



# Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Hustles, and So-Called Hospitality

By Jacob Tomskey

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**In the tradition of *Kitchen Confidential* and *Waiter Rant*, a rollicking, eye-opening, fantastically indiscreet memoir of a life spent (and misspent) in the hotel industry.**

Jacob Tomskey never *intended* to go into the hotel business. As a new college graduate, armed only with a philosophy degree and a singular lack of career direction, he became a valet parker for a large luxury hotel in New Orleans. Yet, rising fast through the ranks, he ended up working in “hospitality” for more than a decade, doing everything from supervising the housekeeping department to manning the front desk at an upscale Manhattan hotel. He’s checked you in, checked you out, separated your white panties from the white bed sheets, parked your car, tasted your room-service meals, cleaned your toilet, denied you a late checkout, given you a wake-up call, eaten M&Ms out of your minibar, laughed at your jokes, and taken your money. In *Heads in Beds* he pulls back the curtain to expose the crazy and compelling reality of a multi-billion-dollar industry we *think* we know.

*Heads in Beds* is a funny, authentic, and irreverent chronicle of the highs and lows of hotel life, told by a keenly observant insider who’s seen it all. Prepare to be amused, shocked, and amazed as he spills the unwritten code of the bellhops, the antics that go on in the valet parking garage, the housekeeping department’s dirty little secrets—not to mention the shameless activities of the guests, who are rarely on their best behavior. Prepare to be moved, too, by his candor about what it’s like to toil in a highly demanding service industry at the luxury level, where people expect to get what they pay for (and often a whole lot more). Employees are poorly paid and frequently abused by coworkers and guests alike, and maintaining a semblance of sanity is a daily challenge.

Along his journey Tomskey also reveals the secrets of the industry, offering easy ways to get what you need from your hotel without any hassle. This book (and a timely proffered twenty-dollar bill) will help you score late checkouts and upgrades, get free stuff galore, and make that pay-per-view charge magically disappear. Thanks to him you’ll know how to get the very best service from any

business that makes its money from putting heads in beds. Or, at the very least, you will keep the bellmen from taking your luggage into the camera-free back office and bashing it against the wall repeatedly.

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### Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best Books of the Month, November 2012:** Always tip. If you can't tip, be nice. And if you can't manage either, you might be better off unwrapping a new toothbrush every day. That's just one lesson to be learned from Jacob Tomsky's gonzo account of his years as a front-desk clerk at hotels in New Orleans and New York. From the glad-handing doormen to the unsung workers in the "back of the house," Tomsky exposes the machinery and machinations that make luxury hotels run (if not always smoothly), advising his potential guests about whose palms to grease (and how much) in order to get that coveted park-view upgrade. Informative and mildly salacious, *Heads in Beds* is an entertaining peek inside the places people go to get away, and the stunts they pull when they get there. --Jon Foro

### Amazon Exclusive: An Essay by Jacob Tomsky

When I started working in hotels the computer screens glowed in one color, alien green, and the monitors were the size of boulders. We used to confidently toss comment cards in the trash (or, as we referred to it, file them in the "T" file) making them disappear forever. I used to cash checks by picking up the phone and speaking to another human being. Music in the lobby was usually provided by a piano player, who would swivel his head at passing guests with a ridiculous, pasty-looking smile as he tapped out non-offensive cover songs played with a non-offensive classical flourish.

Now, mid-volume, beat-heavy techno seeps from recessed speakers built into the lobby's crown molding. The screens are flat. You can't manage to direct anything from Trip Advisor into the "T" file and all the guests want to hook up their iPad to the toilet or whatever. And if you pay with a check I still have to pick up the phone, which is extremely irritating because who pays with checks anymore? Stop it.

But all of that change means nothing. Because I'll tell you what hasn't changed: The front desk agents, the bellmen, the doormen, the housekeepers, the room service attendants, and the managers. Hotel employees are still version 1.0 and I guarantee if you brought me to a bar and sat me next to a front desk agent from 1897, we'd over-drink and swap the same type of hilarious stories about the same type of insane guests. Hospitality, no matter how slick it gets, will always be a business run by people who serve people. It will always be about service. It will always take a person to explain that, no, you cannot hook up your iPad to the toilet but you *can* use it to control the lights and wirelessly play music through the in-room speaker system. And guests still, and hopefully will forever, hand me physical comment cards, which I will continue to throw in the trash.

