

The Haunting of Moscow House

by Olesya Salnikova Gilmore



About the Book

In this elegant gothic horror tale set in post-revolutionary Russia, two formerly aristocratic sisters race to uncover their family's long-buried secrets in a house haunted by a past that is dangerous --- and deadly --- to remember.

It is the summer of 1921, and a group of Bolsheviks have taken over Irina and Lili Goliteva's ancestral home in Moscow, a stately mansion falling into disrepair and decay. The remaining members of their family are ordered to move into the cramped attic, while the officials take over an entire wing of grand rooms downstairs. The sisters understand it is the way of things and know they must forget their noble upbringing to make their way in this new Soviet Russia. But the house begins to whisper of a traumatic past not as dead as they thought.

Eager to escape it and their unwelcome new landlords, Irina and Lili find jobs with the recently arrived American Relief Administration, meant to ease the post-revolutionary famine in Russia. For the sisters, the ARA provides much-needed food and employment, as well as a chance for sensible Irina to help those less fortunate and artistic Lili to express herself for a good cause. It might just lead them to love, too.

But at home, the spirits of their deceased family awaken, desperate to impart what really happened to them during the Revolution. Soon one of the officials living in the house is found dead. Was his death caused by something supernatural, or by someone all too human? And are Irina and Lili and their family next? Only unearthing the frightening secrets of Moscow House will reveal all. But this means the sisters must dig deep into a past no one in Russia except the dead are allowed to remember.

Discussion Guide

1. How did the author meld elements of gothic horror, folklore and real history in this book?
2. What does Moscow House represent? How does the setting shape the story?
3. In the beginning of the novel, Irina and Lili decide to secretly get jobs with the American Relief Administration. Given their controlling aunt, their Bolshevik landlords, and the danger of working for Americans, would you have done the same? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe that the past never dies? Why or why not?
5. How does sisterhood grow and change for Irina and Lili throughout the course of the novel? Conversely, how does each of the sisters come of age individually? Which sister did you identify with more?
6. How might the sisters' struggles reflect the political and social climate in 1920s postrevolutionary Moscow?
7. Who was your favorite secondary character, and why?
8. What did you think of Aunt Marie and her decisions throughout the novel? Is she a villain, deeply misunderstood or just a victim of circumstance?
9. Did you feel the characters got closure in the end? Why or why not?

Author Bio

Olesya Salnikova Gilmore is the author of *THE WITCH AND THE TSAR*, *THE HAUNTING OF MOSCOW HOUSE* and *THE FORTUNE TELLERS OF RUE DARU*. Originally from Moscow, she was raised in the US and graduated from Pepperdine University with a BA in English/political science, and from Northwestern School of Law with a JD. She practiced litigation at a large law firm in Chicago for several years before pursuing her dream of becoming an author. She writes speculative gothic suspense and other dark fiction. She also loves exploring Eastern European history and folklore. Her work has appeared in LitHub, Tor.com, CrimeReads, Writer's Digest and Washington Independent Review of Books, among others. She lives in a wooded, lakeside suburb of Chicago with her husband and two daughters.

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