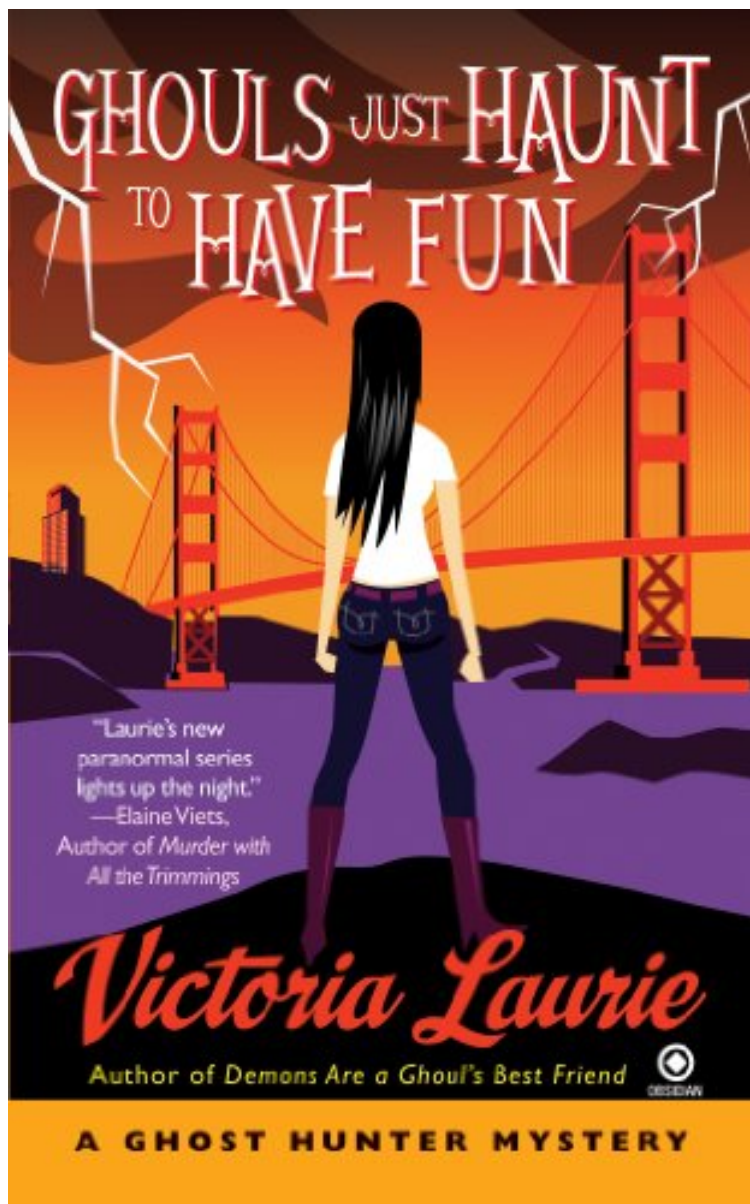


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Ghouls Just Haunt to Have Fun (Ghost Hunter Mysteries, No. 3)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA demonic guest terrorizes a haunted hotel When ghost hunter and medium M.J. Holliday appears on a television show called Haunted Possessions, she encounters an evil knife that releases a demon. Now all hell has broken loose in the haunted hotel where M.J. is staying?and it?s up to her to give the uninvited guest an early checkout.ExtraitTable of ContentsTitle PageCopyright PageDedicationAcknowledgementsChapter 1Chapter 2Chapter 3Chapter 4Chapter 5Chapter 6Chapter

7Chapter 8Chapter 9Chapter 10Chapter 11Chapter 12Chapter 13Chapter 14Teaser chapterPraise for the Ghost Hunter MysteriesA bewitching book blessed with many blithe spirits.Nancy Martin, author of the Blackbird Sisters MysteriesMs. Laurie has penned a fabulous read and packed it with ghost-hunting action at its best. With a chilling mystery, a danger-filled investigation, a bit of romance, and a wonderful dose of humor, theres little chance that readers will be able to set this book down.Darque sM.J.s first-person worldview is both unique and enticing. With truly likable characters, plenty of chills, and even a hint of romance, real-life psychic Laurie guarantees that readers are in for a spooktacularly thrilling ride.Romantic Times (4 stars)A great, fast-paced, addicting read.Enchanting sA great story.MyShelf.comPraise for the Psychic Eye MysteriesVictoria Laurie has crafted a fantastic tale in this latest Psychic Eye Mystery. There are few things in life that upset Abby Cooper, but ghosts and her parents feature high on her list . . . giving the reader a few real frights and a lot of laughs.Fresh FictionFabulous.... Fans will highly praise this fine ghostly murder mystery.The Best sA great new series . . . plenty of action.Midwest Book An invigorating entry into the cozy mystery realm . . . I cannot wait for the next book.Roundtable sA fresh, exciting addition to the amateur sleuth genre.J. A. Konrath, author of Dirty MartiniWorth reading over and over again.BookviewsThe Ghost Hunter Mystery SeriesWhats a Ghoul to Do? Demons Are a Ghouls Best FriendThe Psychic Eye Mystery SeriesAbby Cooper, Psychic Eye Better Read than Dead A Vision of Murder Killer Insight Crime Seen Death PerceptionOBSIDIANPublished by New American Library, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.) Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England Penguin Ireland, 25 St. Stephens Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd.) Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty. Ltd.) Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi - 110 017, India Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.) Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty.) 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Your support of the author s rights is appreciated.eISBN : 978-1-101-01962-7For Leanne Tierney, a great friend and my personal heroAcknowledgmentsA couple of years ago I got a call from my agent, Jim McCarthy, telling me that a producer had been in touch with the agency to see if I might be up for participating in a cable TV special on haunted possessions. The way they envisioned the show was Most Haunted meets Antiques Roadshow.It sounds goofy, I said after hearing the pitch.Think of it like free advertising for the books! he encouraged.Yeah, but these things never make the psychic look good, I argued. You know they can do anything they want in that editing room.But think of how many books you could sell! he countered.I had a feeling Jim had a one-track mind on this one. Finally, however, after a whole lotta back-and-forth I conceded, with one condition: Jim had to fly to California with me and hold my hand during the shoot.And everything was moving forward until Jim found out that the location of the shoot and our accommodations would be aboard the Queen Mary, aka the most haunted ghost ship in America. After that little tidbit came out, the excuses began:Uh, about going to California with you . . . he said.Mmm-hmm?Yeah, well, you see, the thing of it is . . . I might not have room in my work schedule after all.You dont say?And I think I have some other personal conflicts that weekend.I see. . . .Andcough-coughI may be coming down with a cold. Sniffle, hack, wheeze, sniffle. And you know how they say to avoid flying when you have a cold. . . .So it

