



Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

By John Berendt

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Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil By John Berendt

Read John Berendt's **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil** in Large Print.

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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: A Savannah Story is a sublime and seductive reading experience. Brilliantly conceived and masterfully written, this enormously engaging portrait of a most beguiling Southern city is certain to become a modern classic.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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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 Hansford, 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

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Christina Ruiz:

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Nora Emerson:

The reserve untitled *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* is the publication that recommended to you to learn. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to anyone. The language that writer use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The article writer was did a lot of exploration when write the book, and so the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also could possibly get the e-book of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* from the publisher to make you far more enjoy free time.

Hayden Wolfe:

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