



Gad's Hall

Norah Lofts

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An unutterable secret, kept so securely by the women of Gad's Hall a century past, creates havoc for its present-day occupants.

Gad's Hall Details

Date : Published January 1st 1978 by Doubleday Books (first published 1977)

ISBN : 9780385129886

Author : Norah Lofts

Format : Hardcover 282 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Gothic, Fiction, Mystery, Horror



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From Reader Review Gad's Hall for online ebook

Megan says

I enjoyed the story and characters, but I really wanted a more satisfying ending.

C. says

We see at once whether a book brings the kind of story we anticipated. Sometimes, what you get instead, is a masterpiece like “**Gad’s Hall**”! As you are swept up in the lives of each person, it is no disappointment. I see that **Norah Lofts** ruled the gargantuan gift of authoring deeply-entrenched historical sagas. This pair of novels is as ambitious but stands apart.

A 1977 family disbelieves the bargain of a well-kept manor, with fruit trees and grounds from whence to make their living. *Bob Spender’s* daughter is ill at ease, enough that his Mother brings her to live in the village. She opposes their investment unless they look into the negative sensations. In the most creative shift I’ve ever experienced, we revert to the original family: that of *George Thorley*. He wouldn’t see the bursting adventures sparked by everyone in his fold. They ignited at his death. When *Isobel* is left to raise his daughters, *Deborah & Caroline* with hers, *Diana & Lavinia*; she was the first woman to run a business and deal in the marketplaces of men. As we admire her bravery, the girls assert their personalities.

Deborah is a horsewoman, loyal and strong. When she lives on her own with a son, she becomes a celebrity through a career of her own making! In *Caroline* is the humour, becoming a doctor’s wife because the man she prefers married her friend. *Diana* is the fashion-plate, wanting only a respectable man but turns to talent of her own in tough times. *Lavinia*, moody and peculiar, is awakened by little but nature and art; a brilliant painter who always inserted a bizarre twist. These books were composed at the end of **Norah’s** life and I feel fortunate to have discovered them. You must procure and read them both!

Kate says

Norah Lofts has always been a favorite of mine when it comes to historical fiction. Her deft hand at characterization kept me reading this through to the end, but as a "ghost" story, it fell quite short. Still, I will read the sequel, if for no other reason to at least find out what happens to the characters.

Werner says

Set in Lofts' favorite fictional setting, the environs of her imaginary Baidon, Suffolk, this novel is divided into two parts: Part I, set in the author's present, in which a modern family moves into the titular Gad's Hall only to find that there are certain strange manifestations there, connected to a locked attic room with no key; and Part II, set in the mid-19th century, in which we learn what exactly went on in that room and why it came to be locked permanently. The reason, as Lofts implies, involves something more than purely natural horror.

Norah Lofts, of course, was primarily a writer of descriptive fiction -- especially historical fiction; Part II showcases her mastery of that genre. Her work is typically characterized by concentration on family and social relationships; incident-filled plots; realistically drawn, very human characters who are compends of positive and negative qualities (in different degrees) and who cope with their problems in ways that we can understand, whether we see them as constructive or not; an attitude towards life that's neither bleakly despairing nor filled with Pollyanna- style optimism, but which recognizes its challenges, and above all its continuity as an ongoing process over lifetimes and generations. But she also, even in her descriptive fiction, at times exhibits an interest in the supernatural, the psychic, the paranormal dimension that may or may not touch the natural world here and there. All of these elements are present here, in both parts; we're introduced to two families and their web of relationships, and much of the storyline is very realistic fiction about people whose lives you get immersed in and come to care for. It's not a book that's all about bumps on the stairs in the night; it's also about coping with crippling injury, a romantic triangle, loveless marriages, alcohol addiction, the way that miscommunication and misunderstanding messes with our lives, the choices people make in their interactions with others, the rampant sexism and sexual double standard of Victorian society, etc. But while the supernatural element doesn't constantly make itself felt, and is low-key and usually subtle when it does (and so won't please some genre fans who prefer more overt and grisly-gory manifestations) it's more marked than it usually is in Lofts, and indeed casts a shadow over the entire book. For the secret of that attic room involves a story of Satanism, with lethal consequences --and the Satanism here was more than simply a misguided superstition.

Being a fan of Lofts, I found here the kind of qualities I enjoy in her writing elsewhere, and found it a deeply absorbing read (which had me very worried about the characters much of the time!). One caveat, though; the resolution here leaves room for some questions, which are presumably answered in the sequel, *The Haunting of Gad's Hall*. (That's on my to-read list!)

Zora says

I was looking for a haunted house book, and this is on several goodreads lists under that topic, but it's not a haunted house book at all. It was well enough written, I suppose, but right on the cover it says "a novel of the supernatural," and unless you count two people having vague uneasiness about a new house, there's nothing of the sort in here.

