



The Houseparty

Anne Stuart

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He was so coldly handsome, it was positively criminal. Why, his icy blue eyes made Elizabeth's heart flutter at their very first meeting. No doubt about it, the rumors were right: this stony-faced soldier, Michael Fraser, was a traitor, a spy, a scurrilous French agent. Yet her hapless cousin had invited him for the weekend! What mad mischief might this cur cook up in the course of a three-day houseparty full of distinguished guests? Now Elizabeth is surely scandalized, for she hears that this stealthy spy has been querying the servants about her. Her own brother is off on a secret mission against Bonaparte--that must be the reason for Michael's monstrous attentions. If only his gaze weren't so penetrating, his voice so hypnotic, his kiss so treasonously sweet. She never imagined a French agent could be this dangerous!

The Houseparty Details

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From Reader Review The Houseparty for online ebook

SidneyKay says

Memories, Schmemories

While recently searching for something to read I discovered that one of my all time favorite books has been electronically formatted! Of course my paperback is yellow and crumbling, so I just had to buy this again!!! When you read this story remember that Anne Stuart was just starting out, but you can see shades in this wonderful writing of things to come.

Oh, how I miss Fawcett books, and here is one of the reasons why. *The Houseparty* by Anne Stuart, published in 1985, has been one of my favorites ever since reading it when it first came out. But, we all know how my memory is, so I was a tad bit nervous when I opened this book. One of my concerns was my big mouth and that I had been telling people what a great book this was. Well, I'm happy to report that it has withstood the test of time! This book is one of the reasons I love the romance genre.

This story has all of the elements that normally I'm groaning about, but in Ms. Stuart's capable hands they turn into a very delightful story. It has a spy hero, Michael, and a spirited aka feisty heroine, Lizzie. Lizzie was constantly getting in trouble, snooping, going where she was warned not to go, and Michael was always turning up unexpectedly. But it was all great fun. There is also a great scene of Lizzie hiding and people going in and out of bedrooms... very funny.

The story takes place in the span of three days and is filled with tons of memorable characters; any one of them could be the bad guy. This book is a fast, charming read. You may not get any belly laughs out of this, but I believe this story will make you smile. **Even though we don't really get to see the hero's POV, he's still a very sexy guy.** And that is what makes great writing - a writer who can create this very interesting man without us seeing inside his head.

I'm glad to say that I am still very fond of this book. And by the way... Anne Stuart is a very talented writer. She writes gothics, thrillers, historicals, contemporaries... with a lot of dark male characters. If you haven't read any of her books, you should really give one a try. If you can get your hands on *The Demon Count* (1980) and *Lord Satan's Bride* (1981), both from the old Dell Candlelight Intrigue books, you'll will be in for a treat. I believe they have also been electronically formatted. Some other recommendations: *Black Ice*, *The Devil's Waltz*, *To Love a Dark Lord*, *Ice Storm*, *Ice Blue*, *A Rose of Midnight*, *Nightfall*, *Lord of Danger*. And again, a little word of warning - Anne Stuart is known for her very strong, dark, brooding men. She did get her start writing gothic novels, after all.

P.S. - My daughter also recommends the contemporary romance *Special Gifts*, starring a psychic and a cop.
KaysBlog

puppitypup says

Historic Romance/Mystery 3.5 Stars!

This was about equal parts romance and mystery, and, while I'm not a big fan of the mystery genre, this is a very pleasant read. As always, there's a realism about Anne Stuart's writing that I find quite captivating.

The main characters are both likeable, especially the heroine, and I must admit to having a big smile on my face throughout the last chapter.

The story is clean in terms of both language and intimacy, other than a few kisses.