During all these renovations (while I said things like, "Wait, they made the internet *wireless*? It's in the goddamn *air* now?") I was always writing. I grew up reading novel after novel and that's all I wanted from life, to give back and write something good. After years of hotel work and relocations that took me from New Orleans to Paris to Copenhagen and ultimately New York City, I finally conceived the idea for *Heads in Beds*. I put everything I had into it, all my knowledge of the industry and the writing skills I'd developed since I was a child. I truly hope you find it funny and informative and that it helps you navigate the crooked halls of hospitality. That has always been my goal, to write something good.

That and hang out with a front desk agent from 1897.

From [Booklist](#)

Comparisons to Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential* (2000) are inevitable but not entirely accurate. Yes, both Tomskey and Bourdain purport to expose the underbelly of service industries with which most readers are familiar, hotels and restaurants. But where Bourdain is all rock 'n' roll, egotistical bluster, Tomskey is surprisingly earnest and sympathetic; there are, after all, no television programs called *Top Desk Clerk*. He wants your respect, not your adulation. Sure, he tosses off a few requisite f-bombs, instructs readers on how to steal from hotel minibars, and name-drops Brian Wilson, of the Beach Boys, more so because he seems to feel the genre demands it. Indeed, it would be easy to pen a book about crazy hotel guests. But this memoir succeeds, instead, in humanizing the people who park our cars, clean our hotel rooms, and carry our luggage. You will never not tip housekeeping or your bellhop again. Tomskey fell into hotel work and proved to be rather good at it; the same can be said for his writing. --Patty Wetli

Review

Praise for *Heads in Beds*:

"*Heads in Beds* is Mr. Tomskey's highly amusing guidebook to the dirty little secrets of the hospitality trade. But it is neither a meanspirited book nor a one-sided one.... [H]e winds up sounding like an essentially honest, decent guy. And his observations about character are keen, perhaps because he's seen it all.... If this were simply a travel book of the news-you-can-use ilk, it would be of only minor interest. But Mr. Tomskey turns out to be an effervescent writer, with enough snark to make his stories sharp-edged but without the self-promoting smugness that sinks so many memoirs.... *Heads in Beds* embraces the full, novelistic breadth of hotel experience.... [Tomskey] is no longer a hotel employee and now, with good reason, thinks of himself as a writer."

—**Janet Maslin**, *New York Times*

"For those of us who'd rather live in good hotels than in our own homes, oh Lordy, is this ever a horrifyingly good time. It's the sort of equivalent of WebMD for hypochondriacs: You know you're learning way more than is good for you, but you just can't stop reading. Tomskey, who may be an even better writer than a hotelier (and he's a damn good hotelier) has worked every job and every shift; he takes us into the bowels (sometimes literally) of the hotel business, with all the pomp and circumstance, the hidden filth, and the fears and aspirations and secrets of guests and staff alike."—**Judith Newman**, *People* (4 Stars)

"For the uninitiated, staying at a luxury hotel can be a little intimidating.... [But] front desk raconteur Jacob Tomskey is here to help. His sharp-witted, candid new book, *Heads in Beds*, demystifies the world of high-end hospitality.... Coarse, smart and wickedly funny, the author delivers hilarious caricatures of the hotel guests and colleagues he has encountered over the years.... Tightly written and laced with delicious insider tips."—**John Wilwol**, *Washington Post*

"A wonderfully indiscreet veteran of the hospitality industry, Jacob Tomskey knows his way around a hotel."—**PARADE**

"Room upgrades. Free movies. Late checkouts. Jacob Tomskey promises readers the keys to the hotel industry kingdom in his tell-all book, *Heads in Beds*. The one-time philosophy major has spent more than a decade

working in the industry and, like room service, he delivers the goods.... Beyond tips, Tomsy has packed his book with outrageous anecdotes about guests...[and] the hotel staff too.... Tomsy has only worked at hotels in New Orleans and New York, so readers may wonder if his tips will work anywhere else. Maybe they will, maybe they won't. But his stories are so good, it almost doesn't matter."—**Jessica Gresko, *Associated Press***

"Jacob Tomsy is a star. The kid writes like a dream. *Heads in Beds* is hilarious, literate, canny, indignant and kind—revealing an author who manages somehow to be both a total hustler and a complete humanitarian. I love this book. Keep an eye on this writer. I'm telling you, he's a star."

—Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia*

"And I thought I had it bad when I worked in restaurants! *Heads in Beds* is a hilarious, informative, and naughty peek at what really happens behind the glitz and glamour of the hotel experience. Not content with dispensing advice on how to get a better room or avoiding the vengeful wrath of bellhops, maids, doormen, and front-desk clerks, Tomsy also spins a touching yarn on how he kept his dignity and humanity intact while dealing with insufferable guests, Expedia wannabes, predatory hotel managers, conniving coworkers, and the occasional pervert. After reading this book, you'll become either a better-educated hotel guest who constantly receives great service—or realize why you always get that noisy room by the elevator shaft. As a survivor of America's dysfunctional hospitality industry, I highly recommend this book."

