



Dial-a-Ghost

By Eva Ibbotson

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The Dial-a-Ghost Agency finds good homes for ghosts. And Fulton and Frieda Snodde-Brittle are looking for a few frightening ghosts to "accidentally" scare their young cousin and heir, Oliver, to death. The ladies at the Dial-a-Ghost Agency have the perfect match: the Shriekers, two bloodstained and bickering horrors. But thanks to a mix-up at the agency, the Wilkinsons, a kind family of ghosts, arrive instead. Can they put a stop to the Snodde-Brittles' schemes before it's too late?

Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes.

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Dial-a-Ghost By Eva Ibbotson Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #833680 in Books
- Brand: Puffin
- Published on: 2003-04-14
- Released on: 2003-04-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.80" h x .60" w x 5.10" l, .41 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 195 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

After spending most of his 10 years in a London orphanage, Oliver Smith is horrified to discover he is the sole master of a grand old mansion. Oliver is quite satisfied with his life just as it is, but he soon finds himself ensconced in a spooky, creaky tower bedroom in Helton Hall, under the care of his two cruelly calculating cousins, the Snodde-Brittles. Cousin Fulton and Cousin Frieda, next in line to inherit the family mansion if something should *happen* to Oliver, have offered to help him settle in to his new home. Of course, if the matron of the orphanage knew that this assistance involved renting bloodthirsty ghosts from the Dial-a-Ghost Agency in hopes of frightening the boy to death, she certainly wouldn't have allowed Oliver out of her sight. As it turns out, though, there's been a bit of a mix-up at Dial-a-Ghost. The gruesome specters intended for Helton Hall accidentally end up at a convent, while the gentle family of ghosts that wind up in Oliver's home suit him just fine, much to his evil cousins' dismay.

Eva Ibbotson has established herself as a true master of her genre with her extraordinary fantasy novels such as *Which Witch?* and *Island of the Aunts*. In *Dial-a-Ghost*, Ibbotson continues to excel in wit, whimsy, and wisdom. It's as if one's favorite crazy aunt has dropped by to tell the kind of convoluted and magical story children *really* want to hear. (Ages 8 to 12) --*Emilie Coulter*

From Publishers Weekly

Once again, Ibbotson (*Which Witch*; *Island of the Aunts*) dishes up an irresistible brew of magical high jinks and adventure in this tongue-in-cheek post-WWII ghost story set in Britain and starring two families of displaced spooks. Miss Pringle and Mrs. Mannering, founders of the Adopt-A-Ghost agency, are delighted when they find homes for two of their hard-to-place clients, the Wilkinson family of five (who died all at once when a bomb hit their house) and the Shriekers, a pair of maimed and foul-smelling aristocrats who, after suffering the loss of their only child, aim to rid the world of as many living youngsters as possible. Due to a clerical error, the spirits wind up in the wrong homes. The Shriekers haunt an abbey filled with mild-mannered nuns, and the Wilkinsons move into the Snodde-Brittle estate, where their two evil hosts plan to scare to death the youngest heir, a kindhearted orphan named Oliver. The comedy of errors becomes more complicated by the minute as murderous plots are foiled, ghost busters are hired and the identity of the Shriekers' long-lost daughter is uncovered (astute readers will figure it out before the Shriekers do). Hawkes's whimsical drawings perfectly capture the book's slapstick action and sly humor. Readers will be highly amused as disjointed pieces of the puzzle start to neatly interlock. Ages 8-12.

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From School Library Journal

Gr 3-6-When a perfectly respectable family of ghosts finds itself homeless, its members are horrified to have to take up residence in a knicker shop (think *Wonderbras*). Luckily, an agency for the placement of homeless ghosts finds a lovely convent for them to haunt, but they are accidentally sent to Helton Hall instead, which is inhabited by one small and lonely orphan. The two hideous spirits who were supposed to be sent there to scare the boy to death (courtesy of Oliver's scheming, evil uncle) are mistakenly sent to the convent. But all turns out well and the evil uncle ends up a ghost in the knicker shop, tearing merchandise apart with his teeth. The irresistible premise of this story is that if you happen to become a ghost, you go on pretty much as you did before, but with tastes a tad more macabre. The book is filled with a large and delightful cast of characters, some made of ectoplasm and some made of flesh. No one could be as frightening as the de Bone

ghosts, who festoon themselves with rotting gobbets of meat and a ghostly python, except maybe Uncle Fulton, who wants to take over Helton Hall. The Wilkinsons, from the bewhiskered, umbrella-wielding Grandma to little Adopta, are the perfect ghostly family for Oliver. The black-and-white illustrations have an eerie charm. Don't miss this phantasmally funny fantasy.

Eva Mitnick, Los Angeles Public Library

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dawn Spigner:

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