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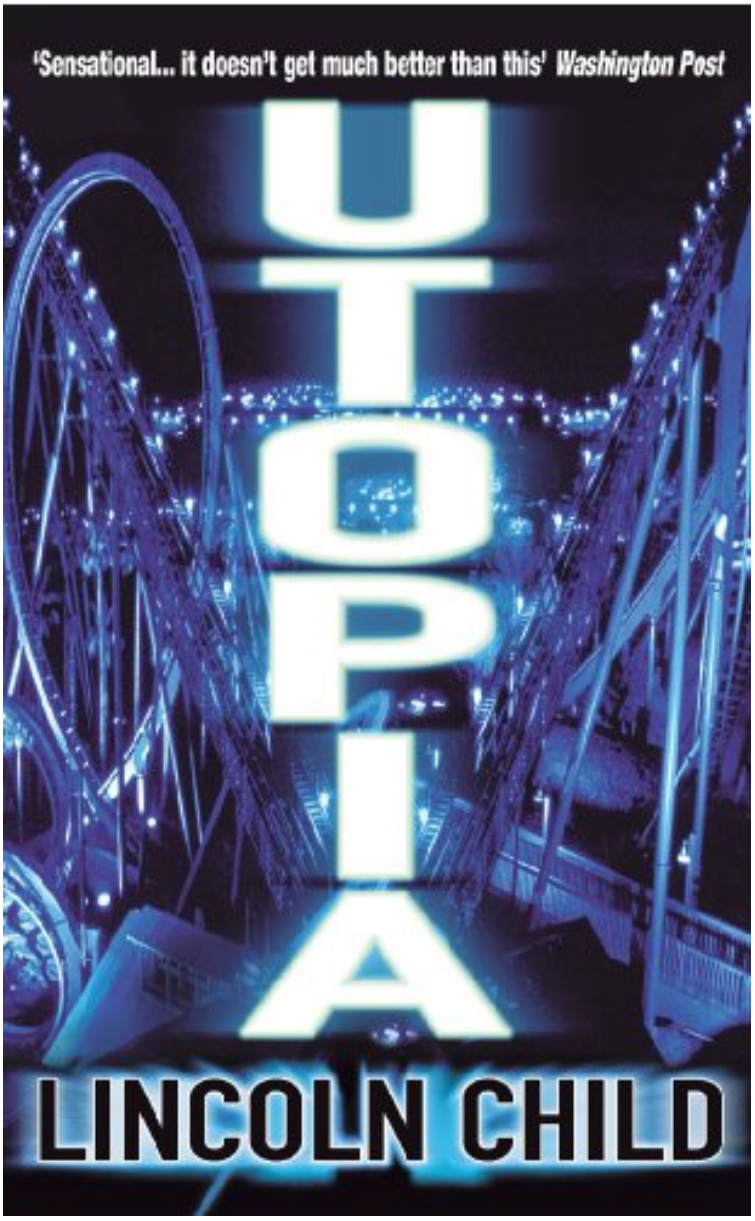
Utopia



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Par Lincoln Child : Utopia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Utopia:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe world's grandest theme park is a place known for its cutting-edge robots, awe-inspiring holographics, and white-knuckle thrills. Stretching out beneath a vast golden dome in the desert north of Las Vegas, Utopia attracts some 65,000 visitors a day who travel into the pleasure dome via a gleaming monorail to experience state-of-the-art rides, fireworks, light shows, amazing robotics and even a gambling casino. When serious mishaps start to disrupt the once flawless technology and a popular rollercoaster nearly kills a rider, the brilliant computer engineer who designed much of the technology is summoned to put things right. But on the day that Andrew Warne arrives, Utopia finds itself in the grip of

something far more sinister and every man, woman and child trapped in the dome are at risk. As the minutes tick away, Warne's struggle to outwit his opponents becomes increasingly urgent - his teenage daughter is just one of the unsuspecting potential victims amongst the crowd in the park. With hair-raising thrills and heart-stopping twists, Lincoln Child takes the reader on a rollercoaster ride which is a complete tour-de-force..comIt takes a lot of chutzpah to give your novel the same title as one of the most famous novels in the history of English-language literature, even if the original novel didn't spawn a literary field or two (utopian and dystopian fiction) or become an everyday term for the perfect place to live on Earth. Yet there's a postmodern appropriateness to applying the title Utopia to a novel set in a theme park that uses cutting-edge technology to create Earth's most desirable fantasy place to visit. Like Westworld and Jurassic Park, Lincoln Child's Utopia is a near-future theme-park thriller, and like Michael Crichton, Child delivers an abundance of white-knuckle thrills, chills, and shocks. Despite its remote location in the Nevada desert, the Utopia theme park receives 65,000 visitors daily. They never dream their lives may be in any real danger. However, some of the self-programming robots are becoming erratic, so park administrators quietly bring the robots' brilliant creator from the East Coast to fix the problem before it gets any worse. Dr. Andrew Warne brings his daughter, for he doesn't believe there is anything wrong with his creations. But on the day of their arrival, a mysterious band of ruthless criminals infiltrates not only the park, but its computerized systems. The unknown terrorists appear to control everything, from the simplest robot to the most dangerous ride. And if their demands aren't met, thousands of innocent park-goers will be killed. --Cynthia WardExtrait7:30 AMFrom its jumping-off place at Charleston Boulevard, above the Las Vegas strip, Rancho Drive makes a casual bend to the left and heads straight for Reno. It arrows northwest with absolute precision, ignoring all natural or artificial temptations to curve, as if in a hurry to leave neon and green felt far behind. Country clubs, shopping centers, and finally even the sad-looking ersatz adobe suburbs fall away. The Mojave Desert, tucked beneath the asphalt and concrete sprawl, reasserts itself. Spidery tendrils of sand trace their way across what the signs start calling Route 95. Joshua trees, hirsute and sprawling, dot the greasewood desert. Cacti stand like standard-bearers to the emptiness. After the frantic, crowded glitter, the gradual transition to vast empty spaces seems otherworldly. Except for the highway, the hand of man appears not to have touched this place.Andrew Warne tilted his rearview mirror sharply upward and to the right, sighing with relief as the dazzling brightness receded. "How could I possibly have come to Vegas without bringing dark glasses?" he said. "The sun shines 366 days a year in this place."The girl in the seat beside him smirked, adjusted her headphones. "That's my dad. The absent-minded professor.""Ex-professor, you mean."The road ahead was a burning line of white. The surrounding desert seemed bleached by the glare, yucca and creosote bush reduced to pale specters. Idly, Warne