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Susan Cooper, Omar Rayyan (Illustrator)

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"Centuries old and housands of miles from home". When Emily and Jess Volnik's family inherits a remote, crumbling Scottish castle, they also inherit the Boggart - an invisible, mischievous spirit who's been playing tricks on residents of Castle Keep for generations. Then the Boggart is trapped in a rolltop desk and inadvertently shipped to the Volniks' home in Toronto, where nothing will ever be the same - for the Volniks or the Boggart.

In a world that doesn't believe in magic, the Boggart's pranks wreak havoc. And even the newfound joys of peanut butter and pizza and fudge sauce eventually wear thin for the Boggart. He wants to go home - but his only hope lies in a risky and daring blend of modern technology and ancient magic.

The Boggart Details

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From Reader Review The Boggart for online ebook

Eshusdaughter says

When a Canadian family learns they've inherited a keep in Scotland they discover a lot more than they bargained for. Along with crumbling bricks and nice furniture they also get a mischievous boggart. The Boggart is inadvertently transported from Scotland to Canada and all sorts of mayhem ensues.

A fun, fast read that is quaintly sweet. This is a good book to share with a kid and there are some fun parts that had me laughing. I liked the Boggart's character and the way Cooper portrayed his mischievous nature. The ending was a little too pat and contrived and really pushed the bonds of credibility. Still, as a kids book you have to expect the happy ending all neat and nice and tied up in a pretty bow and that is exactly what this book delivers.

Cassandra says

My overwhelming impression reading this book was one of pleasant surprise. Though I've always enjoyed Susan Cooper's output in the past, considering how little is spoken about this one, I hadn't been expecting it to be as good as it is. The plot unfolds at a nice pace, and details from the beginning resurface at the end in an agreeably rounded denouement. I've given three stars because I believe I gave four to Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* sequence, and *The Boggart* doesn't quite achieve their level of soaring beauty, but it really is an excellent little story.

The characters, while not particularly deep, are realistic and original. The villain is appropriately slimy and irritating in that patronizing niceness that grownups often overlook, and that every kid despises. The kids' mom is lovingly rendered: both sympathetic and exasperatingly overprotective, as a mom ought to be. Her son's "layabout" genius friend whom she so distrusts is a strikingly ambiguous detail for such a young audience, as is the hinted relationship between the two helpful theatre workers who first teach the heroes to call the 'weird stuff' that has been occurring by its name, 'Boggart.' Both these details, without intruding onto the story, add subtle layers of authenticity to the world.

Some have complained about the use of technology in the story, saying that it "dates" the book and makes it irrelevant; but honestly, computer technology becomes outdated so quickly nowadays that by that argument one would have to avoid it in literature entirely, and it's scarcely the author's fault that nobody uses floppy discs anymore. I can't see that it detracts from the story in any way. I felt rather intrigued by the glimpse into a time when computer games were an exciting new invention being created by gangs of enthusiastic kids, rather than the massive industry of today. Cooper weaves science in with the magic in a surprising way, and in this as well as in the affectionate nod to *Business Invites* comparison to Madeleine L'Engle.

But the real heart of the story is the Boggart himself. With his satisfyingly mischievous pranks, his innocent delight in fun, and his alien mind (racing blithely, Tinkerbell-style, from one emotion to another, the ecstasy of discovery to brain-numbing sorrow to cheerful curiosity, within seconds) Susan Cooper's little scottish puck is a delicious realization of the trickster spirit.

I wasn't a fan of this audio recording. The narrator just doesn't seem to grasp the frolicking, antic tone of this story; he is booming and august when he ought to be atmospheric, and recites the humorous bits as if he were

reading a stern lecture--not in a dry, ironic way, but rather as if he slightly disapproved. He is also apparently under the impression that dramatic moments must be read at a shout, LISTEN TO HOW EXCITING THIS IS, as if the audience couldn't figure out for ourselves when something important is going on.

However, this story begs to be read aloud. Its blend of whimsy, lightly poetic descriptions and slapstick humor make it excellent bedtime-story fodder. While not necessarily life-changing, it would make a great addition to a library; if you want a fun adventure and quality storytelling, you really can't go wrong.

Melanti says

I liked her *Dark is Rising* series, but I just can't get into this one.

I wanted something light to read in between stories of a difficult classic but this just isn't working at the moment. I've been pecking away at it for about a week now and I'm barely to page 30. Normally for a book for this age level, I'd be to page 30 in under half an hour. It's just not holding my attention for more than a page or two at a time.

