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The Song of Hartgrove Hall

by Natasha Solomons



About the Book

A love triangle, family obligations, and the rediscovery of joy in the face of grief, all set against the alluring backdrop of an English country estate. This breathtaking new novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE HOUSE AT TYNEFORD is sure to strike a chord with fans of "Downton Abbey."

It?s a terrible thing to covet your brother?s girl . . .

New Year?s Eve, Dorset, England, 1946. Candles flicker, a gramophone scratches out a tune as guests dance and sip champagne --- for one night Hartgrove Hall relives better days. Harry Fox-Talbot and his brothers have returned from World War II determined to save their once grand home from ruin. But the arrival of beautiful Jewish wartime singer Edie Rose tangles the threads of love and duty, and leads to a devastating betrayal.

Fifty years later, now a celebrated composer, Fox reels from the death of his adored wife, Edie. Until his connection with his four-year-old grandson --- a piano prodigy --- propels him back into life, and ultimately leads him to confront his past. An enthralling novel about love and treachery, joy after grief, and a man forced to ask: Is it ever too late to seek forgiveness?

Discussion Guide

1. Hartgrove Hall is in and of itself an important character in the novel. How would you describe it? Discuss its many uses, both as a gathering space for personal and family functions and for the community. Do they change over time?

2. In the ?A Note on Song Collecting? section that follows the novel?s conclusion, Solomons discusses the tradition of song collecting. How does song collecting relate to cultural identity? At what points does Fox feel an urgency to preserve history in THE SONG OF HARTGROVE HALL?

3. The theme of maternal loss is present throughout THE SONG OF HARTGROVE HALL. How does Fox seek out his mother?s memory? How do his daughters cope with the loss of their mother? When does Fox feel their grief most acutely?

4. On page three of the book, Fox reveals that ?So many people think they knew [Edie]. The Little Nightingale. England?s perfect rose.? Why don?t these people actually know Edie? What aspects of her history and personality was Edie most hesitant to share? Why do you think she was able to confide in Fox?

5. Early in the novel, it is revealed that Edie suffers from crippling stage fright, yet she performs consummately. Discuss the difference between her personal and professional identities and how they manifest in various social situations. Which version of herself is Edie most comfortable displaying? How does she transition between the two?

6. Discuss Fox?s role as a grandfather, both before and after discovering Robin?s piano acumen. Is he comfortable being a grandparent? How do memories of Edie help guide him as he assumes this role?

7. Who most influenced Fox?s career as a composer? When the music in his head stops after Edie?s death, what restores his musicality?

8. How is masculinity discussed within the novel? What type of masculinity does the General value? Is Fox?s idea of masculinity different? When does Fox feel insecure about himself?

9. Discuss Fox?s relationship with his daughters. How would you characterize their interactions? How does Fox?s relationship with Clara change after her divorce?

10. Compare Fox?s relationship with Jack to his relationship with George. What do the brothers have in common? After their decision to turn Hartgrove Hall into a working farm, how does their relationship change?

11. Discuss the sojourn to Scotland that takes place in 1948. How is this trip restorative for Fox? How does he grow during this time?

12. THE SONG OF HARTGROVE HALL is a novel about grieving as much as it is one about healing. Discuss the intimate moments wherein Fox reveals his grief over Edie?s death to the reader. Is his sadness alleviated over time? How does his state of mind change throughout the novel?

13. Edie?s Jewish identity is revealed suddenly and cruelly to Fox by the General, but Fox does not discuss it with her directly for years. Why do you think he is hesitant to approach the topic? Does Fox seem accepting of her cultural heritage?

14. As the plot shifts between the past and the present, Solomons slowly reveals each character?s motivations. Who surprised you the most?

15. Recall the scene on page 196 in which Marcus reveals to Fox that he is dying. How does that conversation affect Fox? What actions does he take to ensure that his friend feels comforted during this time?

16. Edie and Fox?s relationship is a storied romance, yet it is borne out of deceit and manipulation. Did the revelation of their infidelities affect your understanding of each character?

17. Discuss Fox?s decision to reconcile with Jack. Why do you think he brought Robin with him to Florida? Were you surprised by how Jack received them? How did you interpret their last scene together?

Author Bio

Natasha Solomons is the author of nine internationally bestselling novels, including MR ROSENBLUM'S LIST; THE NOVEL IN THE VIOLA, which was chosen for the Richard & Judy Book Club; and THE GALLERY OF VANISHED HUSBANDS. Natasha lives in Dorset with her son, her daughter and her husband, the children's author David Solomons, with whom she also writes screenplays. Her novels have been translated into 17 languages. When not writing in the studio, Natasha can usually be found in her garden.

Critical Praise

?Devotees of television?s ?Downton Abbey? will be drawn in by this novel?s historical detail and emotional story line.?

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