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The Comedians

Von Graham Greene
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Von Graham Greene : The Comedians before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Comedians:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. "The President's bogey-men, they wear dark glasses and call on their victims after dark."Von expressThere's no question that Graham Greene was a major figure of 20th century letters of biography, plays and screenplays, essays, and

criticism, as well as thrillers. He was probably the author most often named as a Nobel Prize candidate, though he never won the award. The Comedians, first published in 1966, is set in Haiti under the authoritarian rule of President François "Papa Doc" Duvalier, his Voodoo-inspired horror and his brutal secret police, the Tontons Macoutes (officially Milice de Volontaires de la Sécurité). Considering Greene's criticism of the Duvalier dictatorship shrouded in its darkest days, it was to be expected that this novel about a world-weary hotelier would be banned in the country. It would be comforting to read it today as a historical record of a different era but sadly the night in Haiti has darkened further and if Greene were to return he would find no shortage of the corruption and violence that acted as a backdrop to *The Comedians*. Three men meet on a steamer en route to Haiti and as their personal dramas unfold, their paths become intertwined. The three gentlemen, Brown, Jones and Smith are covering all the bases: Smith is a former American presidential candidate and generally of positive disposition that motivates him to improve condition of the world and particularly of Haiti. Unfortunately he is rather ignorant of the current state of the country. Brown is the hotelier and disillusioned and cynical Englishman, educated by Jesuits in Monaco and now living in Haiti. He doesn't mean anyone any harm and even has the intention to help others to the extent, that they don't really bother him, he also serves as the narrator of the story. He is returning after a trip to the US during which he hoped and failed to find a buyer for his hotel and now wants to return to his life of waiting for the government to be overthrown. Mr. Jones is the most tragic of the three and tells many breezy stories about his army days with "the Commandos" but when asked precisely what he did during any of those missions, his military recollections suddenly become vague. "Major" Jones turns out to be a friendly and genial man who is only looking out for his own interests, which he has come pursuing, in a mysterious fashion. Brown immediately sees through the flimsy stories and takes Jones for a conman whom he is continuously attempting to trip up with probing military questions, but Jones dodges them admirably. The Haiti that they are approaching is everything but a Caribbean Paradise. Papa Doc Duvalier has recently been "elected" President *vie* and has moved the nation from a tourist haven to a police state that has fallen into a state of poverty. On top of that the notorious and sinister Tontons Macoutes are committing crimes and violence, creating paranoia, fear, duplicity. Voodoo is practiced among the population to escape the general feeling of despair. When our three gentlemen arrive, Brown's empty Hotel Trianon becomes the stage for a variety of dramas. Problems for Brown start in serious when he is finding the dead body of a government minister in his swimming pool. When Brown starts to convince his first guests since a rather long time that the body in the pool really is not of great significance, the story turns into the surreal. During this and other passages it becomes obvious that Brown is quite skillful sweeping unpleasurable things under the carpet. While Mr. Smith and his wife have come to set up a health-food center, Jones is arrested, and Brown is troubled by his long-standing affair with the wife of an ambassador. In the middle of the hoopla he becomes involved in everything that's going on and his disinterested, yet pivotal attentions make for a very engaging story indeed. It involves among other events the chilling and untouchable, sun glassed Tontons, a whore house, chilling escapes, corpse theft, lots of rum drinking and all sorts of nastiness. Brown needs to recognize the sounds of approaching engines in order to calculate whether or not to hide from Duvalier's Tontons Macoutes, from now on he has to protect each one of his guests because each might be his last, everything about his life has its own significance due to its precarious nature and everyone in the little group is perfectly aware of that. Greene's critical and harsh portrayal of a country falling into barbarism enraged the self-proclaimed "Président *vie* de la République de Haïti" so much that immediately after publication, he attacked the novel personally in his paper *Le Matin*. Even five long years later, Duvalier's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had nothing more important to do than publishing an elaborate and elegant brochure, dealing with Graham Greene and "*The Comedians*." It was printed in French and English and entitled "*Graham Greene Finally Exposed*" and distributed to the Press through the Haitian embassies in Europe. Graham Greene was depicted as, "a liar, a cretin, a stool-pigeon...unbalanced, sadistic, perverted...lying to his heart's content...the shame of proud and noble England...a drug addict...a torturer." According to Greene's autobiography, "distribution ceased abruptly when the President found the result was not the one he desired. The last epithet has always a little puzzled me." Greene continues, "I am proud to have had Haitian friends who fought courageously in the mountains against Doctor Duvalier, but a writer is not as powerless as he usually feels, and a pen, as well as a silver bullet, can draw blood." 6 von 8 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Good Place and strange laughter Von Doug Vaughn To call a novel about the most horribly repressive and violent period in Haitian history *The Comedians* is typical Graham Greene irony. The main characters, Jones (a Brit expatriate on the run from a never disclosed shady past), Smith (a vegetarian crusader who was once a splinter candidate for U.S. president), and Brown (a man of no real country who has inherited a run down hotel in Haiti from his absent mother) are all rootless failures playing at life who are brought together in Haiti during a time of terror and political chaos when the country was descending into a kind of primitive madness. Against their will and in ways they don't anticipate, they are each sucked into the vortex. How they respond highlights the questions that Greene is forever posing about faith, redemption, commitment and responsibility. The dreams of each character, flimsy as they are, are doomed to fail in a land where utilities and civil order have broken down, where beggars predominate and order is maintained by the Tontons Macoute, the zombie figures in dark glasses who dispense Papa Doc's brutal 'justice' and leave the evidence of it lying beside the road. Smith, who with his wife, wants to start a vegetarian center in the Haitian capitol, flees the country

