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Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel

By Herman Koch



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The blistering, compulsively readable new novel from Herman Koch, author of the instant *New York Times* bestseller *The Dinner*.

When a medical procedure goes horribly wrong and famous actor Ralph Meier winds up dead, Dr. Marc Schlosser needs to come up with some answers. After all, reputation is everything in this business. Personally, he's not exactly upset that Ralph is gone, but as a high profile doctor to the stars, Marc can't hide from the truth forever.

It all started the previous summer. Marc, his wife, and their two beautiful teenage daughters agreed to spend a week at the Meier's extravagant summer home on the Mediterranean. Joined by Ralph and his striking wife Judith, her mother, and film director Stanley Forbes and his much younger girlfriend, the large group settles in for days of sunshine, wine tasting, and trips to the beach. But when a violent incident disrupts the idyll, darker motivations are revealed, and suddenly no one can be trusted. As the ultimate holiday soon turns into a nightmare, the circumstances surrounding Ralph's later death begin to reveal the disturbing reality behind that summer's tragedy.

Featuring the razor-sharp humor and acute psychological insight that made *The Dinner* an international phenomenon, *Summer House with Swimming Pool* is a controversial, thought-provoking novel that showcases Herman Koch at his finest.



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Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel By Herman Koch Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Exclusive Q&A with Author Herman Koch

Q. Could you explain some of the inspiration for *Summer House with Swimming Pool*?

A. At first I thought about the idea of a ‘passive’ murder. In a novel, if a character wants to kill someone, they have to think about weapons and there’s a certain amount of planning. A doctor, however—particularly an ambivalent one like Marc Schlosser—could murder someone simply by medical error. I found this real-life possibility intriguing.

Q. Like *The Dinner*, *Summer House with Swimming Pool* calls upon a parent’s natural instinct to protect their children, both from external forces and from themselves. How does this theme speak to you as a writer?

A. Being a parent myself I found that this instinct to protect is stronger than anything else. In writing the two books I was curious as to how far my characters were prepared to go. Marc Schlosser in *Summer House* is only thinking in the interest of his daughters and yet, as readers we might ask ourselves if he is going too far.

Q. Your characters aren’t always as honest with each other as they are with the reader. Do you think humans inherently struggle to tell the truth?

A. I think we all try to function in a certain role. We are interested in what other people think about us, and most of the time we try to have control over the outside image we are trying to present. What we really think, and what—in a novel—I feel free to tell a reader, is a different story altogether.

Q. *The Dinner* takes place over a few hours—and courses—in a chic restaurant. The action of *Summer House* sprawls across a summer and is set in several locations including Amsterdam, a beach along the Mediterranean, and finally, the United States. How much of a role did setting play in *Summer House*?

A. Though it might not end up as a specific description in my books, I’m always thinking of a concrete setting, a place I know very well—I have to know exactly in which summerhouse we are staying and what the swimming pool looks like and how far it is from the house. Also where the nearest beach is, where characters would go to do their shopping, etc. The exact place is less important. Some European readers of *Summer House* think it’s set in the south of France, while others place the story in Italy or northern Spain. I know where it is: I’ve been there myself.

Q. Which of your characters do you think is the most relatable, if any?

A. I always try to feel sympathy for all of my characters, even if they do terrible things. If not, they become two-dimensional monsters. I want them to be real-life people, although we might condemn what they do, we should at least be able to understand why they do it under the circumstances.

Q. How did your background as an actor inform the way you wrote Ralph Meier?

A. Well, I have met actors like Ralph Meier. I drank beer with them at the bar and listened to their stories.

And I thought: *one day you will end up in a book of mine.*

Q. What's next for you?

A. My next novel, *Dear Mr. M*, just came out here in The Netherlands the first week of May. It's about a formerly-bestselling writer, M, who is now very old and almost forgotten. Forty years ago he wrote a successful novel loosely based on facts, in which a school teacher disappears forever. Two schoolchildren were accused of having had a hand in this, but there was no proof. Now, at the end of his career, the disappearance case returns to haunt him.

From [Booklist](#)

Just as he did in his bestseller, *The Dinner* (2013), Dutch novelist Koch tells a sinister tale through the eyes of a questionable narrator. Marc Schlosser is a physician whose reputation as a concerned and thoughtful listener has brought him high-end clientele. One patient is Ralph Meier, an imposing theater actor suffering from terminal cancer. Marc assists him in his suicide in the opening pages and then looks back to share the events leading up to Ralph's death, beginning when Marc and his wife, Carolyn, attend a performance of Ralph's. The actor and his wife, Judith, invite Marc, Carolyn, and their two daughters to spend some time at their summer house with them and their sons. Though Carolyn is put off by the way Ralph looks at her, Marc's attraction to Judith ultimately leads to the Schlossers accepting the Meiers' offer. The decision has devastating repercussions for both families. It's a slow burn, but Koch's deft and nuanced exploration of gender, guilt, and vengeance make his second novel to be translated into English an absorbing read. -- Kristine Huntley