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

An okay read for a sleepless night. Published in 1993 but it feels late seventies, with the media fascination for poltergeists, ESP, and the "adolescent girl rage causes telekinesis" trope (remember "Carrie"?) However, beyond a mention of the fact that the Boggart is a part of "Wild Magic", Cooper manages to keep it all very light. Nobody's special, nobody's Chosen--it's a comic little story of Canadians dealing with an ancient Scottish spirit they have inherited along with the castle and the furniture. I got a definite The Canterville Ghost vibe, as the Boggart tries to make friends with the kids and just wants a little appreciation--but not the kind he gets from the creepy psychiatrist who wants to "study the phenomenon." The little brother is a computer nerd with floppy disks and a B/W monitor, who creates a computer game that may or may not hold the answer. Their parents are so wrapped up in their own lives and work that they have very little clue as to what's going on, and don't get one throughout the book. The kids get on with their own affairs and as long as they're home on time for supper everything's jake.

I see there's a second volume (naturally). I don't expect much from it, because there wasn't much here, but for a light frothy read it was okay. Much more humour than in the The Dark Is Rising Sequence, less angst and no attempt to down Christianity; it simply doesn't arise. It passed the time on a sleepless night and was entertaining enough.

Jerry says

I usually like kid-friendly stories involving computer technology, but, this one did not do much for me; it was just dumb and unexciting. Fans of youth fiction can do much better than this.

Mahrya says

Cooper, Susan. *The Boggart*, Aladdin Paperbacks, 196 pages. Fictional chapter book, fantasy.

Description: A Scottish spirit called the Boggart is unwittingly taken to Canada when a Canadian family inherits his castle. Emily and Jessup, the kids, struggle to communicate with the Boggart and get him to stop playing his disruptive tricks.

Review: This book is at its best at the beginning and end of the story, when the Boggart resides on his Scottish Island. The prose is incredibly descriptive during these passages, making the misty setting and ancient-seeming characters come to life for chapter book readers.

The Canadian scenes, which comprise most of the book, are less inspired. The children are constantly blamed for the Boggart's antics, and their parents are remain oblivious to what is going on around them. While dull parents are common in books for this age group, the parents in *The Boggart* are nothing more than caricatures, which are uninteresting for any age group. The technology references in this book also make it seem rather dated and stale.

Professional Reviews:

Flowers, Ann. *Horn Book*, May/June 1993.

Flowers describes the characters in *The Boggart* as well-rounded. I agree that the children, as well as the Boggart are complete characters, but not the parents.

Fader, Ellen. *School Library Journal*, Jan. 1993.

Fader mentions that the novel aptly handles the meeting of technology and ancient folklore. Although I think that the folklore v. technology theme is an ambitious one, I don't think that it holds up 15 years later.

Misti says

The Boggart by Susan Cooper -- When the old MacDevon dies, Castle Keep on a Scottish island is inherited by the Volnick family. They visit their legacy before putting it on the market, and inadvertently ship the castle's mischievous boggart back to Toronto. What will a creature of Old Magic make of modern technology?

As you might expect, the computer parts of the story are solidly 1993, and some of the specs mentioned will give savvy modern readers a good laugh. Moving beyond that, it's obvious that Cooper is a master of her craft: the descriptions, the relationships between characters, and the emotion of the piece is spot on. I enjoyed this more than I thought I would.

Stephanie Jobe says

I read this years ago but honestly I couldn't remember what I thought of it. It was probably quite similar to my feeling right now. Meh. I don't dislike it but it falls sort of flat in comparison to *The Dark is Rising*

Sequence. It is heavily dated by the technology used. I mean I read the description of the computer the nerds drool over to my boyfriend and we both laughed out loud. Black and white monitors and floppy disks are something more alien than time travel to today's kids. A modern kid would tell you to email the boggart. You spend a lot of time watching the boggart's tricks but because he quickly forgets things even his own grief he is hard to relate to. To use my character terminology I feel like the kids are round but they are not dynamic. No one changes. There is no lesson learned at the end. It hardly feels like a resolved conflict even. I did think she did a good job of giving a decently well rounded view of the people within the theatre world without introducing too many alien concepts for kids. Though dear world, as an ex-stage manager why oh why do you always have to portray us in literature and film as either a glorified light board op or the crazy nazi with a megaphone? (Cooper goes with light board op). I have the 1995 edition, though there is a new one with a less dated cover but we all know any library has the old cover with a computer older than anything kids today have ever seen.

Janice says

I'm not sure how I missed this Susan Cooper book. I'm a big fan of her other works. I found this on Scribd last night and decided to read it.

I love authors that can make non-human creatures actually NON-human. The Boggart of the title is a creature of old Wild Magic. He's not motivated by many human things, and doesn't feel most human emotions. He has developed a taste for things like peanut butter and applesauce over the centuries, and once or twice, he's felt grief. In this book, he gets homesick, because he was accidentally carried far from his home in the Scottish castle where he'd lived time out of mind. The boggart is curious and experimental; his antics are fun to him, but are capable of causing real harm. And it's harm that the boggart is largely incapable of understanding.

