



Spirit Hunters

Ellen Oh

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We Need Diverse Books founder Ellen Oh returns with *Spirit Hunters*, a high-stakes middle grade mystery series about Harper Raine, the new seventh grader in town who must face down the dangerous ghosts haunting her younger brother. A riveting ghost story and captivating adventure, this tale will have you guessing at every turn!

Harper doesn't trust her new home from the moment she steps inside, and the rumors are that the Raine family's new house is haunted. Harper isn't sure she believes those rumors, until her younger brother, Michael, starts acting strangely. The whole atmosphere gives Harper a sense of déjà vu, but she can't remember why. She knows that the memories she's blocking will help make sense of her brother's behavior and the strange and threatening sensations she feels in this house, but will she be able to put the pieces together in time?

Spirit Hunters Details

Date : Published July 25th 2017 by HarperCollins

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Author : Ellen Oh

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From Reader Review *Spirit Hunters* for online ebook

Hafsa Sabira says

I am confused about what I feel about this book. Reading it was like going through an emotional rollercoaster where I wanted to buy it or throw it away in the trashcan. To be honest, it's a pointless novel. I think even the novelist was confused about what to write.

I am just glad that I finished it after promising myself a treat of hot coffee.

Brandy Painter says

This is a creepy ghost story. Really creepy in some places. It is a perfect book to have on hand for kids who enjoy the scary kind of ghost stories and want to read about kids battling ghosts. It is well written with excellent world building and fully rounded characters. It is a hard book to put down. (I was forced to put it down for a little while and couldn't wait to get back to it.) The pacing and the plotting keep the reader engrossed until the very end. Also it's a sibling story so it gets bonus awesome points of that.

Jenna (Falling Letters) says

Review originally published 26 June 2018 at Falling Letters.

Spirit Hunters, the first book in an upcoming series, is a classic haunted house tale with a Korean-American perspective. (This book is #ownvoices for Korean-American representation.) Harper's family has just moved from an air conditioned apartment in New York to a stuffy old house in Washington D.C. Harper knows the move has something to do with a fire at school and a serious accident that put her in hospital, but she has no memories of the incident. Harper is wary of her new home, especially when she learns of its' supposedly haunted past from her new friend Dayo. When Harper's usually sweet little brother Michael starts acting sullen and mean, Harper and Dayo begin investigating the history of the house in an attempt to uncover the root of Michael's behaviour. Harper unblocks her memories halfway through the book, remembering everything that happened around her accident as well as the critical fact that she can see and communicate with ghosts – a skill that Harper will need to use to her advantage if she wants to save Michael from a nasty ghost's possession.

What sets *Spirit Hunters* apart from other middle grade books with ghosts is that *Spirit Hunters* feels properly frightening. The sharp change in Michael's personality demonstrates the threat that Billy, the older boy who haunts the house, can be. As Harper and Dayo uncover more of Billy's history, they learn just how awful he was when he was alive. Billy is a real threat to Harper and her family, and the creepy happenings he raises around the house invoke the same kind of chills I experience when reading adult haunted house stories.

In addition to being a ghost story, *Spirit Hunters* deals with themes of cultural identity. Harper is Korean-American and has a Korean grandmother who lives near Washington, but whom she's rarely met because her mother and grandmother are estranged. Harper eventually reconnects with her grandmother and learns that

she is a mudang, a shaman who can hunt spirits, and that Harper has the same ability to do so. Family conflict arises because Harper's mother does not have that ability and denies the existence of ghosts. Racism is also addressed, not as a primary theme in the novel but something that Harper, as a visible minority, has to deal with in her everyday life.

The Bottom Line: Recommend for readers who love truly frightening books. Extension activities could include filming a book trailer or sharing ghost stories from other cultures/comparing them to Korean beliefs about ghosts.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It's early summer and Harper Raine, 12, isn't very happy about the family's move to Washington, DC. Older sister Kelly thinks the move is all Harper's fault because of starting a fire at school and then having a terrible accident at Briarly, a psychiatric hospital, that left her with both arms broken and two broken ribs. Harper, however, has absolutely no memory of either event

The new house is unbearably hot because of broken air conditioning, except for 4 year-old Michael's room, which is unnaturally cold. And Michael claims to have made a new friend in his room named Billy that no one else can see. Slowly, Harper begins to see her brother change from a sweet, loving little boy to a mean, violent child who only wants to stay in his room with Billy.

When Harper meets Dayo, a Jamaican girl who lives a few blocks away, they become instant friends. Dayo knows some of the odd history of Harper's new house, and tells her it has always been considered to be haunted.

