly bored by the pages and pages of business talk/empire building. It's an odd time capsule of 80's beach reading that veers often into action and sex(like older brother The Pirate) and even leads you to think it might dabble with sci-fi..but misfires. Compared to The Pirate, Descent seems cramped and almost sloppy- not written as badly as it seems written hastily. Harold Robbins clearly wrote with zeal and enthusiasm, but I imagine him getting sidetracked by his own fantasies and tiring out after sating them...only to come raring back four chapters later. *Action! Science! Sex! Administrative meetings. Anticlimactic flashbacks. Opulent lifestyle stuff. Drugs! Action! Sex!* and so on.

I feel like I'm coming off as harsh, but it's not exactly a good book. It's a FUN book and I may even read it again in a few years. Can you say that about many recent pulp paperbacks?

Gloria says

UGH.

'becca says

Slow moving, convoluted, and confusing

Reads more like science fiction than a typical Harold Robbins romance novel. Sex and drugs do not a first rate romance novel make. Now I know why I had never read this particular book.

Gary Turner says

Just read it, you will enjoy.

Devilsjourney says

The storyline and characters for this book would have been brilliant, if not for Robbins' terribly cheesy "erotic scenes". He could have expanded upon Judd's search for immortality and taken us across the world. He could have come up with some fascinating science fiction, business/political conspiracies, and shown us more of Judd's character development.

But no. He did not. While all of the above was present to an extent, it was much weaker than it could have been.

The erotic scenes did not help the plot or the characters at all - they were just there. You could completely skip over them and not miss a beat of the main storyline (which was skimpier than it could have been, referring to the points made earlier). But due to the great non-erotic aspects, it's worth at least 2-3 stars. Probably 2, but I'm generous (hence the 3).

Juan Pablo says

A powerful man's search for immortality

Bibliovixen says

A guilty read that's fun...as are all of Harold Robbins' books.

Janna says

Tried to stay with it! Read half way through and just couldn't finish it! Had some very erotic parts, but just did not have much of a storyline for me.

Anthony says

The book was sizzling and very entertaining.. Looking forward to the pirates..

Greg says

embarrassingly trashy fun

Saskia (Smitie) says

Het hele boek viel erg tegen. Er zit een hoop onnodige erotica in, alsof de schrijver in ieder hoofdstuk iets van seks erin moet schrijven om het interessant te houden. Vooral de houding van Judd tegenover vrouwen (een speeltje dat je kan gebruiken wanneer je wilt) is niet meer van deze tijd. De rest is ook erg ongeloofwaardig en eindigt teleurstellend.

christine lopez says

Awsome reading

I love Harold Robbins. He is one of my favorite. Authors. I love his books. They are so well written. I was devastated at his passing many years ago. But I still read his books. And he is still alive to me in his writings.

Agustín Fest says

Este es uno de esos libros que se leen a escondidas. Me lo llevé a un Vips y de repente, encontré que la gente notaba (con distintas y variadas expresiones) en la portada como una modelo ochentera se tapaba los senos con una manita. El sexo abunda, así como los chispazos sardónicos que se avienta el personaje u otros que están alrededor de él.

Judd Crane es un billonario que gasta toda su lana en buscar la inmortalidad. Maneja sus negocios (que son tan variados como sea lo que necesite en el momento) desde un avión personal (cierta reminiscencia a Cosmopolis de Don DeLillo, donde el yuppie maneja todo desde su limosina. Siempre en movimiento.)

Los personajes no dejan de meterse cocaína para volverse una especie de súper hombres: más rápidos, más atentos, más precisos, más aguantadores y con más ganas de coger. Judd Crane suele tomar coca cola con tantito polvo porque, bueno, según esto estaba tratando de tomar coca cola como en la fórmula original.

El primer libro es un festival de excesos. El segundo libro transcurre tres años después y Judd Crane me dio la impresión que se transformaba en una especie de Steve Jobs. Su búsqueda se transforma en un culto, sus oficinas se vuelven minimalistas, blancas y más limpias. La transformación -con todo y lo chafón que el libro pueda ser o... deba ser en apariencia-, del personaje me pareció muy interesante.

Sólo que los demás personajes que orbitan alrededor de Crane funcionan simplemente como circunstancias.

Al final, podemos decir que este libro es un placer culposo. Algo para entretenerte un par de horas o unos días.