This is one of those early 90's books that carries an odd cross of technology and supernatural things. Computers form a link between the children and the boggart.

And there's a happy ending. It's a slight book, but a nice story.

Chelsea says

I really liked this one - in large part because the Boggart himself is such a charming, entertaining little curmudgeonly creature. I liked the beginning, in the castle in Scotland, better, so I really enjoyed the sequel (The Boggart and the Monster), when they head back. A good choice for kids who are too young for Cooper's The Dark Is Rising series, but want a fun fantasy.

Thom says

A slightly dated pre-teen book about a trickster spirit from Scotland that ends up shipped to Canada. The kids are the main characters and the adults busy or clueless. I liked the environment and the problem solving our heroes go through, and found the book fun, if short.

Nine year old Jessup has more hobbies (hockey and computers) and is better fleshed out than older sister Emily. While in Toronto, there are a few too many instances of the adults not believing the kids, despite the evidence. Other than that, the plot and resolution are believable and work well. The Celtic side characters are great, and the villain is suitably creepy.

Author Susan Cooper is better known for her award winning fantasy series *The Dark is Rising*. She has won other awards for childrens literature and came to my attention through the World Fantasy Award she was awarded in 2013. I would definitely like to read more from this author.

Joan says

What a delightful, humorous, saucy melding of ancient mythologies and modern technology! The boggart is an ancient Scottish spirit that lives for mischief. However, sometimes the mischief goes awry and gets even the Boggart into trouble. The Boggart ends up in Toronto and while he has loads of fun...discovers peanut butter and pizza!...he also finds that he is very confused by modern life and ends up missing his home in Scotland. But how can an ancient creature of wild magic get across the Atlantic ocean? Even boggarts need help now and then! Now of course, I'll have to get the second book in the series....

Latasha says

the story was ok. I know I was not the target age range for this book and sometimes that's ok but I think younger kids will like this more than I did.

Xyra says

This was fabulously written. Susan had me crying along with the boggart in the first chapter...that was 13 pages. The visuals she painted of the boggart's memories and emotions were so very strong that my heart was touched immediately.

So why did I only give it 4 stars? Sadly, for something that some authors do not anticipate...what was commonplace in 1993 (or late 1980s since I know it took time to get this story published) is so far out of date now that the target age readers may have no idea what she is talking about. Example: Emily goes to a record store and the sales person finds her a tape. I received my first CD player in 1991, so this part really could have been avoided since CDs are still readily available. Jessup's part in dating the story line was unavoidable since his hobby is computers and at the time many still had monochromatic monitors and stored everything on either 5 1/4 or 3 1/2 inch discs.

Back to the good stuff. I love how the author introduced us to the Boggart and his style of old magic. [Note to Harry Potter fans: This boggart is not the kind that takes this shape of what you fear most in order to feed off your fear. This boggart is more like a combination of house elf (he stays with one family) and invisible Peeves (likes to play jokes to have fun not to hurt) and is really quite likable.] She also gave us a look at a being related to samhain (Halloween). Sadly, his good intentions land Emily and Jessup in hot water.

Part of the story takes place in a remote part of the Scottish Highlands. Castle Keep sits alone on an island in

the middle of a loch. The residents must use a boat to get to the mainland for supplies. The boggart lives in the castle. Emily's family inherits the castle and when they go to investigate they meet the boggart, but do not really get to know him until they find out he has tagged along with them back to Canada. The majority of the story takes place in Toronto.

The boggart wakes and starts playing his jokes on the family. As Emily and Jessup learn about him, they really get to like him, but he is very out of place in the land filled with technology.

The part that disturbed me the most was that Emily's mother thought that her polite, well behaved teen daughter was harboring bitter thoughts about her parents and those thoughts were manifesting in acts of telekinesis, so she contacts a super creepy para-psychologist. This was horrible...to think that a mom would come to that conclusion without actually talking to her children first. This mom was weird. She yelled a lot, she didn't listen or try to understand, and she wasn't there. In fact, like many YA parents, these parents weren't really there for their children, but were focused on their jobs. Thankfully, this portion of the story was not very big. Dr. Stigmore reminded me a lot of the "child catcher" in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.
shudders

Maggie, Emily & Jessup's mother, did soften at the end. She focused more on her children at that point rather than jumping to conclusions and she apologized for some of the nasty things she said about one of Jessup's friends as well.

To balance that are those that do believe what Emily and Jessup are saying. Those characters include Tommy (Emily fancies him), Willie, and Cai. The three are instrumental in educating Emily and Jessup on boggart history and behavior.

The story was very emotional and exciting from page one to the very end. I enjoyed every moment (even the creepy ones) so much so, I might search this book out to add it to my collection.

