



## The After Party

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## **The After Party** Anton DiSclafani

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.

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.

## **The After Party Details**

Date : Published May 17th 2016 by Riverhead Books

ISBN :

Author : Anton DiSclafani

Format : Kindle Edition 384 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Adult Fiction, Adult

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# From Reader Review The After Party for online ebook

## Tooter says

Goodreads Giveaway. 4 stars.

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## Karen says

The narrator and narration are ceaselessly banal and shallow; the plot nonexistent.

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## Bill Kupersmith says

Sir Walter Scott knew that a best setting for a historical was 60 years back, long ago enough to belong to another world, but still within living memory. In the case of *The After Party*, that living memory is mine. I lived in the very place & time the story is set = the River Oaks area of Houston, Texas in the 1950s. When the narrator Cici mentioned Troon Road I thought, OMG, we could have been neighbors. That's only one block away; when my brother or I were out late & our mother, lying awake, heard the Morgan's motor rev as we downshifted for the turn onto Chilton, she knew she could stop worrying and go to sleep. If the principal characters, Joan & Cici, had younger siblings, they might have been belonged to the same group of teenaged friends I belonged to that formed in the summer of 1957; over the following years we were to live our own private Secret History.

Like her characters, my family bought clothes @ Battelstein's & Sakowitz's (when I went to prep school in New England my clothes-snob roommate made fun of the labels; I labeled him "the littlest Brooks Brother"!) Just as soon as the Shamrock Hotel opened, my parents joined the Cork Club & I can well-remember that huge pool with that terribly high diving board (I only dared go off the board @ mid level), & went to deb parties there when I was an undergrad. Reading this book, I felt like a T-Rex visiting a natural history museum. For moments it almost felt like I was back in Texas then.

Anton DiSclafani's *The Yonahloosee Riding Camp for Girls* is one of the best school stories that I have ever read. *The After Party* belongs to the next generation; Joan & Cici are living out as 20-somethings the kind of life Yonahloosee girls were being prepared for: "good" marriages (@ least in Cici's case) to men who worked for oil companies (3 of my friends fathers were with Humble Oil), membership in the Junior League & the River Oaks Country Club. In real life girls like Joan & Cici did @ least try college: Texas - "The University" - pledging Pi Phi or Kappas & perhaps marrying a Kappa Alpha, or Hollins or Sweetbriar, majoring in playing bridge & dating boys from W&L or UVA majoring in alcoholism. Joan & Cici would have had more of a cultural life too - going to plays @ the Alley Theatre & hearing the Houston Symphony Orchestra, which was already trying to become respectable.

Actually, Houston CC was the snob club & not everybody was a nouveau riche parvenu like Glenn McCarthy. There was some "old money" (Galveston before the hurricane) like the Andersons & the Claytons. But I am utterly overwhelmed by how much research Anton DiSclafani must have put into this book. did she unearth a huge cache of ancient issues of the River Oaks Times? I even caught the bartender's reference to the Fortiers' locker @ the Cork Club - the Byzantine Texas liquor laws made club membership

imperative if you wanted to entertain. I'm not sure the author quite got the liquor laws right either (there was also something called a "liquor pool" - quite appropo for these characters!) Of course then I was too young to drink - legally that is.

I got too caught up in the nostalgia & historical reconstructions to pay all that much attention to the plot or the characters. The narrator Cici is intended as Joan's fides Achates living in the shadow of her glamorous but mysterious friend. Had I listened more carefully I should have figured out the story behind the disappearance of the teenaged Joan (something similar would happen with one of us). Neither of them quite reached the tragic level of Thea Atwell in Yonahlossee. (Which reminds me - the Fortiers certainly would have owed a ranch, with horses - maybe cattle - & nobody ever called "the Fat Stock Show" - pronounced as a cretic - "the Houston Fat"!)

But my GR friends can do the criticizing. I loved this book for the memories. Next time I read a story set in one of my favorite historical periods such as England in the '40s, I'll be aware of how close an author can get to reconstructing what it was really like to live in that time in the place. So close, but not quite. Thank you Anton DiSciafani for all your hard work. You got it almost perfect!

