



Hula

Lisa Shea

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For two young girls in the 1960s, the family backyard is both playground and prison. Among the bushes and brambles, it offers places to hide from the rages of their war-scarred father, places that also become secret gardens of the imagination. Told over the course of two hot Virginia summers, Hula presents a child's-eye view of a family drama played out to a chilling climax. The younger sister narrates, introducing us to her older sister's ritual taunts, her mother's dreamy distance, her father's escalating temper. Lisa Shea's haunting first novel probes the dark place where adolescent fantasies and real terrors collide.

Hula Details

Date : Published July 17th 2001 by W. W. Norton Company (first published 1994)

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Author : Lisa Shea

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From Reader Review Hula for online ebook

Gigi says

Nice quick read. Liked the writing style, but I think the author could've added a little more to the story.

Kasey Jueds says

One of the strangest books I've ever read... which I mean in the best way possible. Very spare, atmospheric, disturbing, beautiful. It makes me so happy when writers know what to leave out of their work--and Lisa Shea does, exactly: there's so much unsaid in this book, and it's exactly the right things that are left out, left to the imagination. And, along with that, exactly the right things are included: vivid and revelatory details, dialogue that's pointed and real. Plus I love the way the setting--a Virginia backyard in summer, and some of the surrounding countryside--doesn't feel separate, in its loveliness and darkness and menace, from any of the characters or what happens in the story. Not a fun read, because of the subject matter, but one that will stay with me for a long time, I think.

Kristy Lee says

After I finished this book, I was like "I don't get it." This book was all over the place, had no real plot, and underdeveloped characters. Some parts were interesting. The father's character, suffering from Post Traumatic Stress from the war, was worth the read. Otherwise, I was disappointed, and would rather read Cosmo.

Neena says

It was entertaining, the setting was hauntingly realistic. It captures the experiences of the family beautifully. Would love to read more, it ended rather abruptly for me. What's next for these girls?

Karen says

Purchased for 50 cents at the library book sale. It's a quick read and I guess it was worth the price but can't say I liked it much...

Lacy says

2/5 stars

I don't know. I think I've just read too many child abuse stories this year. Too many stories with crappy parents and damaged kids. But this one felt pointless and directionless. It read like a short story (which I'll admit, I'm pretty biased against). It reminded me of 'All the Ugly and Wonderful Things' minus the parts of that book that made me think and tore my heart out. So if you're interested in this I would suggest that instead.

I'm ready to read something happy now.

Inoli says

I'm going to have to get another look at this. I remember liking it well enough but it didn't stick in my memory at all. I'm giving it 3 stars but that's not reliable. I think there's a good chance of that going a little higher if I get it back from the library and review it for my poor memory.

Linda says

I'll save you the time of actually reading the book.

- * Two sisters
 - * Two summers
 - * A deranged / mentally ill father
 - * A mostly absent mother
 - * No plot
-

Sam says

Written in very poetic pose, this very realistic book let me down a little. Especially with the ending, which felt a little unrealistic based on what we saw from earlier in the book. Not as much plot as it is a lot of moments from the girls two summers, it was interesting seeing how war can affect lots of people who weren't even in the war and after it has ended. I would say for those aspects, and it's length, it's worth a least a look into.

****Edit****

More like 3 1/2- almost 4 now. I have changed my mind some since discussing this in AP English with everyone that's it's worth a little bit higher rating.

Jennifer says

Spare and poetic. Full of messy adolescent truth. Such a pearl of a novel.

Kathrina says

I almost shelved this little book in horror-thriller. It's not intentionally a thriller, but the voice of the child narrator, analyzing her world with the only tools available to her, constantly toes the precipice of complete devastation. I fear for her and her sister, not being able to see the shadows right behind her until she discovers them herself. But to add to that horror, instead of running from the monster, she turns to embrace it. As readers, we give her more attention than any character in her life, and it's terrifying to see the conclusions she makes from her child-logic. Sexual awakening is horribly entwined with violence, punishment, and inevitable pain. Some scenes are highly disturbing, but perhaps what's most frightening to readers is that she doesn't fear enough. Her experiences of pain, betrayal, and cruelty should terrify her, but seem only to teach her that this pain is what you deserve, and all you can ever expect. There is some hope in redemption at the end, as her mother removes her and her sister to a Waikiki-wanna-be hotel to escape their cruel father, but as the Hawaii theme of paradise is faked, so may be their redemption. It has probably come too late.

Stuart says

I thought this was a nearly perfect novel. It's beautiful, creepy, compelling. I finished it, and immediately flipped to page 1 and read it again. I also really like small novels.

Disappointed that Shea hasn't ever had a follow-up books published.

James says

the book's cover and its blurb describe a tale not exactly rendered on the pages inside... a scant coming-of-age tale that likely resonates more strongly with girls than boys... the writing is well-suited to the characters voices, and there is a palpable sense of something not quite right happening or about to happen, maybe... the violence of males is ever-present, a father that menaces the mother and punishes the girls in multiple ways (nothing graphic or unseemly), boys that tease the girls and also physically harm them in the stupid "but he must like you if he does that!" ways... the sisters have an uneasy balance that teeters on the maturation of the older girl tempered by the youth and social lack in the younger... not really "chilling" or "haunting" and a tad light on the "adolescent fantasy", but maybe the book's gifts are those left up the imagination, much like the girls' playful conquering of their surroundings, doubly utilized to escape their reality and dream up new places to go...

karen says

i am choosing to picture the sisters in this book as looking like sally mann's photographs. those eyes... these kids have *seen* some shit. and it manifests itself in a thousand ways in the details of this book - the foundations are disturbed.

this is a family story, focused upon the dangerous and subtle undertow of the first awareness of sex and death and their commingling in preadolescent girls.

this book resides in the porous space between short stories and novel. there is no individual arc to each story, but neither does it create, at the end of the day, a cohesive novel. this book is a collection of things that happened to two sister characters during their formative years with a father suffering from PTSD, a war-memento metal plate in his head and a penchant for wearing a gorilla mask and hands, a dancer-mother who no longer dances, and is wilting under pressure, and a series of sexually curious and pre-predatory boys metaphorically peering over the fence.

i loved that all of the action took place during two subsequent summers - it is like coming across a jumble of someone else's photographs in a box and there are so many questions about what happened in between the time when the pictures were taken. it's a really excellent way to tell a story in moments.

the only thing preventing this book from a five-star rating was the ending. i liked how shadowy the tone of the rest of the book was - it felt dangerous and subterranean and the end felt flashlit and exposed, if that makes any sense to anyone who hasn't read it.

this isn't the david lynch exploration of the horrors of suburbia - it is more subtle even than that. it takes place in the underpinnings - the secret dirty linens of family history and the mysteries of teen-girl psychology. it isn't all sugar and spice, after all. a lot of it is violence and manipulation and confusion.

overall, a short little book that will stay with you for a while...

come to my blog!

John McIlveen says

Nostalgic and heart-breaking tale of a defective relationship between two early teen sisters and their emotionally absent parents.