Happy reading!

hedgehog says

Nostalgia re-read 2018! I carried a couple of clear memories about this story: the Halloween costumes, and the ending with the computer game central to the plot. What my sheltered baby self skimmed right over were the gay couple in the dad's theatre troupe. :D I also didn't catch the undercurrent of tension with Barry, the high-school dropout.

In 2018, the tech bits are hilariously dated; 2018 me also found the way the computer programming was handled to be written by someone who doesn't... know how programming works... There's a sinister subplot with a doctor that doesn't really go anywhere*, and the computer solution was kind of thrown in at the last minute. I feel like this book could have benefited from being a little longer. But the base story is still pretty charming, and I can see why this stuck in my head for so many years. Scottish castles! Computers! ("Computalk" LOL) Scottish penpals! Tricksy supernatural spirits! I love when magical creatures are truly Other, and the Boggart—sympathetic, but not a little unsettling in his lack of care for human safety, even as he considers the children 'friends'—qualifies.

* I guess it sort of felt like a fourth wall thumbing-of-the-nose at YA stories where the 'hauntings' are really a metaphor for the Curse Of Adolescence etc. For me, nothing about this plot thread worked, especially the parents' reactions. You have a doctor who says your daughter needs to be locked up and your response is to ignore her distress and think this is a good plan, up until the point said doctor tries to profit off the case to the press?? It feels like the publicity is what sends Maggie and Robert over the edge and not concern for their own child, which is... uh... _(?)_/-

RhiannaH says

A fun and exciting story about the relationship between two children and a mysterious, mythical and magical creature! Definitely a book to share with a class - the mischievousness of the Boggart will have them attached to the story throughout, determined to find out what the Boggart will get up to next.

kelley says

Susan Cooper is one of my favorite authors. Her words are so "visual", she paints a picture in your mind as you read. Her narrative is so descriptive you can "hear" the haunting sound of the gulls as they sail above the sea shore. I could actually believe I was driving over the moors of Scotland, visiting a castle for the first time. Her writing is a treat for the senses, to be savored and enjoyed.

The story itself is completely delightful, with the Boggart being an exceptional character. I would recommend this book to all readers.

Grace says

While finishing out my *The Dark Is Rising* re-read, I figured I'd pick this one up on the way down. Unfortunately, I didn't really like *The Boggart* very much. If the whole book had been like the first part in the Scottish village, I would have enjoyed it a lot more.

As soon as we left Scotland to go to Canada, though, everything just felt incredibly disjointed. I liked the Boggart, and the humans seemed okay, but I couldn't really muster up any interest for them? Serious things were happening (the Boggart almost killing people on accident, Emily almost getting committed to a psychiatric ward, the family relationships suffering as everyone blamed each other for the Boggart's problem-causing) but there was a weird dissonance between the type of things that were happening, and the sketchy, lighthearted tone of the book.

The computer stuff was super confusing and weird, as well. Maybe it's just because it's old and I wasn't alive in 1993 to know what computers were like then, but half of it seemed to not even make sense, and the rest of it was a distraction from everything that really mattered.

Zabet says

I'm a huge fan of The Dark Is Rising series and no stranger to reading YA novels as an adult. This novel, however, was not the greatest and I wouldn't enthuse about it, reread it, or recommend it to my friends the way I have TDIR over the years. In the opening chapter Cooper shines, her prose sure and amazingly strong (if a little sweeping), but the rest of the story absolutely flounders. Cooper's inexperience with computers is massively distracting and, in the end, creates a huge hole in the plot. I feel like at the time it was written she was probably very enthusiastic about computers, but, a little like most of the grownups in the story, found them to be frustrating little boxes of timesuckage. I was strongly reminded of every time I ever encountered faculty at the University who wanted to teach a class so that they could learn the subject; by the end of the class, said faculty's grasp was poor at best and their students were disgruntled and bitter.

Warren Rochelle says

I am a big Susan Cooper fan, especially of The Dark is Rising series. I read this book because I am interested in boggart lore and there is a fair amount here in this story of a Canadian family who travel to Scotland when the dad inherits a castle there. When they decide to sell the castle and go home to Toronto, they pack up some of the furniture. Inside a desk, the boggart was sleeping. Late 20th century Canada is a big surprise to the Boggart, practical jokester extraordinaire.

There is a fair bit of the story that is predictable, beginning with the family inheriting a haunted (sort of) castle, as well as the shock of a creature of Wild Magic when he encounters the modern world. Besides the strong writing and engaging story, I was struck by the boggart as a sympathetic character, especially when he is finally able to tell them he wants to go home. The use of a computer game was clever.

Middle school children and those a bit younger, 4th and 5th grade, who are interested in the fantastic, will like this book.