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### **Kasa Cotugno says**

Giving two stars because of some well written passages, but really, it's 1 1/2. I did like DeSciafani's first book, but this effort, which promised a reflection of society in Houston of the '50's, did not present either the era or the location with any specificity. Why Cece finds Joan so fascinating is beyond me, since neither character is presented as anything but cookie cutter. If I wasn't reading this to review, I wouldn't have gotten past page 20.

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### **Claire says**

I loved the setting of this book - 1950s Houston: the Shamrock Hotel, huge mansions with beautiful gardens in River Oaks, the cocktails, the clothes, the big American cars. It was just so fun to read about that time and place. I also loved the writing. It was crisp and clear, and I was happy to pick up the book and to continue reading. I do wish the author had taken more risks with the plot, though. The tense, secretive mood of the book has you intrigued, but the truth, when you discover it, doesn't seem like such a big deal. In the end, I just wanted a bigger revelation, one which would have matched the mysterious tenor of the first three quarters of the book.

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### **Helen Finnigan says**

But for the fact I was on bed rest while reading this, I would have never finished it. Slow-moving plot and damaged (yet still almost completely uninteresting) characters with upscale problems. By the time I got to the "big reveal", I didn't care. Skip this one.

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### **Liz marx says**

Disappointing kept reading because I thought there would be some better character development. I wanted a

better

Explanation of why Joan turned out as she did.

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### **Jennifer says**

I've been a fan of Anton DiScalfani's since her best selling debut novel, *The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls*, and have been eagerly anticipating *The After Party*. DiScalfani did NOT disappoint.

Set in 1957 Houston, *The After Party* follows the friendship of two women: Joan and Cece, who have been best friends since childhood. These women grew up together. They were there during pivotal moments in their lives from first loves to losing a parent, and through it all Cece places Joan on a pedestal. Joan is the epicenter of Cece's life, and this often conflicts with Cece's married life especially as we see Joan's life spiraling out.

DiScalfani paints a brilliant portrait of female friendships and the intricacies of our relationships. Of the lengths we go to for our friends. Of even the people we try to become for our friends. *The After Party* begs the question: what would you do if you saw a friend spiraling out? Would you run in and save them? Would you try to get to the bottom of their behavior or would you sit there and watch it all unfold?

*The After Party* will leave you with the best kind of hangover: a book hangover from reading an emotionally obsessive tale about two friends.

I highly recommend it.

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### **Michelle says**

This book was perfection. 1950s Houston society, troubled girls, family drama, and fantastic writing.

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### **HistoryGeek 42 says**

It was ok. It started off really grabbing my attention but by the end I was so annoyed by the whole dynamic between Cece and Joan that I just felt "enough already". Joan is a narcissist and Cece is at best a clueless enabler and at her worst a total doormat.

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### **Obsidian says**

There really isn't much for me to say about this book besides the fact that it was an okay book, but not one that I would recommend or read again. I think that the synopsis set this book up like a very big mystery, but in the end, everything fell flat. I thought the whole book just limped to the end where I wondered what in the world was I supposed to get out of this book.

Told in the first person by CeCe Buchanan, we have her reminiscing about how she came to meet her best

friend in the world, Joan Fortier. Both women's first names are Joan, but when they are in the same grade school as children, the teacher promptly changes our narrator's name to CeCe (cause apparently this is something people do? I don't know. I thought that whole thing was weird. How do you go from a Joan to a CeCe?) and she doesn't even mind, because in her mind, Joan Fortier was born to be a Joan.

The hero worship that CeCe has for Joan is way over the line to unhealthy. Frankly I would have probably given the book more stars if we actually had CeCe learning a thing. But instead, we have CeCe in love with Joan and her parents. CeCe wishes for the life that being a Fortier would entail. And even for a time she gets to live with them and take the place of a runaway Joan.

We are subjected to CeCe's weirdness anytime someone says anything negative about Joan (mutual friends and her husband) and her jealousy if Joan doesn't talk to her and involve her with all things.