Mary says

When the Spender family - Bob, his wife Jill, and their three children - are first offered the chance to move into Gad's Hall; they are absolutely thrilled. The previous owner of this ancient, beautifully kept Tudor-style house is a kind-hearted elderly gentleman who simply wants someone to protect the family homestead. He is actually looking for a family that is capable of caring for the mansion, and of bringing Gad's Hall back to life; and he is willing to give the Spenders his home for practically a song.

The Spender family views Gad's Hall as an incredible bargain - a truly amazing godsend - and they are beyond thankful for this gentleman's astonishingly selfless act of generosity. They are delighted to accept such a thoughtful gift. The happy couple and their young family soon move in and make themselves comfortable in their new home.

However, what the Spender family does not realize is that Gad's Hall is haunted. Oh, nobody heard terrified screams in the night, no objects went flying through the air, and no one heard murderous, disembodied voices - yet Gad's Hall is haunted just the same. Gad's Hall has absolutely been brought back to life.

In fact, the house is actually alive! Yes, a door to the past has been opened by the arrival of the Spender family. And soon Jill Spender - a strong-willed, sensible woman - will be overtaken by irrational feelings she can not possibly control. All because of the unspeakable secret kept by the women who had lived at Gad's Hall more than a century ago...

I must say that I absolutely loved reading this book. In my opinion, Norah Lofts was a truly excellent author. She was an intelligent writer, able to write intriguing and intricately-woven plots that are thoroughly enjoyable. I think Gad's Hall: A Novel of the Supernatural is another absolute gem written by Norah Lofts and I give this book an A+!

Katharine Edgar says

This is Norah Lofts being creepy and supernatural in a 19th century farming context. It wasn't as scary as I remembered it, the 'evil' is very slow-burning and it's interesting more because of the strong characters and very practical plot (how does the widow of a cattle farmer manage to run her late husband's farm in the face of prejudice against women?) than the Satanic bit of the storyline.

I think it didn't quite work for me because the Satanic stuff needed to be more fully developed - it was too slight for me to quite believe in it. It almost felt like the first half of a book that was going to get going later - so now I need to read the sequel to see if things speed up a bit.

It's still great, vintage Lofts though - rounded, interesting characters, lots of juicy historical detail and some bodies buried in the garden.

Sheila says

4 stars--I really liked it (though this is no literary masterpiece and I really have no reason to have liked it so well. Some books are just like that).

The bad: It's slow. It starts with the story of one (modern-ish) family, then completely drops them to focus on another (historical) family. There's racism (era appropriate? Probably, but it's never addressed in the narrative). Not a lot happens. The writing is adequate, but not stellar.

The good: Despite all of this, I was fascinated by both families in this semi-gothic read. I'm looking forward to reading the second book to see what happens to them. Though the gothic touches were light (very light!) here, and I'd call this more of a historical family saga, I did enjoy the slightly sinister elements of the tale and hope they're expanded upon in the next book. (More ghosts! More creepy paintings! More--gasp!--daughters practicing satanism in the attic! :lol:)

Melissa Osburn says

I loved the intertwining of stories, the present mixing with the past. I found myself admiring Jill's tenacity and resourcefulness. And I admired Mrs. Thorley for the same reason, both women were strong, even in the face of heartbreaking events, and both decided it was best to continue than to dwell on their misfortunes. Both women were portrayed as flawed and that only made them more human, more realistic. I enjoy reading and rereading this book, it calls to me every so often, inviting me back to Gad's Hall.

Jeanette says

Oh my, is this a cross-over genre that combines deep description of core personality for 5 or 6 main characters, but also at the same time hums a hypnotic mood. The platform of the place being one of concrete strong structural base for contentment and "good intent" belief countered with a dichotomy of constant singular antithesis to all that is "normal" and of "natural" wholeness.

This is Norah Lofts near the end of her career. She is experimenting in somewhat a reversal of her normal chronological order of seating a house at its beginning and then proceeding through the centuries for its events and occupants. In this one we start in post war modern England with a family of now handicapped abilities and wholeness. And then after just a few chapters, we revert to the beginnings for their house which they have bought near Baildon (Bury St. Edmunds actually- England Suffolk) to start a new life in the countryside.

That house is Gad's Hall. It's the 1840's for the entire remaining sections of the book and this is only the first in a series.

How she completes this 5 women and 1 boy 1840's family (plus Jenny and Will which are the help) is so masterful, that I can only give it 5 stars. It's not perfect in the light of action level comparison for moderns but much deeper at core.