—**Steve Dublanica, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Waiter Rant***

"In pulling the musty curtains back on the seedy hotel business, *Heads in Beds* provides first-rate insights for all grades of travelers. But the real revelation here is Jacob Tomsy, whose writing combines presidential suite talent with rack-rate, smoking-room, vending-machine-down-the-hall edge."

—**Chuck Thompson, author of *Smile When You're Lying: Confessions of a Rogue Travel Writer***

"Readable and often engaging.... [W]hen the author is passionate about his career and is able to express his passion on the page, it can be a joy to read... hilarious."—**Kirkus Reviews**

"Comparisons to Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential* (2000) are inevitable.... [B]oth Tomsy and Bourdain purport to expose the underbelly of service industries with which most readers are familiar, hotels and restaurants. But where Bourdain is all rock 'n' roll, egotistical bluster, Tomsy is surprisingly earnest and sympathetic; there are, after all, no television programs called *Top Desk Clerk*. He wants your respect, not your adulation.... Indeed, it would be easy to pen a book about crazy hotel guests. But this memoir succeeds, instead, in humanizing the people who park our cars, clean our hotel rooms, and carry our luggage. You will never not tip housekeeping or your bellhop again. Tomsy fell into hotel work and proved to be rather good at it; the same can be said for his writing."—**Booklist**

"Those who want a hotel up-grade, who must make a same-day room cancellation without getting charged, or wonder why hotel water sometimes tastes like lemon Pledge need look no further than Tomsy's memoir, a collection of stories, memories, and secrets about the hospitality business. Bouncing around various hotel jobs...for more than 10 years, he's got the skinny that would make

most travel sites blush.... But this is more than a collection of trade secrets; it's a colorful tale filled with vibrant characters from crazy bellmen to even crazier guests. Tomskey is a solid storyteller who is able to intricately detail all the insanity surrounding him."—*Publishers Weekly*

"With incredibly witty, from-the-gut prose, Mr. Tomskey provides an inside scoop on the good, the bad, and the incredibly ugly happenings that go on behind closed hotel doors—as well as front desk antics that happen right before your untrained, naïve eyes.... A very fun, entertaining read. It is incredibly relatable, not only for a consumer, but also for anyone who has worked in a public-oriented service industry. Despite his brash language, or perhaps in spite of it, the author comes across as sincere and personable with the patience of a saint—or at least he's really good at faking it. Though it seems he was very good at this job, it's about time for Jacob Tomskey to move on to bigger and better things. If this book is any indication, writing will be his next calling."—Renee C. Fountain, *New York Journal of Books*

"Tomskey shines in...this funny and profane memoir."—Nathan Gelgud, *Biographile*

"After the party, it's the hotel lobby.... and that's where things get real. Jacob Tomskey's hilariously irreverent memoir *Heads in Beds* chronicles the all-work, no-sleep, but never dull lifestyle of the young hotelier and the innermost workings of high-end hotels...[and] shares five-star advice for your next check-in."—Gina Angelotti, *Metro*

"*Heads in Beds* is at turns hilarious, sad, too revealing, naughty, frightening and wildly fun. Tomskey proves to be a smart writer. His voice is warm and accessible, but he's also pleasantly snarky and potty-mouthed. He lets the reader see him at his smarmy, smooth-operating best and his filthy, fed-up worst. (And the book includes lots of tips, like how to eat and drink everything in your minibar for free, how to get extra amenities, and all of the things a hotel guest should never say to a front desk agent.)"—Alli Marshall, *Mountain Xpress*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Allison Stiffler:**

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try to and must have the extra time or they will get wide range of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , whenever we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely of course. People is human not just a robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer can unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading guides. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, the book you have read is actually *Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Hustles, and So-Called Hospitality*.

#### **Pamela Garcia:**

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually



you have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition of information. Even you love Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Hustles, and So-Called Hospitality, you can enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout fellas. What? Still don't buy it, oh come on its called reading friends.

#### **Minnie Rivera:**

Does one one of the book lovers? If yes, do you ever feeling doubt if you are in the book store? Aim to pick one book that you never know the inside because don't judge book by its cover may doesn't work this is difficult job because you are frightened that the inside maybe not since fantastic as in the outside appearance likes. Maybe you answer might be Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Hustles, and So-Called Hospitality why because the wonderful cover that make you consider regarding the content will not disappoint anyone. The inside or content is actually fantastic as the outside or perhaps cover. Your reading sixth sense will directly direct you to pick up this book.

#### **Nikki Kirkland:**

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