I thought the writing was fine, but nothing to really write home about. It got a bit too purple prose for me there in the end. The flow was a drag to the overall book though. I think because there was no good stopping place for anything, the book just kept going and going and going. I really wish that the author had included two POVs one from CeCe and one from Joan. There seemed to be a lot of resentment that Joan was storing up and there also seemed to be mysteries still left unsaid that I really couldn't wrap my head around. Pretty much the gist of the whole book read to me, poor little rich girls and I was ultimately not feeling it.

The setting of Texas in the 1950s does not come alive at all during this book. Maybe because most of the book takes place at clubs, homes, and in CeCe's bedroom? I don't know. There wasn't much there there for all of the commentary on this being about Texas socialites in the 1950s.

The book just kind of ends abruptly. I think readers are supposed to see CeCe as better off now. But instead the book as a whole left me to think that she's still broken and needs Joan way too much.

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## **Taryn Pierson says**

I absolutely loved Anton DiSclafani's debut novel, *The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls*, so I've been making gimme-hands ever since I found out she had a second novel coming out this spring. And even though *The After Party* isn't likely to stick in my mind the way her first book did, it's still really dang good. In it, narrator Cece has a singular fixation in her life: her best friend since childhood, Joan, who is wild even by MTV's *Real World* standards, let alone the standards of her actual world, which is oil-booming 1950s Houston. Cece spends almost all her time thinking about Joan, worrying about Joan, or cleaning up Joan's messes. Even when she's grown, with a husband and a baby, Cece's life is more about Joan than anyone else, even herself or her own family.

Cece's obsession, while unhealthy and maybe a bit creepy, is at least somewhat understandable—Joan is a fascinating character, elusive and enigmatic even while she's the center of attention (and she's always the center of attention). But Cece's neediness occasionally drives Joan away, and because we're limited to Cece's perspective, Joan is always at a frustrating distance. An effective choice, if DiSclafani is trying to invoke in the reader Cece's own feeling of never having quite as much of Joan as she wants, but decidedly less interesting than hearing Joan's story from her own mouth.

This method of using a comparatively bland bystander character to narrate the adventures of the main attraction seems to be popular lately, and I can think of several books I've enjoyed that employ it (*The Girls*

by Emma Cline and *The Hours Count* by Jillian Cantor come to mind, though there are others). In this case, though, I would rather have read about Joan without Cece as a lens. One of the aspects I loved most about *The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls* was Thea, the bold, sexy, risk-taking main character—a character not unlike Joan, in fact, now that I consider it. For my money, DiSclafani is at her best when she gives her most charismatic character the microphone.

More book recommendations by me at [www.readingwithhippos.com](http://www.readingwithhippos.com)

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## Julie Ehlers says

I was a fan of Anton DiSclafani's *The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls* and was very excited to get my hands on this one, which sounded even more interesting to me. Perhaps my expectations were too high, because while there was much I liked about this book, ultimately I was disappointed--although I'm having a little trouble sorting out the source of my disappointment.

*The After Party* is about two women who become friends in early childhood and stay friends into their mid-twenties, in 1957 (when much of the book's action takes place). Both of these women are named Joan, but when they start school, the teacher decides she can't have two Joans in the classroom and promptly rechristens our narrator Cecilia (her middle name), or Cece for short. This renaming is a neat (maybe too neat?) metaphor for the relationship between the two women: Cece's identity is always subsumed by the identity of the flashier, bolder, more beautiful Joan. What's more, Cece likes it that way.

The novel takes place in the Houston suburb of River Oaks, a high-society place that felt positively claustrophobic and suffocating to me. As with *The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls*, the plot moves slowly, creating a feeling of being immersed in this world and the lives of its people. You have Cece, who wants nothing more than to be a mother and wife and stay in River Oaks forever; she's no ahead-of-her time revolutionary, and she doesn't even chafe under the restrictions the women of her world live with. She just wants her life to be settled. On the other hand, you have Joan, who *does* chafe under these restrictions and who attempts to rebel against them as much as she can. Joan is also hiding a BIG secret, and Cece's desperation to learn this secret is a large part of the plot's forward momentum.