Poe has gotten literary acclaim for his moods. This one is just as good. Plus it combines immense minutia of trade, husbandry, cow auctions, corn markets, and dozens of patterns of manners and occupations of time for that period. All within economic class constraints and the processes of courting and marriage eventualities for 4 female offspring. How that is worked and more highly patterned by the females as much as the males, is pivotal.

But what gives it that extra star is the voids. Lofts doesn't need to be gross, pornographic, vile in chewy blood-letting scenes, or highly descriptive of the menace in play. Not at all. But IS IT THERE. Unsaid and known at the same time. Among them in their midst.

And in fact, the onus of what really has occurred is far more deeply scored upon the understanding of the reader for those peculiarities of the voids of admittance for the process.

Modern readers of horror, or romance, or sci-fi. or grit. madness/insanity might think this book is mild and slow. Some, I read in reviews, think that this pace of "eyes" can be tedious. Not I.

Can't wait for the next one in this series which is waiting for me to pick up today. The Haunting of Gad's

Hall is HIGHLY anticipated.

Bonnie says

Ok, the cover of my book has "A Novel of the Supernatural. Gad's Hall." To anyone that has read this book: where was the supernatural?? There were 2 pages of eerie feelings at the beginning of the book and then nothing relating to the supernatural until page 200! Sooo disappointing....

Don't get me wrong, "Gad's Hall" was a very good read. The story essentially covers the history of a of two families living farm house in rural England. I won't go into any more detail than that because many other reviewers did such a good job. I just want to point out that if you are looking for a nice gothic horror novel, keep moving.

Sarah Mac says

Boring, boring, BORING.

I don't expect every haunting novel to stand up against masterworks like Hill House or The Shining, but this was just plain dull. No personality to the characters (except perhaps the contemporary narrator, who only stands out because she's a prattling, yammering moo), no plot whatsoever (unless you count endless minutiae: prices of Victorian farming + nonstop blabbing about all the damn daughters & who they married), bland descriptions of purposeless details, brief spurts of droning conversation punctuated by eye-gouging monologues to show how Isobel & Jill are such Strong, Tenacious Women...yeah, it's that great.

But honestly, y'all. The single most important failure of Gad's is that it's NOT SCARY. Who gives a crap about these people? Why should *I* care about their so-called creepy house if nobody knows -- or even cares -- that it's fucking haunted?! Things finally started to happen in the last 75 pgs, but Lofts' writing is so choppy & piecemeal that I could hardly tell WTF was going on, let alone why I should bother to finish.

I won't be trying any more Lofts. Her prose is consistently bland & choppy with too much obvious effort at subtlety; even when/if the plots finally kick into gear, such an overt sense of self-importance kills any interest on my part.

Nancy Ellis says

I had forgotten how good a storyteller this author was! This is another book that has been sitting on the shelf for quite awhile and turned out to be great entertainment! The Spender family can't believe their good fortune at finding this beautiful Tudor manor for an unbelievably reasonable price. Naturally, the house is haunted! The majority of the book tells the story of the Thorley family in the mid-1800s and how the strange fortunes of all those involved were affected by the evil of one person. A great story, if you like that sort of thing, which I do very much! This book leads right into the second book where the story continues.

Barb says

I read the combined edition with both stories in one volume; Gad's Hall and The Haunting of Gad's Hall.

This is the first novel (or novels) by Norah Lofts I've read and honestly I found it (them) somewhat disappointing. I thought that I was sure to find something spooky between the covers given the title. But sadly this story just didn't do much for me in the spooky department.

The story is about two families. There is a contemporary story and an historical one, both center around an old Tudor home in England. The contemporary family moves into the old house and the daughter and the grandmother are afraid of something there. The reader is taken back in time to learn what happened in the house that caused the evil feeling to linger.

I thought the story was rambling, the details somewhat tedious and the historical portion of the story lacking in period details. I thought Lofts gave endless details about the lives of these characters but at the same time they didn't feel fully developed to me. The story drags and there is plenty of filler that could have been trimmed out. The haunting portion was very predictable and basically uninteresting.

I wish Lofts had focused more on the events in the life of the youngest daughter in the family in the past as well as the relationships the contemporary mother had with the owner of the house. Those two stories were the most interesting to me and also seemed to be the most neglected.

I did like some of this but overall I was disappointed and didn't feel satisfied when I turned the last page.

Melanie Griffin says

A good read, but not earth-shattering. It's less creative than some of the Norah Lofts I've read, though it follows a similar pattern. I never really got into the characters and I found the plot a bit predictable. I love some of her other books about old houses and the psychic connections between past & present owners, but this one isn't her best.

A house is inhabited by a malevolent spirit and we go back in time to generations before to uncover the secret of the "haunting." There's another in the series that I may read as well: The Haunting of Gad's Hall.