Thank you to NetGalley for providing an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

SaturNalia says

Michael is a spy and Elizabeth is a troublesome, society beauty. Both are invited to a house party for different reasons but end up entangled in a little spy intrigue. Elizabeth is beautiful, witty and curious, a deadly combination for Michael who is trying to save the world by finding a spy list. I liked the colorful secondary characters more than the romance between Michael and Elizabeth. Adolfo was unintentionally hilarious with his extravagant wardrobe. The romance felt flat to me, both thought they were the cleverest people in the room and I didn't feel a spark between them. Quick and good for a few chuckles.

Sissy's Romance Book Review says

This book was first published in 1985 but this is the first time I am reading this book. I was glad that they re-released it since I did miss it the first time. Our heroine, Elizabeth is at a house party where her brother wants her to marry the host. But he isn't what Elizabeth would want at all. Our hero is Captain Michael Fraser and rumors abound that he is a spy for the French. Elizabeth thinks this is her chance to help her one brother who is doing undercover work for the English in France and foil any possible plans Fraser might have. This starts a really good mystery type love affair. This is also a really good short read (almost 200 pages) that you won't want to put down! I hope that you enjoy having this book too!

Under the Covers Book Blog says

The last thing Elizabeth wants to do is go to a three day house party with her insufferably stuffy brother and her unbearable distant relations; however, it seems she has no choice. But things prove far more interesting and far more dangerous than she expected with the presence of the handsome yet equally rude and boorish Captain Michael Fraser. Could his reputation as a French spy be correct? Or is it all a ruse to find the real traitor? Elizabeth is determined to find the truth, placing not only her heart, but her life into jeopardy.

This book is a rerelease of one of Anne Stuart's earlier books, published in 1985, which has now been spruced up with a far more pleasing cover. The 80s were a dangerous time for historical romance with bodice rippers and "forced seduction" running rife, luckily *The Houseparty* avoided that, although I can't imagine it would have been released again if it contained a scene with forced seduction. So instead of *The Houseparty* falling in to that old 80s trap, what I found instead was a romantic spy romp where our intrepid heroine sticks her nose in and does some amateur sleuthing, much to her own and every one else's peril.

The Houseparty was easy going and a lot of fun to read, even if nothing really surprising happens. Elizabeth was a likable heroine even though she did insist on gleefully running headlong into danger with alarming frequency; however, what is one to expect from such a feisty headstrong heroine? Certainly not any common

sense or sense of personal danger. I did like the romance, it wasn't anything grand or heartfelt, much like the rest of the book it was light-hearted and skin deep.

This certainly isn't as good as Anne Stuart's current releases, especially her House of Rohan series, which I adore, but if you want a fun spy caper with a nice central couple then this wouldn't be a bad book to pick up.

*ARC provided by publisher

Reviewed by Suzanne

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Sheila Melo says

Classic Anne Stuart Which Shows Glimpses of Her Later Themes and Characters

"My dear Captain Fraser, if you really happen to be a spy and a traitor, then I intend to be the one to catch you red-handed. I see no reason to let the men have all the fun and excitement."

FINAL DECISION: Lively with a classic Stuart hero who walks the line between hero and villain. This classic historical book is sex-free, but with intriguing characters and a well written suspense story.

THE STORY: Elizabeth Traherne is "bright, inquisitive and far too pretty" when she attends a houseparty. She is worried about her brother who works as an agent for the British. When Michael Fraser attends, Elizabeth learns that Mr. Fraser is known by gossip as a traitor and French spy and agent. Elizabeth learns that something is going on that threatens English security and maybe the life of her brother. At the same time, she is attracted to the dangerous potential spy which might threaten Elizabeth herself.

OPINION: I liked this book because of the interesting characters. Elizabeth is nosy and sometimes too curious for her own good, but I liked that she is unwilling to conform to her "proper" role. I really liked Michael. Stuart keeps his role ambiguous until the end of the book. He is sexy and dangerous like many of Stuart's heroes. The well plotted suspense story is also emblematic of Stuart's later works. This is a nice uncomplicated read that I enjoyed primarily because of the suspense story and the interesting characters.

WORTH MENTIONING: This book is really clean compared to modern romance novels.