As something evil and malicious takes over Michael more and more, Harper and Dayo research on the house's history and discover some really frightening information. And it helps when Harper reconnects with her old friend Rose, a ghost who lives in a family mirror, and who can help figure things out. At the same time, Harper begins to remember more details about the fire and her accident at Briarly. And she is beginning to see glimpses of Billy, the boy possessing her brother. But what can two 12 year-old girls and a sweet ghost do in the face of such evil?

Luckily, Harper's estranged grandmother lives nearby and shows up suddenly. Grandma Lee is a Korean mudang or shaman, and her belief and work in the spiritual world is what has alienated Mrs. Raine from her mother. She immediately accesses the situation with the house and especially with Michael, who by now is almost totally possessed by Billy. And she informs Harper that she too is a mudang, and it is up to her to exorcise the house and her brother. But does Harper's understand her newly uncovered ability as a spirit hunter enough to go up against such a strong malevolence.

Spirit Hunters is a fast read simply because you can't put it down, the need to know what happens next is just too great. Even though the story covers only 10 days, Oh manages to build the tension slowly, beginning with a playful insinuation of creepiness and working up to almost full scale horror. Some of the tropes she used are a bit cliché, like oozing, bleeding walls, or floating ghosts, but these by no means diminish the delicious pleasure of the story for fans of scary tales.

Oh's writing is friendly and pretty straight forward, but I liked that in-between the third person narrative are Harper's first person journal entries. These allow the reader to directly know and understand what she is

feeling and thinking, and which also slowly reveal the blocked events surrounding the fire at school and the accident at the psychiatric hospital as they resurface in Harper's memory.

And I liked the way Oh introduced Harper's Korean identity on her mother's side of the family (her father is clearly not Korean). In *Spirit Hunters*, Harper begins to explore more fully this part of who she is and, I hope, it will expand subsequent books in this new series.

Spirit Hunters takes place in Washington DC and you couldn't ask for a better ghost story location (except maybe New Orleans). There's just something about those old homes, the sidewalks inlaid with bricks, and the heat and dense humidity of summer that can be cut with a knife that all just lends itself to a well-done scary story.

If you want a good hair-raising scare this summer, do pick up a copy of *Spirit Hunters* and enjoy.

This book is recommended for readers age 9+

This book was an EARC received from Edelweiss Plus

Dayla says

I can't get over the fact that this is a middle grade book. This was so creepy!! I loved the Korean spiritual references and how the haunting was described.

I do wish the parents were more aware of the haunting so that the protagonist could have a moment of "I told you so", but other than that, this was a fun and creepy read!

Happy reading!

Shenwei says

I got the creeps reading this ????. but on top of the ghost story there's also a story of family, friendship, and a girl coming into herself and her potential.

Miriam says

All the elements here were pretty familiar, especially the Michael/Billy plot, and the most original bit with the long-dead Grady wasn't elaborated enough. That aside, the writing and characters were solid and it was a very enjoyable read. I think this would be excellent for a kid or even adult who hadn't already read a lot in this genre, and I'm certainly open to try something else by this author.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Harper's family moves from New York City to Washington, D.C. and end up in a decrepit old house. Harper has had problems at school-- she was accused of setting fire to the art room, and was hospitalized for some time, but she doesn't remember any of it. She notices that her four-year-old brother Michael's room feels oddly clammy, and he claims to have a "new friend" named Billy who tells him things that cause him to have headaches. Harper does manage to meet a neighbor girl, Dayo, so she has someone to help her investigate when things get odd. Harper has two bad accidents in one week; she is pushed down the stairs, and also cuts herself on an old metal fire truck. Dayo does some online investigating and finds out some very creepy things about the house, and Harper reconnects with her own "imaginary" friend Rose who inhabits an antique mirror. Things escalate with Michael, and Harper's estranged grandmother finally visits the family and not only helps Harper but gives her the surprising news that she is a spirit hunter who can communicate with ghosts. Grandma Lee is a mudang, a shaman who has worked with the spirit world for a long time, which is the source of the rift between her and Harper's mother. Can Harper save her brother, make the house safe, and come to terms with her inherited skills?

Strengths: No wonder middle school students don't want to move! All of the houses people move into are haunted! Bonus points to Oh for managing to add some new twists to this trope with a benevolent ghost friend, an unexplained hospitalization, and a Korean grandmother with interesting skills. Add to this standard family dynamics (busy older sister, young brother who requires babysitting), supportive and involved parents and a new best friend whose mother is a chef, and this was a fantastic story about ghosts, family, and figuring out personal identity. Really enjoyed this one.

