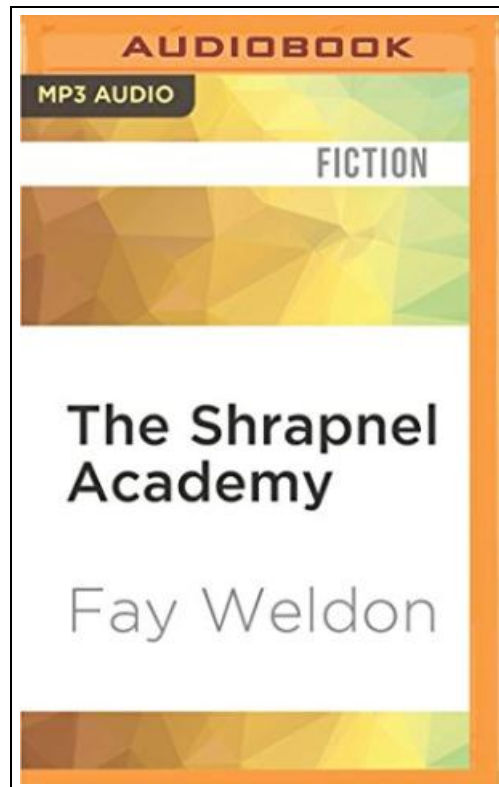


The Shrapnel Academy



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Reviews

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(Meredith Hoppe)

THE SHRAPNEL ACADEMY



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Audible Studios on Brilliance, 2016. CD-Audio. Condition: New. Unabridged. Language: English . Brand New. They thought they were attending a benign military lecture at the illustrious Shrapnel Academy, housed in one of England's grand manors and dedicated to the memory of Henry Shrapnel, genius inventor of the cannonball. But the weekend is not peaceful. Perhaps benign militarism is always a false conceit. Septuagenarian General Leo Makeshift, charged with delivering the annual Wellington lecture, arrives in a black Rolls-Royce. The knee under his hand belongs to his current mistress, Bella, who wears a tight black skirt and seamed stockings for the occasion. (Bella is considerably younger than the general.) Medusa, or Mew, on the other hand, hitchhikes to Shrapnel after the gas runs out on her motorbike. Mew is the correspondent from Woman's Times and, yes, it was a mistake to allow a feminist reporter on the scene. On the greeting committee are Joan Lumb, the institute's dictatorial director, her lithesome secretary, Muffin, and Acorn the butler, a stunningly handsome South African whose army of Third World servants is primed to rebel against the ruling class. Fate provides a snowstorm, making escape impossible; lust, jealousy, bigotry, chauvinism, and pure greed provide the other essential ingredients for all-out war during the Wellington weekend - between Upstairs and Downstairs, between men and women, between First and Third Worlds, between the fiercest of sexual rivals. Speculation about the occupancy of a given bed or the espousal of a given cause is unlikely to prove correct, yet to attempt it is irresistible. As a chronicler, Fay Weldon has never been more brilliant or more ruthless about the folly of human relations. The Shrapnel Academy is a devastating update of the English country house novel, as savagely funny as it is topical.



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