CONNECTED BOOKS: THE HOUSEPARTY is a standalone.

STAR RATING: I give this book 4 stars.

NOTE: I received an ARC of this book via Netgalley in order to provide a review. I was not required to write a positive review. All opinions contained herein are my own.

Anita says

ARC provided by the Publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

When NetGalley offered this older Anne Stuart book I grabbed it without even reading what it was about. I do that with authors I really like and I really like Anne Stuart. The Houseparty is a Regency Historical-Romance set during the British Napolitano war in the mid 1800's. It is really a cozy romantic-suspense and a lot of fun, with no overt sexual content. No one writes witty, sarcastic dialogue like Anne Stuart.

Elizabeth is a old maid at 23. She keeps house for her parson brother and life is good, if dull. Elizabeth and Sumner are invited to a houseparty given by a distant cousin, Adolphus, who is also Sumner's patron and has his eye on Elizabeth as a possible wife. Unknown to them is the fact that there is a spy also in attendance and he must be stopped before he can pass valuable information.

Captain Michael Fraser is on the staff of Adolphus' uncle, Colonel Maurice Wingert, also guests for the weekend. Michael is something of an black sheep. He was disgraced in Italy over some gambling debts and passed over for a promotion, being assigned to Colonel Wingert, who is soon to retire. Gossip has it he is bitter and could have traded information for the money to get him out of his trouble.

Elizabeth and Michael strike sparks from their first meeting. Elizabeth is mistakenly given information about a list of British agents that the spy is going to transfer during the weekend. As her brother Jeremy is an agent Elizabeth is determined to recover the list and gets herself in all kinds of trouble. With everyone.

? Rhiannon ☆ Mistwalker ? says

Not my cup of tea. Basically, everyone is awful and stupid and for some reason the prose rubbed me the wrong way. I picked it up because it was on a number of spinster shelves, but the heroine is slender and charming and beautiful and just not married.

Chelsea says

Received an ARC from Netgalley

I was a little disappointed in this book. The description was very promising but the first chapter in the book I was struggling to figure out who was who and the words the author used were just too complicated. I like books that are easy to read, not where I am constantly trying to figure out what the author meant because she threw a large word in there unnecessarily.

I went back and did some research on this book and realized it was first printed in the 1980's so I'm guessing that's why the wording is the way it was but my first impression was that it was unnecessary to use such large words and that the author was new at writing and was trying too hard.

I also didn't like the chemistry between Captain Fraser and Elizabeth. She was so hot and cold towards him, one minute obsessed with him and then the next minute she was hating him, it was difficult to keep track of her emotions towards him and for what reason she was or was not liking him. Then he just assumed they would marry, even though they never really got to know each other. All they ever talked about was what he was up to and what she was up to, not about each other. I prefer books where the characters fall for each other because of who they are, not because of some life threatening mission. There was a lack of profiles for each of them. For instances, Michael claims at one point he has three sisters-why did he not then tell tales of those sisters when he and Elizabeth had stolen moments together? That way she could get to know him on a

more personal level and see the charming side of him and that he cares for his family.

I only gave it three stars because I did like not knowing who was at fault until the end, which was the only thing that kept me reading the book and not giving up on it.

Jan Goodard says

I received this book from NetGallery for an honest review.

Spies, intrigue, and romance in Regency England, are among my favorite scenarios. This is an older offering of Anne Stuart's, now in kindle. Although I have read many of her books, this was not one of them. It did remind me of why I enjoyed her stories. House party is just that, a weekend gathering of relatives, near relatives, and various other people. However, this was not just a friendly get together, but an attempt to catch an English turncoat who is spying for the French. But who is the spy? Michael Fraser allows himself to be cast as the potential bad guy, or is he, maybe it's a long time friend.

Elizabeth and Michael are drawn to each other much to her chagrin, she doesn't trust but wants to know what is going on. She knows her brother, Jeremy is a spy working in France for England and she is concerned how this weekend's ActiveX will affect him.