laid the palm of his hand against the window, then snatched it away. Seven-thirty AM, and already it had to be a hundred degrees outside. Even the rental car seemed to have adapted to the desert conditions: its climate control was stuck on the maximum AC setting.As they approached Indian Springs, a low plateau rose to the east: Nellis Air Force Base. Gas stations began to appear every few miles, out of place in the empty void, sparkling clean, so new they looked to Warne as if they'd just been unwrapped. He glanced at a printed sheet that lay clipped to a folder between their seats. Not far now. And there it was: a freeway exit sign, bright green, newly minted. Utopia. One mile.The girl also noticed the sign. "Are we there yet?" she asked."Very funny, princess.""You know I hate it when you call me princess. I'm fourteen. That's a name for a little kid.""You act like a little kid sometimes."The girl frowned at this, turned up the volume on her music player. The resultant thumping was clear even over the air conditioner."Careful, Georgia, you'll give yourself tinnitus. What's that you're listening to, anyway?""Swing.""Well, that's an improvement, at least. Last month it was gothic rock. The month before, it was--what was it?""Euro-house.""Euro-house. Can't you settle on a style you like?"Georgia shrugged. "I'm too intelligent for that."The difference was evident the moment they reached the bottom of the exit ramp. The road surface changed: instead of the cracked gray concrete of U. S. Highway 95, lined like a reptile's skin by countless repairs, it became a pale, smooth red, with more lanes than the freeway they'd just left. Sculpted lights sloped gracefully over the macadam. For the first time in twenty miles, Warne could see cars on the road ahead. He followed them as the highway began a smooth, even climb from the alkali flats. The signs here were white, with blue letters, and they all seemed to say the same thing: Guest Parking Ahead.The parking lot, almost empty at this early hour, was mind-numbingly large. Following the arrows, Warne drove past a cluster of oversized recreational vehicles, dwarfed like insects by the expanse of blacktop. He'd snorted in disbelief when someone told him seventy thousand people visited the park each day; now, he was inclined to believe it. In the seat beside him, Georgia was looking around. Despite the

practiced air of teenage ennui, she could not completely conceal her eagerness.Another mile and a half brought them to the front of the lot and a long, low structure with the word 'Embarkation' displayed along its roof in Art Deco letters. There were more cars here, people in shorts and sandals milling about. As he eased up to a tollgate, a parking attendant approached, indicating Warne to lower his window. The man wore a white polo shirt, the stylized logo of a small bird sewn on the left breast.Warne reached into the folder, pulled out a laminated card. The attendant studied it, then plucked a digital stylus from his belt and examined its screen. After a moment, he handed the passcard back to Warne, motioning him through.He parked beside a line of yellow trams, then dropped the passcard into his shirt pocket. "Here we are," he said. And then, looking out at the Embarkation building, he paused momentarily, thinking."You're not going to try to get back together with Sarah again, are you?"Startled by the question, Warne looked over. Georgia returned his gaze.It was remarkable, really, the way she could read his mind sometimes. Maybe it was the amount of time they spent together, the degree they had come to rely on each other in recent years. But whatever the case, it could be very annoying. Especially when she chose only to speculate on his more sensitive thoughts.The girl lowered her headphones. "Dad, don't do it. She's a real ball-buster.""Watch your mouth, Georgia." He pulled a small white envelope from the folder. "You know, I don't think there's a woman on earth that would pass muster with you. You want me to stay a widower the rest of my life?"He said this with a little more force than he'd intended. Georgia's only response was to roll her eyes and replace the headphones on her head.Andrew Warne loved Georgia intensely, almost painfully. Yet he'd never anticipated how difficult it would be to navigate the world, to raise a daughter, all by himself. Sometimes