



Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story

By John Berendt

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Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story By John Berendt

Shots rang out in Savannah's grandest mansion in the misty, early morning hours of May 2, 1981. Was it murder or self-defense? For nearly a decade, the shooting and its aftermath reverberated throughout this hauntingly beautiful city of moss-hung oaks and shaded squares. John Berendt's sharply observed, suspenseful, and witty narrative reads like a thoroughly engrossing novel, and yet it is a work of nonfiction. Berendt skillfully interweaves a hugely entertaining first-person account of life in this isolated remnant of the Old South with the unpredictable twists and turns of a landmark murder case.

It is a spellbinding story peopled by a gallery of remarkable characters: the well-bred society ladies of the Married Woman's Card Club; the turbulent young redneck gigolo; the hapless recluse who owns a bottle of poison so powerful it could kill every man, woman, and child in Savannah; the aging and profane Southern belle who is the "soul of pampered self-absorption"; the uproariously funny black drag queen; the acerbic and arrogant antiques dealer; the sweet-talking, piano-playing con artist; young blacks dancing the minuet at the black debutante ball; and Minerva, the voodoo priestess who works her magic in the graveyard at midnight. These and other Savannahians act as a Greek chorus, with Berendt revealing the alliances, hostilities, and intrigues that thrive in a town where everyone knows everyone else.

Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil is a sublime and seductive reading experience. Brilliantly conceived and masterfully written, this enormously engaging portrait of a most beguiling Southern city has become a modern classic.

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Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story By John Berendt Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2592 in Books
- Brand: Vintage Books
- Published on: 1999-06-28
- Released on: 1999-06-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .83" w x 5.10" l, 2.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 400 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* has been heralded as a "lyrical work of nonfiction," and the book's extremely graceful prose depictions of some of Savannah, Georgia's most colorful eccentrics--remarkable characters who could have once prospered in a William Faulkner novel or Eudora Welty short story--were certainly a critical factor in its tremendous success. (One resident into whose orbit Berendt fell, the Lady Chablis, went on to become a minor celebrity in her own right.) But equally important was Berendt's depiction of Savannah socialite Jim Williams as he stands trial for the murder of Danny Hansford, a moody, violence-prone hustler--and sometime companion to Williams--characterized by locals as a "walking streak of sex." So feel free to call it a "true crime classic" without a trace of shame.

From Publishers Weekly

After discovering in the early 1980s that a super-saver fare to Savannah, Ga., cost the same as an entree in a nouvelle Manhattan restaurant, Esquire columnist Berendt spent the next eight years flitting between Savannah and New York City. The result is this collection of smart, sympathetic observations about his colorful Southern neighbors, including a jazz-playing real estate shark; a sexually adventurous art student; the Lady Chablis (' "What was your name before that?" I asked. "Frank," she said. '); the gossipy Married Woman's Card Club; and an assortment of aging Southern belles. The book is also about the wealthy international antiques dealer Jim Williams, who played an active role in the historic city's restoration--and would also be tried four times for the 1981 shooting death of 21-year-old Danny Handsford, his high-energy, self-destructive house helper. The Williams trials--he died in 1990 of a heart attack at age 59--are lively matches between dueling attorneys fought with shifting evidence, and they serve as both theme and anchor to Berendt's illuminating and captivating travelogue.

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From Library Journal

It's difficult to categorize this book. On one level, it is a travelog, recounting former New York magazine editor Berendt's eight years in Savannah, Georgia, that beautifully preserved hothouse of the South where eccentric characters like black drag queen Lady Chablis and charming con man Joe Odom blossom in rich profusion. It is also a true crime tale, the saga of antiques dealer Jim Williams whose 1981 shooting of his sometime lover Danny Hansford in the historic Mercer House obsesses Savannah denizens; they watch as Williams endures four trials and is eventually acquitted, only to die of a heart attack a few months later, haunted (some say) by Hansford's vengeful ghost. Although nonfiction, Berendt's book reads like a novel (he admits he has taken "certain storytelling liberties"), and this reviewer sometimes wondered where the truth ends and the fiction begins. Still, this entertaining book will appeal to many readers. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 9/15/93.

- Wilda Williams, "Library Journal"

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Elnora Perry:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also turn into a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. Associate programs you got of course the knowledge your information inside the book in which improve your knowledge and information. The info you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want truly feel happy read one with theme for entertaining for instance comic or novel. The Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story is kind of guide which is giving the reader unforeseen experience.

Rickie Miller:

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information currently can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even an issue. What people must be consider any time those information which is in the former life are difficult to be find than now is taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you find the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen with you if you take Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story as the daily resource information.

Michael Kendig:

This book untitled Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, here is because when you read this guide you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this book in the book retail store or you can order it through online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you easier to read this book, as you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason for you to past this guide from your list.

Luis Morales:

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