I don't like to give the storyline away with spoilers in a review. If you enjoy clean romance mixed with intrigue, then I recommend this book. It was definitely worth my time.

CLM says

When Elizabeth reluctantly attends a houseparty hosted by a corpulent and annoying cousin, she does not expect to encounter a Napoleonic spy - or that he will be so attractive!

Sarai says

The Houseparty is a Regency Romance in which Lizzie Traherne is a guest at a houseparty, along with her proper brother Sumner. Sumner wants her to marry the host, Adolphus Wingert, a portly fellow who favors pink and likes to smack his lips. Lizzie is against it. Adolphus' mother is also against it, as she makes known in various ways. Also present is Brenna, who is after Sumner, and the luscious widow the Contessa, who may or may not have several schemes going on. Captain Michael Fraser is also in attendance and rumors abound that he is a spy for the French. Since Lizzie's other brother is doing undercover work for the English in France, she sees the need to foil any possible plans Fraser might have. After learning there is a list of English spies hidden somewhere in the house, she sets out to uncover it. But one or more of the other guests seems to have the same idea!

Anne Stuart has written contemporary and historical romances, in many different categories. Sometimes her writing is dark but this time it is light and funny. The characters are interesting and the sparks fly between the hero Fraser and his heroine Lizzie. A nice, quick read!

Suzanne (Under the Covers Book blog) says

The last thing Elizabeth wants to do is go to a three day house party with her insufferably stuffy brother and her unbearable distant relations; however, it seems she has no choice. But things prove far more interesting and far more dangerous than she expected with the presence of the handsome yet equally rude and boorish Captain Michael Fraser. Could his reputation as a french spy be correct? Or is it all a ruse to find the real traitor? Elizabeth is determined to find the truth, placing not only her heart, but her life into jeopardy.

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Pterodactyl says

It was kinda fun. The deliberate body-shaming where being fat automatically means disgusting and gross was not.

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

Elizabeth has been convinced to attend a houseparty with her vicar brother but they are unaware that it will be a hotbed of spy activity. A list identifying the names of English spies in France is on the loose in the house and everyone is suspect, especially the dark and handsome Captain Michael Fraser. There are rumors that he is a traitor but nothing has been proven so far. Elizabeth has an instant dislike for the infuriating captain but also finds herself inexplicably drawn to him. It will be a weekend of intrigue and insights and Elizabeth must decide whom to trust before it is too late.

A quick read of mystery and machinations, *The Houseparty* was a fun ensemble read. Originally published in 1985, it is a great book to reissue as the story manages to avoid any dated feelings. There was an abundance of characters that occasionally veered into too much of a handful but ultimately end up being the strong point

of the story. From the too good-looking for his own good brother, slightly evil mother, her sinisterly flamboyant son, the overly sexual woman of the world widow, gruff military men, and a sprinkling of red-herrings, the characters sweep you along on who's the real baddie ride. The actual story thread of spy stratagem was a bit confusing and wasn't quite fleshed out but the characters' personalities filled in the cracks.

Elizabeth was our leader through the story and while she could be called precocious and full of gumption, she also could be called bratty and TSTL. There was many times where Elizabeth blindly and bull headedly charged into situations that made her annoying to follow along with. She was smart in figuring things out and knowing the score but not so great in butting out of situations she had no business in. Michael was a little more lighthearted than your average brooding hero and even though I didn't get to see him as much as I would have preferred, I liked him. Most of what we see of Michael is him trying to keep Elizabeth from possibly dangerous situations and ruining his mission; he had somewhat of a limited role. Together they have tit for tat conversations that were entertaining but their interactions were limited. I wanted to see them together so much more, I'm not sure their relationship felt completely solid to me.

If you're looking for a cleaner, quicker read with many and varied characters and willing to accept a wobbly spy plot, and a scant romance, Anne Stuart is a quality writer to whittle away a few hours to.