Review

***New York Times* Bestseller**

***A Publishers Weekly* Best Book of 2014**

"This is a novel of ideas (Have fun, book clubs)...[Koch] makes Nietzsche sound like Dale Carnegie."—**Janet Maslin, *New York Times***

"Caustic...Poisonous ... I couldn't stop reading this... Chapter by chapter, it is shockingly cynical and infected with a strain of humor so toxic that it should come with a bottle of Purell....Ghoulishly fascinating."—**Ron Charles, *Washington Post***

"The opening pages grab us with a mordant view of socialized medicine and a chilled insight into the anxieties of the flesh... Disturbingly good...Psychologically rich...Deftly paced...Compelling."—**USA Today**

"*Summer House With Swimming Pool* is a gripping read, an assault of unexpected twists and thumbscrew-turning tension."—**Entertainment Weekly**

"Sick, twisted—and more important—highly entertaining... Balmy temperatures and sunny skies won't stop the chill that runs up and down your spine as the story unfolds...A modern-day Agatha Christie... [This] could be the most talked-about book of the summer."—**Chicago Tribune**

"Bound to satisfy fans of *The Dinner*...A new psychological thriller about nasty people on an opulent vacation."—**Boston Globe**

"Twisty, thrilling."—**New York Post**

"There are all kinds of scary novels, and this one, out of the Netherlands, Herman Koch's "Summer House With Swimming Pool," is perhaps the most unsettling sort. It's devilish... You'll be hooked."—***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***

"Gripping... Koch uses language like a stethoscope, so that we can hear the beating hearts of his characters and their visceral feelings of envy, love, fear and hatred... The novel anatomises our most unsavoury impulses with scalpel-like prose... For fans of thrillers such as *Gone Girl*, this should be the summer's essential reading."—***The Guardian***

"This book is horribly thrilling, and utterly entertaining. There is a manic clarity and gleefulness to its writing... Take this book to the beach, you'll be gripped and chilled."—***The Independent***

"In Koch's equally devious follow-up to *The Dinner*, civilization is once again only a thin cover-up for man's baser instincts... Make no mistake: very few real-world events will distract readers from finishing this addictive book in one or two sittings."—***Publishers Weekly* (starred review)**

"[In *The Dinner*,] Koch's wry wit and sardonic approach to marriage and children transformed a grisly act of violence into fodder for parental and ethical contemplation. Here, he once again probes the limits of parental protection... [and] continues to illuminate ways in which our Freudian unconscious takes dreadful revenge on the ego."—***Library Journal* (starred review)**

"Just as he did in his bestseller, *The Dinner* (2013), Dutch novelist Koch tells a sinister tale through the eyes of a questionable narrator... Koch's deft and nuanced exploration of gender, guilt, and vengeance make his second novel to be translated into English an absorbing read."—***Booklist***

"In this disquieting novel from Koch (*The Dinner*, 2013, etc.), sex, celebrity and medical ethics become inextricably tangled as a summer idyll goes nightmarishly wrong... A sly psychological thriller lurks within this pitch-dark comedy of manners."—***Kirkus***

"Herman Koch (*The Dinner*) dishes up another rich stew of language, character and cynicism... [with] a summer vacation mystery."—***Shelf Awareness***

Praise for Herman Koch's *The Dinner*

"A European *Gone Girl*... *The Dinner*, a sly psychological thriller that hinges on a horrific crime and its consequences for two families, has become one of spring's most anticipated suspense novels." —***The Wall Street Journal***

"Poised to shake up American publishing... Koch tells a story that could very well take away your appetite." —***USA Today.com***

"[Koch] has created a clever, dark confection... absorbing and highly readable." —***New York Times Book Review***

"[A] deliciously Mr. Ripley-esque drama." —***O, The Oprah Magazine***

"You'll eat it up, with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." —***Entertainment Weekly***

"Koch's ability to toy with the reader's alliances while using one family's distress to consider greater

societal ills gives the novel a vital punch.” —**Daily Beast**

“A tart main course that explores how quickly the facade of civility can crumble. It's hard to digest at times, but with a thought-provoking taste that lingers.” —**Cleveland Plain Dealer**

“The novel has been called the *Gone Girl* of the Continent, and not without cause: Like Gillian Flynn’s bestseller, it’s a tale told by an unreliable narrator, full of twists and skillfully executed revelations, ultimately registering as a black parable about the deceptively civilized surface of cosmopolitan, middle-class lives...What Koch achieves with his prose—plain but undergirded by breathtaking angles, like a beautiful face scrubbed free of makeup — is a brilliantly engineered and (for the thoughtful reader) chastening mindfuck. The novel is designed to make you think twice, then thrice, not only about what goes on within its pages, but also the next time indignation rises up, pure and fiery, in your own heart.”