I was mixed on both Cece and Joan. I could understand why Cece submitted so willingly to the restrictions her culture put on her; as the book makes clear, her childhood was quite turbulent (and some aspects of this were portrayed quite beautifully and movingly), and wifehood/motherhood/conformity clearly represented peace to her. I just didn't quite buy an intelligent character who never once questioned the limits on the lives of the women in River Oaks, and how they might have contributed to both her unhappy childhood and the unhappy life of her best friend Joan. But Joan was equally exasperating to me. She wanted something different from life than what she was getting in River Oaks; she wanted, as she herself put it, to be "where the ideas are"--New York, say, or Los Angeles. But she wasn't willing to work to make that dream a reality. She remained completely tethered to her father's money, was unwilling to be without it, and was therefore totally under her parents' thumb. As a result, her "rebellion" played out as having a lot of male suitors and sometimes making a scene at the River Oaks nightclubs. It was a Miley Cyrus-style rebellion: all reaction to her upbringing, no actual meaning behind anything she did. If she had had a few actual goals or original ideas, I might have liked her better.

Of course, Joan was also concealing the aforementioned BIG SECRET, which I was dying to learn, but which was ultimately a major letdown. Just think of the most soap-operatic secrets you can imagine, discard

the most implausible ones, and you'll be left with the run-of-the-mill secret this book eventually reveals.

I do think my own expectations were part of the problem here. High-society women in the 1950s were privileged but had a limited lot in life; that's a fact. For me to expect more modern attitudes from either heroine is not exactly realistic, and the fact that DiSclafani writes within these limits is actually quite interesting and a more difficult task than modernizing her characters and making them ahead of their time. But I don't think I'm at fault for expecting something a little more complex and satisfying from the secret, given the way it was built up throughout the book.

I know there were plenty of people who weren't fond of the slow-moving nature of *The Yonahlossee Riding Camp for Girls*, and those people probably won't like this one either. But fans of DiSclafani's first novel should check this one out; for all its flaws, it does have the same beautiful writing and immersive quality as its predecessor. While my experience with this one was mixed, I remain a fan of DiSclafani's writing and will happily check out her future offerings.

I received this ARC from the publisher via Goodreads. Thank you, Goodreads!

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### **Ashley says**

The After Party follows the story of a young socialite in 1950s Houston. Cece Buchanan has it all: money, popularity, a husband who adores her, a loving son, and a best friend all women - and perhaps some men - are envious of. Cece has been attached to Joan Fortier at the hip since childhood. When the death of Cece's mother and the virtual desertion of her father leaves her without parents at fifteen, the Fortier family takes Cece under their wing and into their home. Cece and Joan have their whole lives planned, but not everything is as solid as Cece wants to believe. Joan disappears shortly before their high school graduation without a word only to almost just as mysteriously reappear a year later. Fast forward six years and Cece is as devoted to Joan as ever even though Joan - and Cece's husband - doesn't want her to be. Cece soon realizes that Joan isn't the person she has always thought and Joan may just be hiding a few secrets that could destroy her and her well to-do family.

I know that women in the 1950s were not as innocent as I would like to imagine they were, but I was honestly a bit shocked by the looseness of the high class group of socialites in this book. The main objective of these women was to marry men of well standing, which of course was no surprise for the 50s. To Cece, this was a perfectly acceptable goal in life, but to Joan - it was not. Joan wanted something more. She wanted to go *where the ideas are*. But, I honestly never saw any real effort from Joan. For the majority of the book she seemed like a spoiled rich girl who was willing to hurt her parents through any means necessary - even if that means sleeping with half of Houston. And her big secret? It was frankly a bit underwhelming and predictable. (view spoiler)

Joan's behavior was deplorable, but I honestly found Cece's behavior to be even worse. As mentioned above, Cece had it *all*. Except Joan. Joan was the one thing Cece could never truly fully grasp, and it drove a wedge between Cece and her husband, Ray. (view spoiler)

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### **Laura says**



Ok, ok, you can quit thanking me. Yes, I read the book so you didn't have to. There is only one positive thing about the book....it's over!

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