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The Tennis Party



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIt was Patrick's idea that they should have the tennis party. After all, he has the perfect setting - the White House, bought out of his bonuses as an investment banker. He hasn't actually told Caroline, his brash and beautiful wife, what the real reason for the party is. She is glad to welcome Stephen and Annie, their impoverished former neighbours, less glad to see newly wealthy Charles and his aristocratic wife Cressida, and barely able to tolerate the deadly competitive Don and Valerie. But as the first ball is served over the net it signals the start of two days of tempers, shocks, revelations, the arrival of an uninvited guest, and the realization that the weekend is about anything but tennis. From Publishers WeeklyBoth the author and reader win this game of literary tennis, a comedy of manners in which British first-novelist

Wickham aces the shallow rich, displaying a wicked backhand along the way. At their country estate, Patrick Chance and his wife host a weekend tennis party of six (two couples, plus a widower and his daughter) that "comes to an unseemly end." Serving as a catalyst for the debacle, the unprincipled Patrick tries unsuccessfully to peddle a financial fund to the superwealthy Charles Moby, then cons Stephen Fairweather, a floundering doctoral student, into mortgaging his home to make the same investment. While the couples' children amuse themselves with pony rides and rehearsals for a play, the adults suffer a series of personal revelations and crises. These stem not only from Charles's self-serving schemes but from the unexpected arrival of Charles's ex-lover, Ella Harte, to whom Charles is still attracted, as well as from an unexpected financial threat. In this light, fast-paced novel, where the plot is sure, if occasionally predictable, and the characters are superficial, because that is their nature, Wickham deftly shows at every turn that matters may not be as they seem, but that one truth can be relied upon: money corrupts. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. Kirkus sA young English writer's debut assembles a nasty gang of upwardly mobile friends at a houseparty in the British countryside- -and lets them at one another's throats over tennis and cocktails. Patrick Chance's tennis party is not about tennis: He needs to sell a pricey and questionable investment plan in order to reap a cushy bonus. So he and his wife, Caroline, have invited a likely buyer: their old pal Charles, who's come into money by marrying an heiress, the ultraspoiled Cressida. Also invited for the weekend are penniless Annie and Stephen, both salt-of-the-earth types, and neighbors Don and Valerie, a vulgar father-daughter duo who truly care about winning the tournament. Cressida finds Caroline trashy, and she hates the fact that the Chances are friends from Charles's bohemian youth. Patrick slimily tries to sell his lemon plan to Charles and is politely blown off; in a dither because he fears the loss of his bonus, he turns his salesman ways on trusting Stephen and convinces him to take a second mortgage out on his house to invest in the fund. Then Ella, the great love of Charles's youth, shows up uninvited, just back from a world tour. After a drunken dinner, she and Charles slither off to the garden. Later, puffed up by his adulterous conquest, Charles slips into his bedroom only to discover--via a letter--that his wife's finances are so shaky that they now face financial ruin. The finals of the tournament turn into a verbal melee as Stephen realizes he's been had by Patrick, and Cressida finds out about Charles's infidelity. Recriminations are exchanged all around before this houseparty from hell adjourns for the weekend. Despite its contrivances, this featherweight comedy delivers a decided satisfaction: pleasingly humiliating comeuppances for all its odious characters. -- Copyright 1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.