he wondered if he was making a royal mess of the job. It was at times like this that he missed Charlotte most acutely. She would have known what to do. She always knew just what to do.He looked at Georgia another moment. Then he sighed, took hold of the door again, and yanked it open.Instantly, furnace-like air boiled in. Warne slammed the door, waited for Georgia to hoist her backpack onto her shoulders and follow, then hopped over the shimmering tarmac to the Transportation Center.Inside, it was pleasantly chilly. The Center was spotless and functional, framed in blond wood and brushed metal. Glass-fronted ticket windows stretched in an endless line to the left and right, deserted save for one directly ahead. Another display of the laminated card and they were past and headed down a brightly-lit corridor. In an hour or so, he knew, this space would be jammed with harried parents, squirming kids, chattering tour guides. Now, there was nothing but rows of metal crowd rails and the click of his heels on the pristine floor.A monorail was already waiting at the loading zone, low-slung and silver, its doors open. Oversized windows curved up both sides, meeting at the transport mechanism that clung to the overhead rail. Warne had never ridden on a suspended monorail before, and he did not relish the prospect. He could see a scattering of riders inside, mostly men and women in business suits. An operator directed them to the frontmost car. It was, as usual, spotless, its sole occupants a heavyset man in the front and a short, bespectacled man in the rear. Though the monorail had not yet left the Center, the heavyset man was looking around busily, his pasty, heavy-browed face a mask of excitement and anticipation.Warne let Georgia take the window seat, then slid in beside her. Almost before they were seated, a low chime sounded and the doors came noiselessly together. There was a brief lurch, followed by silky acceleration. Welcome to the Utopia monorail, a female voice said from everywhere and nowhere. It was not the usual voice Warne had heard on public address systems: instead, it was rich, sophisticated, with a trace of a British accent. Travel time to the Nexus will be approximately eight minutes and thirty seconds. For your safety and comfort, we ask that you remain in your seats for the duration of the ride.Suddenly, brilliant light bathed the compartment as the Center fell away behind them. Ahead and above, dual monorail tracks curved gently through the center of a narrow sandstone canyon. Warne glanced down quickly, then almost snatched his feet away in surprise. What he had supposed to be a solid floor was actually a series of glass panels. Below his feet was now an unobstructed drop of perhaps a hundred feet to the rocky canyon floor. He took a deep breath and looked away."Cool," Georgia said.The canyon we are traveling through is geologically very old, the voice went smoothly on. Along its rim, you can see the juniper, sagebrush, and scrub pinon characteristic of the high desert . . ."Can you believe this?" said a voice in his ear. Turning, Warne saw that--in flagrant defiance of the remain-seated edict--the heavyset man had walked back through the car to take a seat across from them. He wore a painfully orange floral shirt, had bright black eyes, and a smile that seemed too big for his face. Like Warne, he had a small envelope in his hand. "Pepper, Norman Pepper. My God, what a view. And in the first car, too. We'll have a great view of the Nexus. Never been here before, but I've heard it's outstanding. Outstanding. Imagine, buying a whole mountain, or mesa, or whatever you call it, for a theme park! Is this your daughter? Pretty girl you've got there.""Say thank you,

