

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

EDELWEISS CASTLE

Death of an Interviewer

Gerhard Oberressl

Outskirts Press Inc. (322 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

After a family member uses a TV interview to create political upheaval for an Austrian province, the Aybesfords may become murder suspects in this debut mystery.

Joseph Aybesford, lord of Edelweiss Castle in Goodland, Austria, had planned on discussing sustainable development with interviewer Xanda van Aanstryk. But Xanda's fallen ill, and the Cyclamen TV station sends Louise Chevrolet instead. The interview turns into a platform for Joseph to plead for citizens to express discontent with government by submitting invalid votes in the upcoming election. This triggers a "political revolution," and Goodlanders subsequently vote to secede from Austria. Xanda, however, dies from poisoning, and though it could be suicide, authorities surmise an Aybesford or two may have killed her so that Joseph could pave the way for the secession. Joseph's son, Gordon, wanting to clear the family of suspicion, hires French investigator Pierre de Fermat to look into the case of possible murder. Pierre talks to Xanda's relatives and co-workers in Cyclamen City but soon realizes that quite a few suspects have a connection to the town of Edelweiss. The private investigator ultimately works two cases, the poisoning and another involving someone's pedigree that could cause a stir in the Aybesford lineage. Before he can focus on the Xanda case, Pierre will have to expose some family secrets— and even a secret of his own. The novel is an old-school murder mystery, not unlike Agatha Christie's stories. Pierre's as shrewd as Christie's Poirot, though he's an amusing contrast in appearance, first shown in mirrored sunglasses and shorts. Oberressl plays with perception to great effect, the third-person narration occasionally interrupted by journal entries that provide alternate views of characters like Pierre or a still-living Xanda. Pierre essentially solves the Edelweiss case prior to the final act in an enjoyably traditional gathering of suspects. It's followed by a sudden shift to a character's first-person voice that's initially jarring and runs a bit too long before pieces finally come together. This person, however, is helping the detective as an assistant sleuth of sorts, so the investigation rolls on until it reaches a clever and wholly gratifying conclusion.

Endearingly old-fashioned, with a protagonist crime-solver who steals the show.