—**Salon.com**

“Briskly paced and full of ingenious twists—a compulsive read...for those who can tolerate the unsavory company, *The Dinner* is a treat they’ll gulp down in one sitting.” —**Dallas Morning News**

“*The Dinner* begins with drinks and dark satire, and goes stealthily and hauntingly from there. It's chilling, nasty, smart, shocking and unputdownable. Read the novel in one big gulp, and then make plans with friends—you’ll be desperate to debate this book over cocktails, appetizers, entrees, dessert...and then you still won't be done talking about it.” – **Gillian Flynn**, author of *Gone Girl*

“Funny, provocative and exceedingly dark, this is a brilliantly addictive novel that wraps its hands around your throat on page one and doesn’t let go.” – **SJ Watson**, author of *Before I Go to Sleep*

“Herman Koch has written a sneakily disturbing novel. He lures us into his story with his unfailingly reasonable tone (just acidic enough to be entertaining), and before we know it we've found ourselves in places we never would've consented to go. *The Dinner* is a smart, amiably misanthropic book, and it's tremendous fun to read.” – **Scott Smith**, author of *The Ruins*

“*The Dinner* is a riveting, compelling and a deliciously uncomfortable read. Like all great satire it is both lacerating and so very funny... Intelligent and complex, this novel is both a punch to the guts and also a tonic. It clears the air. A wonderful book.” – **Christos Tsiolkas**, author of *The Slap*

“What a tremendous book. I loved every single gripping and strange thing about it.” – **MJ Hyland**, author of *Carry Me Down*

“By the end of *The Dinner* you'll have to rethink everything, including who you are and what you believe. This is a book you won't forget.” – **David Vann**, author of *Dirt*

“Mesmerizing and disturbing... fast-paced and addictive...*The Dinner*, already a bestseller in Europe, is sure to find an enthusiastic American readership as well.” – **Book Page**

“This chilling novel starts out as a witty look at contemporary manners...before turning into a take-no-prisoners psychological thriller...With dark humor, Koch dramatizes the lengths to which people will go to preserve a comfortable way of life...this is a cunningly crafted thriller that will never allow you to look at a serviette in the same way again.” – **Publishers Weekly (starred review)**

“A high-class meal provides an unlikely window into privilege, violence and madness...Koch’s slow

revelation of the central crisis is expertly paced, and he's opened up a serious question of what parents owe their children, and how much of their character is passed on to them...a chilling vision of the ugliness of keeping up appearances." - *Kirkus*

International Praise for *The Dinner*

"The perfect undemanding, credible, terrifying beach read." —*Financial Times*

"[*The Dinner*] proves how powerful fiction can be in illuminating the modern world...The reader does not rise from his table happy and replete so much as stand up suddenly, pale and reeling. Bored with *Fifty Shades of Grey* and all that brouhaha? Read *The Dinner*—and taste the shock." – *The Economist*

"I'm confidently predicting that *The Dinner* will become this summer's literary talk of the town—and the Twittersphere—here in the UK, as it already is in Continental Europe, where the novel has sold more than a million copies. Order yours now." —*Evening Standard*

"Shivers kept shooting up my backbone as I became engrossed in Koch's darkly disturbing tale of family life. . .As the dinner disintegrates into mayhem, we discover just how far the middle classes will go to protect their monstrous offspring." —*Daily Mail*

"Rather like *The Slap* it is set to become a contentious must-read. It may thrill, chill or cheat, but it is undeniably riveting." —*The Independent*

"This tense and thought-provoking family drama is set to become a major literary talking point as it asks the question: Just how far would you go to protect your family?" —*The Bookseller*

"Hugely accomplished and surprisingly subtle." —*Readers Digest (UK)*

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donald Mobley:

This Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel book is simply not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is definitely information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. This kind of Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel without we know teach the one who examining it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't always be worry Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel can bring when you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel having great arrangement in word along with layout, so you will not really feel uninterested in reading.

Philip Newman:

This book untitled Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel to be one of several books this best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this e-book you can get a lot of benefit on it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book shop or you can order it by means of online. The publisher of the book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, as you can read this book in your Mobile phone. So there is no reason to you personally to past this guide from your list.

Lori Whitten:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always aim to and must have the spare time or they will get large amount of stress from both everyday life and work. So , when we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not just a robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer will unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading guides. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel.

Sherrie Beardsley:

Are you kind of busy person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your day to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill perhaps analytical thinking? Then you are receiving problem with the book in comparison with can satisfy your small amount of time to read it because all of this time you only find guide that need more time to be study. Summer House with Swimming Pool: A Novel can be your answer because it can be read by you who have those short extra time problems.

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