Georgia," Warne said."Thank you, Georgia," came a most unconvincing reply.... On the canyon wall to the right of the train, you can see a series of pictographs. These red-and-white anthropomorphs are the work of the prehistoric inhabitants of this region, the period now known as Basketmaker II, which flourished almost three thousand years ago . . ."So what's your specialty?" Pepper asked."I'm sorry?"The man shrugged his squat shoulders. "Well, you obviously don't work at the park, 'cause y'all are riding the monorail in. And the park hasn't opened yet, so you're not a visitor. That means you've got to be a consultant or a specialist. Right? So is everybody on the train, I'll bet.""I'm an--I'm in robotics," Warne replied."Robotics?""Artificial intelligence.""Artificial intelligence," came the echo. "Uh huh." He took a breath, opened his mouth for another question."What about you?" Warne interjected quickly.At this the man smiled even more broadly. He put his finger to one side of his nose and winked conspiratorially. "Dendrobium giganteum."Warne looked at him blankly."Cattleya dowiana. You know." The man seemed shocked.Warne spread his hands. "Sorry.""Orchids." The man sniffed. "Thought you might have guessed when you heard my name. I'm the exotic botanist who did all the work at the New York Exposition last year, maybe you read about it? Anyway, they want some special hybrids for the atheneum they're building in Atlantis. And they're having some problems with the night-bloomers in Gaslight. Don't like the humidity or something." He spread his hands expansively, knocking both his and Warne's envelopes to the ground. "All expenses paid, first class ticket, nice fat consultancy fee--and it'll look great on my resume, too."Warne nodded as the man retrieved the fallen envelopes, passed his back. That he could believe. Utopia was supposedly so fanatical about the accuracy of its themed Worlds that scholars were occasionally seen wandering around, slack-jawed, taking notes. Georgia was gazing around at the canyon, paying no attention to Pepper....The twenty square miles owned here by Utopia is rich in natural resources and beauty, including two springs and a catchment basin . . .Pepper glanced over his shoulder. "How about you?"Warne had almost forgotten the slightly-built man with glasses sitting behind them. The man blinked back, as if considering the question. "Smythe," he said. "Pyro.""Pyrotechnics? You mean, like fireworks?"The man smoothed his fingers over the tiny toothbrush moustache that grew in the shadow of his nose. "I design the special shows, like the recent six-month celebration. Troubleshooting, too. Some of the late-show indoor chrysanthemums are launching too high, breaking panes of glass in the dome.""Can't have that," Pepper said."And in the Griffin Tower show, guests are complaining the maroons at the end are too loud." The man fell silent abruptly, shrugged, turned his head to look out the window.Warne shifted his own gaze to the passing russet-colored cliffs, then back to the interior of the monorail. Something had been bothering him, and he suddenly realized what it was. He turned to Pepper. "Where are all the characters, the action figures, Oberon, Morpheus, Pendragon? I haven't seen so much as a decal.""Oh, they're around, all right--in the shops and some of the children's attractions. But you won't see any guys in rodent suits walking around. Nightingale was very particular about that, they say. Very concerned about the purity of the experience. That's why all this--" he waved a pudgy hand--"the Transportation Center, the monorail, even the Nexus--is so understated. No commercialization. Makes the actual Worlds that much more real. Or so I've heard." He turned to the quiet man behind them. "Right?"Smythe nodded.Pepper leaned a bit closer to Warne. "Never thought too much of Nightingale's stuff myself. Those Blackstone Chronicles animated movies, based on his old magic act? Too dark. But my kids are crazy for it. And they watch his cartoons every week, like clockwork. They almost killed me when they heard I was coming here, and they couldn't tag along." Pepper chuckled, rubbing his hands together. Warne had read books where people rubbed their hands in anticipation, but he wasn't sure he'd ever actually seen anybody do it."My daughter would have killed me if I didn't bring her," he replied. "Ouch!" he yelped as Georgia kicked him beneath the seat.There was a brief silence. Warne rubbed his calf."So, you think it's true they've got a nuclear reactor buried underneath the park?" Pepper asked."Huh?""That's the rumor. I mean, just imagine the electrical overhead. The place is its own municipality, for heaven's sake. Think of the juice it must take to keep the whole place going, air conditioning, rides, computers. I asked one of the hosts back in the Center, and she said they used hydro-electric power. Hydro-electric! In the middle of the desert! I...hey, look--there it is!"From the Hardcover edition.