

The Giggling Ghost Girl Scout Mystery

Carole Marsh

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The glamor and glitz of girl scouting will entice young readers into this mystery set in Savannah, Georgia. The city's reputation as "the most haunted town in America" provides a thrilling backdrop to the sightseeing of five young scouts, Ella, Avery, Grace, Amber, and Christina, who are on their way to the centennial "Camporee" in Fort Lewis. While visiting with grandparents Mimi and Papa, they eagerly absorb the history of Juliette Gordon Low's visionary organization, a legacy that spans generations of girls and has contributed to the development of many accomplished women.

As the girls tour Savannah, the author of a series of hand-written riddles and clues seems to anticipate their every move. Irresistibly drawn into the mystery, they brave the chills that the "giggling ghost" sends down their spines and embark on a heart-stopping exploration of ghosts, pirates, and romantic legends. Along the way, they share Girl Scout rituals and songs, discuss the scouting mission, and exchange SWAPS, "Special Watchamacallits Affectionately Pinned Somewhere or Shared With A Pal," with other sightseeing scouts who are just as excited about the upcoming Camporee. Girl Scout lingo punctuates their conversation and s'mores, sit-upons, badges, rituals, and the official Girl Scout greeting all receive breathless mention in the conversations of these scouts.

The girls in this story sample every gastronomic delight Savannah's historic district offers: cupcakes, homemade ice cream, and candy, as well as sumptuous pancake breakfasts and calorie-laden restaurant dinners. Although these treats are the standard excesses of enthusiastic tourists, one wishes that the girls did more than simply talking about scouting's famed ruggedness while eating their way through the city.

Like many mysteries written for very young children, this one involves no actual danger, nor even any criminality. It manages to suggest fear and intrigue, but any danger to overly vivid imaginations is quickly smoothed over. The result is a story that shows the adventurous possibilities of scouting for girls in an utterly safe and entirely "girly" environment that will almost certainly lead moms who were scouts to reminisce aloud and locate—or start—troops for their own daughters.

ELIZABETH BREAU (August 24, 2012)

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