when he realizes that he must resort to bribes for the simplest permissions and even then the promises are a sham. Jones, who tries to con the Haitian government into buying arms that he doesn't possess, is uncovered as a fraud and flees to a South American embassy for protection (the British don't want him - or want him too much). Brown, who wants only to be left alone to run his hotel and pursue a pointless affair, nevertheless finds himself acting time and again to help one or another of the other characters (including a number of Haitians), all the while trying to remain emotionally neutral and uninvolved. He fails, and his failure brings on the book's one clear success, a good end for Jones who escapes the embassy, with Brown's assistance, to join and train a small band of Haitian guerrillas in the hills. At the end, having found 'a good place', he dies a comic but heroic death. He did not, it seems, actually know anything about warfare, having served in the army only in the entertainment division. His lies finally catching up. But as one of the Haitian survivors says - he was good for the men - he made them laugh.³ von 6 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. An ambitious, compelling tragicomedy set in Papa Doc's Haiti Von Ein Kunde Greene's ambitious political novel set in Haiti lacks the extraordinary intensity of earlier works such as *The Power and the Glory* or *Brighton Rock* and it has its weak points - at times it seems overschematic and artificial. But it's still a remarkable work - a subtle blending of farce and tragedy, strong and compassionate, beautifully structured and ironic. The background, conveyed with great economy of words, is very vivid. The characters, though rather familiar figures - typical inhabitants of Greeneland - are saved from caricature by Greene's compassionate intelligence. And as a study of commitment and neutrality, the novel is on a par with Greene's *The Quiet American*.

Kurzbeschreibung WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY PAUL THEROUX Three men meet on a ship bound for Haiti, a world in the grip of the corrupt 'Papa Doc' and the Tontons Macoute, his sinister secret police. Brown the hotelier, Smith the innocent American and Jones the confidence man - these are the 'comedians' of Graham Greene's title. Hiding behind their actors' masks, they hesitate on the edge of life. And, to begin with, they are men afraid of love, afraid of pain, afraid of fear itself....de One of Graham Greene's most chilling and prophetic novels, *The Comedians* is set in a Haiti ruled by Papa Doc and the Tontons Macoute, his sinister secret police. Just as *The Quiet American* offered a preview of the coming horrors of American involvement in Vietnam, this novel presages the chaos in Haiti. Classic Graham Greene. Pressestimmen "Graham Greene arouses responses of curiosity and attention comparable to those set up by Malraux... Faulkner and Hemingway." *New Statesman*