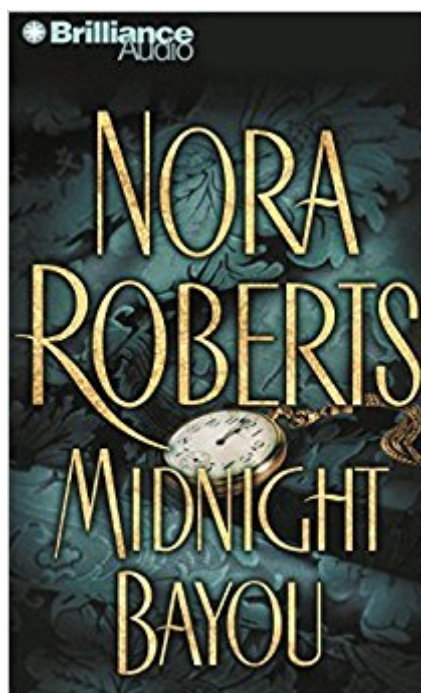


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# Midnight Bayou



## Synopsis

Declan Fitzgerald had always been the family maverick, but even he couldn't understand his impulse to buy a dilapidated mansion on the outskirts of New Orleans. All he knew was that ever since he saw Manet Hall, he'd been enchanted - and obsessed - with it. So when the opportunity to buy the house comes up Declan jumps at the chance to live out a dream. Determined to restore Manet Hall to its former splendor, Declan begins the daunting renovation room by room, relying on his own labor and skills. But the days spent in total isolation in the empty house take a toll. He is seeing visions of days from a century past, and experiencing sensations of terror and nearly unbearable grief - sensations not his own, but those of a stranger. Local legend has it that the house is haunted, and with every passing day Declan's belief in the ghostly presence grows. Only the companionship of the alluring Angelina Simone can distract him from the mysterious happenings in the house, but Angelina too has her own surprising connection to Manet Hall - a connection that will help Declan uncover a secret that's been buried for a hundred years.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Triple-platinum romance doyenne Roberts spins a tale of bayou passions old and new in her latest romantic suspense novel, set on the grounds of a dilapidated postbellum mansion outside New Orleans. Declan Fitzgerald, a Harvard-educated Boston lawyer, has longed to possess Manet Hall ever since he and his friend, Remy Payne, broke into the old place as drunken students on a lark. Now, on the eve of his wedding, Declan leaves Boston, the law and his fianc&#x2e;e, buys the decrepit hall and embarks on a mission to restore it with his own sweat, blood and money. But

Manet Hall comes with a dark history, and restoring it means uncovering its past, which includes rape, murder and betrayal. Declan encounters an additional challenge in the person of Cajun beauty and bar owner Lena Simone, who has her own dark history and a surprising connection to Manet Hall. As Declan digs deeper at the Hall, he often hears a baby crying. The cries are followed by voices, particularly that of Abigail Manet, the baby's mother. Abigail's story, which unfolds in 1900, is woven so tightly with Declan's that he finds it difficult to escape her grasp. In the end, only Lena can bring him back from the tragic past that threatens to engulf him. Roberts's role reversal here it is the male character who hears voices and even swoons gives her faithful readers a little extra thrill, and the lush setting and the satisfying if predictable romance round out the package. Literary Guild main selection. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Always check to see whether the crumbling manor house you impulsively decide to purchase and renovate is in fact haunted. That is what Declan Fitzgerald failed to do, and now he must uncover a 100-year-old secret before it is too late. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is the only book by Nora Roberts that I like - truly love this story and how she tells it. I have read it multiple times. The characters are powerful and the locale of New Orleans comes alive. Her best work in my opinion

Declan Fitzgerald is a hero that is funny, romantic and all male. Lina Simone is a Cajun lady that keeps him jumping. I loved the 2 readers (James Daniels for the present and I believe Sandra Burr for the past). The accents were an added bonus to the story that made it more entertaining. A ghost story with murder, betrayal and love. A definite keeper.

Not what I expected at all...great suspense then story takes off in a different direction. Would like to see a series.

Declan Fitzgerald may have been drunk and reckless when he broke into Manet Hall with his best friend Remy Payne during a trip to New Orleans when he was in college eleven years ago, but he was sober enough to know he wanted that broken down and aging old plantation home as soon as he saw it. He was serious enough about that want - that need - to leave his profession of law and