Weaknesses: It was a little hard to believe that Harper's mother was so averse to the idea of ghosts, since Harper's and Michael's behaviors were so erratic, but I suppose if you grew up with a mother who was a shaman, it might warp you a little.

What I really think: Clearly, I need to stock up on salt. Just in case!

Book Riot Community says

Harper Raine has a bad feeling about her family's new home the moment she steps inside. Then she hears the rumors about the house. And to top things off, her little brother begins acting strangely. Now Harper is spending seventh grade seeking answers to the spirits she senses and trying to figure out a way to save her brother before it's too late. This is a fun debut to a new middle grade series!

Backlist bump: The Children of Green Knowe by L.M. Boston

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<http://bookriot.com/listen/shows/allt...>

Korrina (OwlCrate) says

Wayyyy too scary for me!

Elise (TheBookishActress) says

Very middle-of-the-road middle grade fiction. Not the book's fault, this genre is just not for me.

The writing style of this kind of annoyed me. I sort of expected "a bit childish" which I'd consider fine for an MG novel, but the "she felt angry" kind of style started to annoy me pretty quickly.

The only new or original thing offered here is the Asian lead characters and general diversity, which I did appreciate. 20/10 excellent for middle grade readers.

Cat (cat-thecatladylady) says

this was a fun read.

I like the scary aspect, although it was a bit predictable and too scary. but the writing was a bit off for me, reading as too childish or too adult at times. still need to gather my thoughts better on this one.

full review here: <https://catshelf.wordpress.com/2017/0...>

Darinda says

Harper and her family have moved to Washington, D.C., and Harper hates their new place. Something is just not right about it. Harper learns her home is supposedly haunted, and starts to have a feeling of déjà vu. As Harper's feeling of unease increase, so does the erratic behavior of her younger brother. Harper is missing some memories, and slowly, some start to return to her as she focuses on helping her brother.

A middle grade ghost story. Fun, spooky, and entertaining. Great for fans of ghosts stories... I would have loved this book when I was a kid. Also, a diverse books read, as the main characters are Korean-American.

Mehsi says

A creepy, haunting middle-grade book, the first in a series, and I definitely want more books.

This one lays the perfect foundation for a whole lot of creepy, spooky stories. I am always on the lookout for new horror/ghost stories, especially in the middle-grade/childrens range. Often those books avoid the scariness or weaken it as the story goes on. But not this one.

Oh no, I was definitely creeped out many times, and even NOPE NOPE NOPEd quite a few times (dang that spider/ghost thing on the walls and ceiling or that stuff in the attic). Yep, that is fuel for nightmares, especially with how well the author writes the scenes.

Not only do we have the sense of dread, the spooky house, and a brother (almost) possessed, but we also have a bit of memory loss and what those memories contain. I am really thankful that the author wrote them so well, didn't hurry with the revelation, I would have been disappointed otherwise considering how big of a deal it is and how much it matters to the story.

Harper is a wonderful character, strong, brave, and I was worried about her, and also felt sorry for what happened to her, to her lost memories.

The house was positively spooky, and I was amazed that no one else seemed to notice. I know, I know, they don't have any powers, but I would think anyone would feel the dread seeping from the walls. Not the least with how the little brother is acting totally out of character.

There were a few moments that were quite obvious (the ghost in the house, but also who the great spirit hunter was), but eh, it is still a childrens book. It wouldn't be the first time that things like that are obvious.

Extra love go to Dayo, she was the best, and I hope we will see more of her (and hopefully she can help Harper out) in the next books.

Yuna, the mom, I am still not sure what to think of her. On the one hand I can understand why she did what she did, but on the other hand... I just can't and I was pissy at her for a few parts in the book.

I loved it when those characters appeared in various parts of the story. Haha, yeah, I won't tell you who, or what, as that would spoil something, and I don't want that to happen.

The last chapters were a rollercoaster and I was on the edge of whatever place I was sitting. It was spooky, creepy, and I was afraid for Harper. Would she be able to do it? What would happen afterwards?

Highly recommended if you are looking for a spooky, creepy, twisty book with great characters.

Review first posted at <https://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Adriyanna Zimmermann says

Not sure why there's all these "too childish" 2/3 star reviews. This is middle grade which means the target audience is 9-12 (in most cases). It is meant for children. When reviewing MG you need to be thinking from the perspective of the target audience, not yourself (assuming reviewer \neq target audience).

I know Oh's first series was YA so some of her YA readers may be picking up this new book (being a fan of the author), but please remember this is middle-grade, not YA or adult. If the writing is "too childish" you probably shouldn't be reading it.

Also, I know a 3 star rating/review is usually good but it brings down the average rating which may deter MG readers. Goodreads almost always gets more reviews than book retailer sites.
