

### *Front Desk* Book Review by Leah

*Front Desk* is a fiction book written by Kelly Yang and published in 2017. The book is not too long, with a total of 304 pages. Mia Yang, a ten year old girl, has just arrived from China as an immigrant. Mia's parents are forced to take lowly jobs that do not pay much, which leads to Mia and her family never being able to rise above the poverty line. For the first year they are in America, they are forced to live in their car.

When they receive a job offer to be the managers of a motel a few miles away from Disneyland, Mia and her family immediately accept the offer. However, the runner of the motel, Mr. Yao is immediately seen to be a rude, controlling man.

Mia is also starting at a new school, and she learns that Mr. Yao's son, Jason, is also in her class on the first day. Mia and Jason are the only Asian kids, and Mia wonders how this will affect her school life. At recess, Mia meets a girl named Lupe, and they instantly connect and become friends. Mia begins to tell Lupe about the motel and Jason, and Lupe surprises Mia by saying she has never liked Jason, either.

Back at the motel, Mia learns how to manage the front desk. Mr. Yao warns Mia that she can not press the buzzer that let's customers into the motel if someone looks strange or dangerous. One day, Mia is working at the motel, when she instinctively presses the button without even thinking about it. As Mia looks up to greet the customer, she notices that the customer seems to be a bit out of it - until Mia realizes that this man is drunk. The man demands a room, without paying, and Mia is scared. However, one of the customers from the hotel, Hank, runs out of his room at the sound of the commotion and chases the drunk man away.

Mia is aware of the fact that her family is poor, and she will do anything to help get her family out of poverty. One day, Mia is at school when the librarian mentions an essay contest to

win a motel in Virginia. Mia quickly does some research, and sees that if she wins this contest, her family would finally be able to not be poor! However, the contest costs \$300 to enter, and Mia and her parents do not have that kind of money.

The book continues with racism, poverty, and plot twists in order to reveal if Mia will win the motel in Virginia or not. Mia and her family will learn that they are not alone in America, and they have many people supporting and willing to help them achieve their dreams.

One thing I appreciated about the book was that Mia always had unwavering determination and wanted to overcome any obstacles in her way. The book had so many different important messages, and could be an inspiration to many. I would recommend this book to those 10+ because it's pretty easy to understand and the vocabulary level is not too high. I loved how even though things didn't turn out in the end as I expected, the book still had an amazing and thoughtful ending.

This book is the first in a series with 6 books. I plan to read the next book in the series, *Three Keys*, because this one was such an interesting read, and I really want to know what happens next in Mia's life. This first book had many challenges for Mia to overcome, and I'm sure the next few will as well. Overall, *Front Desk* is a great book!