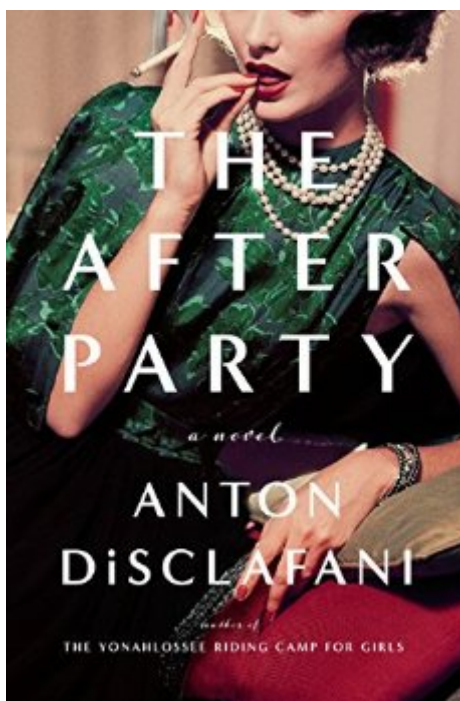


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The After Party: A Novel



Synopsis

One of the Best New Books for Summer 2016 • “ Good Housekeeping One of the 3 Beach Reads You Won’t Be Able to Put Down • “ O Magazine • “ DiSciafani’s story sparkles like the jumbo diamonds her characters wear to one-up each other. Historical fiction lovers will linger over every lush detail. • “ People From the nationally bestselling author of The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls comes • a story of 1950s Texas socialites and the one irresistible, controversial woman at the bright, hot center of it all. Joan Fortier is the epitome of Texas glamour and the center of the 1950s Houston social scene. Tall, blonde, beautiful, and strong, she dominates the room and the gossip columns. Every man who sees her seems to want her; every woman just wants to be her. But this is a highly ordered world of garden clubs and debutante balls. The money may flow as freely as the oil, but the freedom and power all belong to the men. What happens when a woman of indecorous appetites and desires like Joan wants more? What does it do to her best friend? Devoted to Joan since childhood, Cece Buchanan is either her chaperone or her partner in crime, depending on whom you ask. But as Joan’s radical behavior escalates, Cece’s perspective shifts • forcing one provocative choice to appear the only one there is. A thrilling glimpse into the sphere of the rich and beautiful at a memorable moment in history, The After Party unfurls a story of friendship as obsessive, euphoric, consuming, and complicated as any romance. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

This book, so appropriately titled, caught me off-balance at its first page and has not let me go. Set in 1950s Houston, *The After Party* is the story of two girls, now young women, whose lives intertwine to the point of a creepy obsession by one character. Joan Fortier, a classic narcissist, seems to have emerged from the womb as a beautiful, flamboyant, thoughtless rule breaker with an endless supply of her daddy's money. The narrator, Joan's best friend, is also called Joan, but the girls' first schoolteacher, insistent that multiple Joans cannot coexist in her classroom, forces the more docile girl to use her middle name, Cecilia. She is forevermore called Cece. What terrific character development by Anton DiSclafani! These two girls as they become young women make me want to pull out my last hair for different reasons. Cece eventually lives with the Fortiers after her mother succumbs to cancer, with assistance from Joan. Cece's father lives with his mistress in St. Louis, rendering Cece technically an orphan. Joan and Cece become partners in crime as youngsters, with Joan in charge. Cece will do anything to please Joan, the It Girl. Because of her friendship with Joan, Cece's social currency is significant as well. Let there be no mistake; Cece is also beautiful and wealthy, but in her mind, she is a stratosphere beneath Joan. Cece will also do anything to protect Joan, most of the time from herself. Like many narcissists, Joan is a compulsive liar, and Cece eventually finds herself lying to Joan's family and, even worse, to her own husband. "Grow a spine (or a part of the male anatomy)", I seethed. Anton DiSclafani perfectly portrays the era in which the story takes place.

This well-written novel, set among Houston oil-rich socialites in the 1950s, revolves around the relationship of two women both named Joan whose lives are intertwined from the age of six. One is a rebel, flamboyant, a rule-breaker with a self-destructive edge. The other is a "good girl" who always strives to fit in and fulfill expectations. If the first Joan is the sun, the second is a minor planet revolving around her. The narrator is the second Joan, known from early in the book as Cece. A teacher, seeing them both together, decided she could not have two Joans in the class and decided that the flamboyant Joan should keep her name and the shy Joan should be known by another one based on her middle name. It's a symbolic act that symbolizes that the first Joan will always have primacy. Cece's life is not easy though she is rich. Her father leave her mother and eventually forms

another family far away. When she's a teenager, her neglectful mother is stricken by cancer. Cece, the good daughter, cares for her through her final illness -and with Joan's help, eases her passing. Now an orphan, Cece moves in with Joan's family as an unofficial adopted daughter. Joan's parents accept but do not love her. But they see her as a good influence on their own wayward daughter. Cece eventually marries a good, steady (boring) man and has a son -- while Joan disappears and then eventually reappears, drinks to excess and sleeps around. The African-American woman who was employed to help raise Cece explains: "Joan was a fireball because she had a mother who cared about her. You wanted to please because your mother didn't notice you." There's something maddening about both of these characters.

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