

The Fall Guy

James Lasdun

Unemployed chef Matthew Dannecker has been invited to spend the summer with his wealthy cousin Charlie, a Wall Street banker, and his wife, Chloe, at their swanky vacation home in upstate New York. Figuring he'll take the opportunity to reorient his drifting life, Matthew spends his days rounding up delicacies (with his cousin's credit card) to cook for the household each evening, until he begins to suspect that Chloe is having an affair with a local vacationer. Torn between his familial loyalty to Charlie and his unaddressed feelings for Chloe, Matthew begins a covert espionage mission—including a centerpiece scene that is as heart-stopping as anything suspense fiction has produced this year—that will forever shatter any delusions of placidity among the three housemates. The author's taut, penetrating narration burrows deep into Matthew's increasingly cluttered mind, with the class divide between the cousins and a shared history as schoolmates that led to a decade-long fracture as backdrops. **VERDICT** Despite an abrupt resolution, Lasdun's latest (after a memoir, *Give Me Everything You Have*) is an intelligent, disquieting psychological thriller as potent as an end-of-summer hangover. Highly recommended.

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