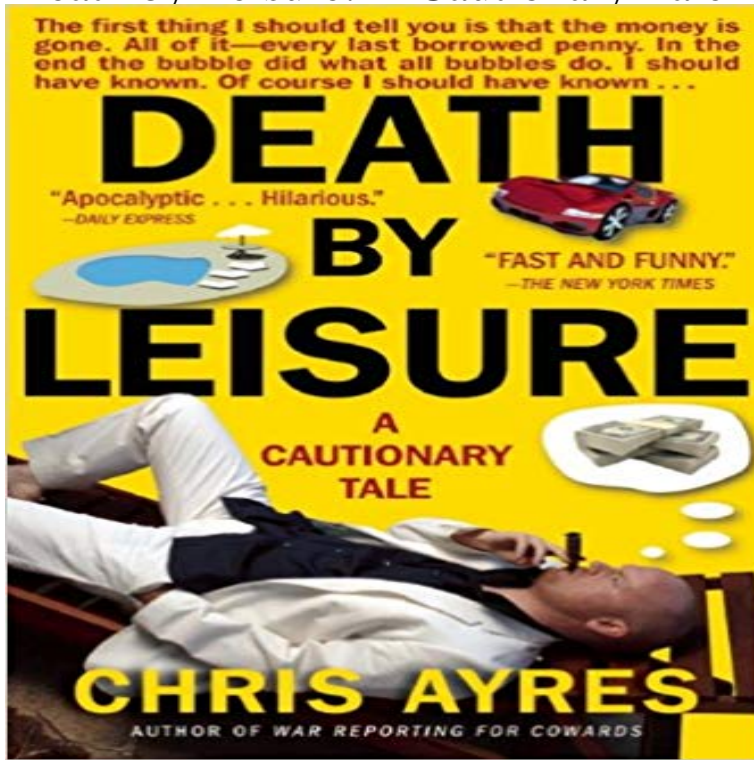


Death by Leisure: A Cautionary Tale



For Chris Ayres, the young British journalist whose first book, *War Reporting for Cowards*, was celebrated as gripping (People), blushingly honest (Los Angeles Times), and hysterically funny (CNN), life in Hollywood is no celebrity junket--its a full-immersion gonzo experiment. After returning to Los Angeles from his harrowing experience in Iraq, Ayres decides to trade the front lines of war for the front lines of the extreme leisure economy. Like Hunter Thompson crossed with one of David Brooks bobos in paradise, Ayres embeds himself in L.A.s leisureocracy: an over-the-top-everything world of caviar facials, billionaire charity balls, souped-up SUVs, and monster home loans ... not to mention thousand-dollar-a-night brothels and million-dollar poker tournaments. Ayres highly leveraged lifestyle lands him a surreal night with a supermodel and a disastrous date at Michael Jacksons birthday party at Neverland Ranch (Ayres bribes the organizers five grand to get in). Dreading his thirtieth birthday and determined to find meaning--and maybe a girlfriend--through gratuitous consumption, Ayres begins to auction his possessions via Craigslist as part of a pledge to upgrade everything. Bizarrely, he discovers this is the perfect way to meet girls: A succession of beautiful-but-broke starlets parade through his living room to buy his old furniture. Naturally, he marries one of them. But disaster is never far away. Whether its a wildfire the size of Massachusetts in which Ayres becomes trapped or a flood that almost wipes his home off its mountainside, the leisure economy seems to be balanced on a precipice. In the books brutal final section, Ayres is forced to confront the excesses of his generation at a scene of apocalyptic destruction: the Katrina-ravaged South. Told with the same blend of offbeat irreverence, genuine pathos, and incisive

