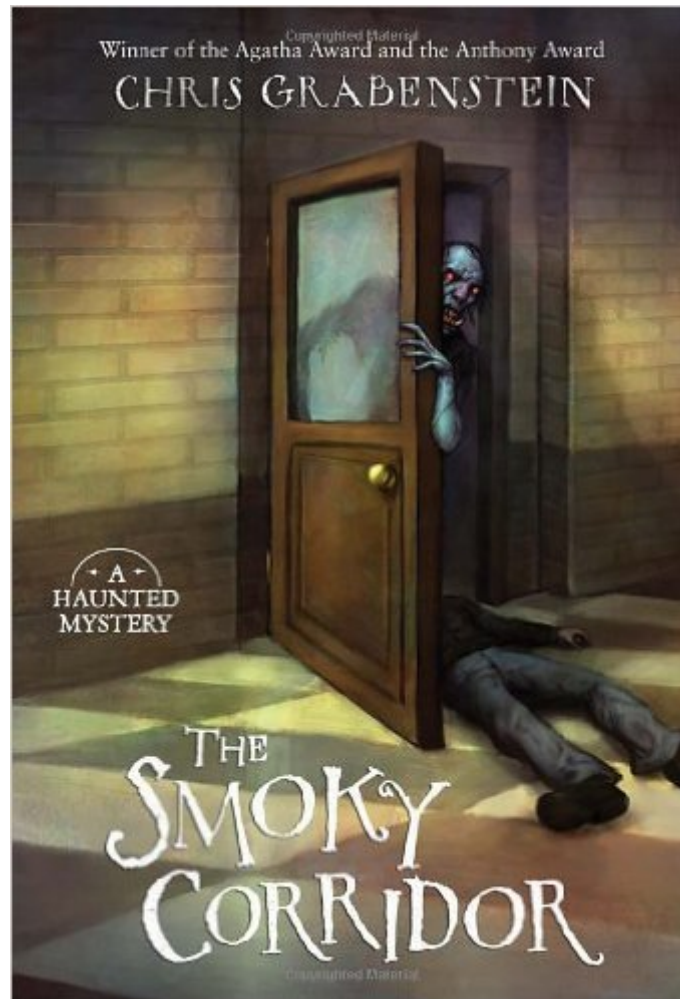


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The Smoky Corridor (A Haunted Mystery)



Synopsis

From the New York Times bestselling author of *Escape From Mr. Lemoncello's Library* and coauthor of *I Funny* and *Treasure Hunters*, comes a series of spine-tingling mysteries to keep you up long after the lights go out. Zack is about to start at his new school, and in addition to homework, school lunches, and bullies, Zack must also contend with a ruthless hit man seeking a lost treasure, a voodoo savvy ghost waiting to take possession of a new body, and a soul-sucking zombie in the basement. Suddenly homework doesn't seem so bad. Once again Chris Grabenstein proves his mastery of the frightening and funny tale. Young readers, especially reluctant ones, have found an inspiration to read in Grabenstein's quirky characters and deadly situations.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690L (What's this?)

Series: A Haunted Mystery (Book 3)

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Yearling; Reissue edition (August 9, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375865101

ISBN-13: 978-0375865107

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (15 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #355,375 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #106 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Stepfamilies](#) #877 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Boys & Men](#) #1001 in [Books > Children's Books > Holidays & Celebrations > Halloween](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

When Zack notices a portrait in his new school watching him, he knows this academic year will feature a few ghosts. In this third Haunted Places mystery, Zack is getting used to being able to communicate with spirits, but is still finding himself in the middle of puzzles caused by living humans as well. Chris Grabenstein keeps the humor and mystery going at high levels in this fun series with plenty of surprises. Zack's father had attended Horace P. Pettimore Middle School years ago, and

now the Principal does not like Zack. The ghosts of the Donnelly brothers, who were burned to death in a corridor, want Zack to play campfire. A janitor then disappears, and Zack's old ghost friend Davy reappears. No one really wants to eat lunch with Zack, who has a lot to sort out here. In his previous two novels, *THE CROSSROADS* and *THE HANGING HILL*, Zack's mystery-solving skills resulted in his house burning down, near-escapes from death for himself and others, saved lives, and more. He's wary of getting too involved in this mess, but it's clear that some evil is at work in the school. "Guardian" ghosts for each student come to warn him about danger and advise him not to tell any adults. Readers will be clued in on the evil plot to find a descendant of the school's founder who will help bring dead people back to life and locate a rumored treasure underneath the school. Could Zack be that descendant? As he starts talking to spirits and humans to uncover what is going on, more misfits at the middle school begin banding together at lunch and throughout the rest of the day to help each other navigate the already stressful life of classes and homework. Add bullies, ghosts, zombies and treasure hunters, and soon they have to rely on each other just to stay alive.

The Smoky Corridor is actually the third book in The Haunted Places Series. Though references are made to events that obviously occurred in previous books, The Smoky Corridor is a standalone tale and I had no problem jumping in without having read the first two books. Nor do I feel that the first two books have been ruined by my reading the third first, so I can go back and read them as well, which I plan to. The upside is that some of the major exposition is streamlined going into this third tale. For example, here is an excerpt from page 3: Zack knew a thing or two about haunted places, because he had a special gift: He could see all sorts of dearly departed souls (even the ones who popped into paintings) whom other people, especially adults like his dad, could not. He always figured it was the kind of gift that should've come with a gift receipt so he could take it back for something better, like athletic ability or super-powers. The fact that our main character has a sixth sense is sort of a big deal plotwise and if this were the first book in the series I would expect Grabenstein to take some time and really establish Zack Jennings' ability to chat with the dead. There are certain obligatory scenes that go along with discovering a gift/curse like this one: Zack's first chat with a dead person, the scene where Zack freaks out and is convinced he's losing his mind, the scene where Zack accepts his ability and heads out to the graveyard to do some chatting the way Bruce Willis walks around bumping people in the crowded train station at the end of *Unbreakable* (a Ninja favorite). Having not yet read the first book in the series, I can't be sure what variation Grabenstein took on these obligatory scenes, but I'm sure some version of them was

employed.

Reason for Reading: Next in the series. Ahh, it was such a blast sitting down with this next book about Zack Jennings, the boy who sees ghosts. Summer is over and Zack is finally starting at his new school. This Middle School has been around since the end of the Civil War when the mansion was donated as such and over the years parts have been added onto it making it a maze of hallways and classrooms. As soon as Zack arrives, he's visited by a ghost from book one who tells him something major is going down at the school; a zombie in the depths of the basement below has reawakened and Zack needs to deal with it and the evil spirit that controls it before he takes over the body of an unknown student in the school. This has all the ingredients for a great horror story! Two ghost children from 1910 who died in a fire in the school under mysterious circumstances and are out for revenge, a zombie (or two), ghost stories, a few gruesome deaths and children's souls in peril. Zack has been warned that adults cannot be involved so he can't tell his stepmother, Judy, who also sees ghosts, and has been his supernatural sleuthing partner for the first two books. Instead Zack makes friends with two loner/outcast-type kids and they are pulled into the events with Zack. But not only does Zack have to deal with the supernatural, he also has two very alive people on his trail and trying to get into the basements as well, for the original owner of the mansion is said to have stolen a sizable treasure of Confederate gold during the war and hidden it somewhere on the property. These two baddies are related to a soldier buried in the nearby Civil War Cemetery and they know all about people who can communicate with the dead.

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