his town of Boston and his family and his ex-fiance to head down to the bayou after buying the house sight unseen in the ensuing eleven years. Compelled in a way he doesn't understand but satisfied to his soul about it, he buys it and intends to fix it, to renovate, modernize a little, but mostly restore it to its once statuesque and stately self. With his own two hands and a lot of sweat. He knows the rumors that Manet Hall is haunted, but he can live with a few ghosts. They're his ghosts now. As Manet Hall is his. One hundred years ago, however, a vicious, unspeakable crime was committed in that house. A life ended. A love and a family torn asunder. A young woman destroyed. Betrayal compounded by jealousy and callous elitism stirred the sultry, steaming heat of evil and stripped the life from a gentle soul. Manet Hall remembers. Declan is left wondering if he's got ghosts or memories or both as he slowly restores the old plantation house. All he knows is he has no intention of giving up his home...even if that means avoiding a room or two that give him a major case of the willies. He expects it'll all work out eventually. What he didn't expect was to stumble across an utterly delightful female creature one night when he ambled into a bar in the Quarter to meet up with Remy. He also didn't expect the unwavering, instantaneous certainty that he had been waiting for that very woman - and had been looking for her for a very, very long time. That woman, Lena Simone, bar owner and feisty spirit, is just as much his as is Manet Hall. Convincing her of that, however, may be harder than dealing with petulant ghosts and a centuries-old mystery.

No...wait...no 'maybe' about it. Roberts has dipped deep into the south and flavored Midnight Bayou with the decadent, weighty atmosphere of the sultry Crescent City, doing a particularly excellent job on the cadence in the dialogue of the characters who were raised there. The entire book had such a tremendous depth of culture with a pinch of Cajun spice that it added a gilded patina to a dark, tragic mystery and slightly creepy haunting, elevating the tension and adding desperate hope to the burgeoning relationship between Declan and Lena. I admit, I'm a total sucker for haunted house stories, so that aspect of the plot in no way disappointed, but I was a little uncertain about the large dichotomy in the tone of the narrative between the century-old atrocity and the lighter, more humorous discourse of the romantic development between the steady and stalwart Declan and his love-hardened Lena. That dichotomy seemed to lessen in some way the significance of the crime and dulled a little of its impact. I thought that was a shame, and by the end of the book I was hoping for a bit more closure and a heck of a lot more justice than I feel was offered. The characters, though, truly spotlight the book. I loved Declan. I thought he was very well written and fully developed, and even though my personal preference tends towards male leads who have at least one or two flaws to round them out, I found Declan's lack of same to be charming and refreshing. There was just something very solid, dependable, and true about him that I enjoyed...and some dry

humor and his ability to laugh at himself sealed the deal for me. I wasn't quite as enamored with Lena, and thought she was a bit too self contained with matters of the heart, too jaded throughout, and a bit too interested in maneuvering Declan and her relationship with him because of it. I wish Roberts had given her more room for the mother/daughter issues that were so vital to her definition. I thoroughly admired her strength, however, and her independence and poise in the face of the paranormal activities. She was a woman who knew her own mind and acted true to it, regardless of the consequences, and that gave her a steel edge wrapped in magnolia-scented appeal. Roberts' writing style is so fluid and she's got a superb ability to bend the narratives in her books to reflect the locale and the culture of the characters inhabiting them. It lends a feeling of authenticity to each book, and none more so than here in *Midnight Bayou*. I can't say it was my absolute favorite of her books, but the combination of the horror of the past tragedy and the creepy haunting, along with the strength of the lead character and the mastery of the tone and pace of the bayou country really appealed to me. I was pleased with this very solid read and reminded yet again of why Nora Roberts' career continues to thrive. Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

I loved the flashbacks!! It's not the best story but it was a good read. I had watched the movie on lifetime and the books are always better

I have always enjoyed Robert's books, I love the details she puts into her settings. She let's you feel immersed in the scenes, you can feel the heat, see the mists, see that old house in those mists. I enjoyed meeting this set of characters, the twist of who was who from past to future-unusual. It was one of those "well!" moments. The ending, very nice. Everything from the past, held so tight and close for so long, unfurled, at peace.

Excellent read..kept me guessing, ended in quite the surprise..No problem recommending it..

Before reading the book, I first saw the made for TV movie. I enjoy books about old houses with secrets and ghosts and the people who want to bring them back to their former beauty. Set in the Bayou on the swamp, the residents of the area are still talking about a mystery that had happened many years ago. A mystery involving two brothers, Lucian and Julian, their mother Josephine, the mysterious disappearance of Lucian's wife Abby and an abandoned baby. The answer to the mystery remains hidden until Declan Fitzgerald arrives in Louisiana to restore Manet Hall. He learns the history of the house and it's inhabitants from an old friend. He becomes very interested in a

young bar owner named Lena. Through her grandmother, Miss Odette, he learns some of the story. Declan begins to hear doors slamming and see apparitions in the house. He begins to sleep walk and to become someone else, someone he recognizes as his former self. Does he believe in re-incarnation? There is a bigger twist involving him and Lena. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and the movie. Nora Roberts has a special way of writing that never disappoints. Her way of describing the Bayou makes you feel like you're right there swatting mosquitoes. Good job! It's a keeper!

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