came to pass that Jim weaseled out, which, truth be told, was a good thing, because I didnt have a great feeling about attending either and we eventually informed the producers that we were no longer interested in participating. A few months later I saw a small clip of the actual show, and all I can say is thank God I backed out! There were some crazy happenings going on during that clip that I knew Id have been totally freaked-out over. (Just cause I can communicate with the dead doesnt mean I dont find it creepy at times.) Still, the concept of a haunted possession intrigued me enough to use it in a story with my favorite ghost hunting team of M.J., Gilley, and Steven. And now you know that Im much braver, sitting in my nice, quiet, decidedly unhaunted home writing about things that go bump in the night rather than hunting them down myself. To that end I would like to thank all those who helped me along the way: My fabulous editor, Kristen Weber, who is so easy to work with and full of enthusiasm and encouragement. Thanks for taking such great care of me, Kristen. It means a lot! Thanks as well to everyone at Obsidian for their efforts on my behalf, and that list includes Leslie Henkel and Rebecca Vinter, along with many, many others who work so diligently behind the scenes. Please accept my boundless appreciation for all you do for me. My agent, Jim McCarthy, who always has my back (unless it involves spending the night on a ghost ship), and who is simply the best damn agent in the biz! Also, thanks to the entire staff at Dystel and Goderich, Literary Management, for their advice and support over the years. And Id like to thank my family for their continued support and encouragement, along with all my friends who cheer every time I show up on their doorstep with a new release. I usually name you all individually, but that list is getting a bit long, so know that if you think I might be including you, I definitely am! One small individual mention here, and that is to Leanne Tierney, to whom this book is dedicated: Leanne, youre simply wonderful, and every time I talk to you its like getting an adrenaline shot of sunshine. Thank you for being a great friend and providing such inspiration. You amaze me with your attitude, boundless enthusiasm, and continued strength and determination. Hugs and love, gal pal!

Chapter 1 Heres some free advice: Never go into business with your best friend. And if you happen to ignore that initial advice then, by God, make sure you have some sort of an escape clause. How am I qualified to give such advice? Ill tell you: Im the idiot who went into business with her BFF and barely lived to tell about it. Gilley Gillespie has been my best friend for twenty years and hed been driving me crazy for nineteen and a half of them when I ignored all reason and good sense and formed a small ghostbusting business with him as my partner. The plan had seemed sound at the time. Im a psychic medium with a good reputation and lots of experience, Gilley is a computer and gadget whiz, and New England is chock-full of haunted houses. We thought it was the perfect blend of talent meeting opportunity. But, sadly, what we found after hanging out our ghostbusting shingle was a whole lot of skepticism and folks who werent bothered by bumps in the night as much as we thought theyd be. Still, our prices werent cheap, so the jobs we did manage to book we were at least well compensated for, and that left us with a lot of free time waiting for the phone to ring. I liked to fill these periods surfing the Web or scoping out the latest gossip rag, while Gilley liked to think up new ways to increase business. (Enter the need for an escape clause. . . .) So when I came into the office suite I shared with Gil on a cool Friday morning in late September, I noticed right away that my best friend might have had way too much time on his hands recently, and that meant I was likely in trouble. You see, Gilley looked guilty. Of what exactly, I wasnt yet sure, but something was up, and I had a feeling it was probable that my breakfast would consist of a cup of coffee, a bagel, and a side of aspirin. Whatd you do now? I groaned as I put my jacket on the coatrack. Something that will bring us tons of new business! he announced with a flourish. I shot him a skeptical look over my shoulder as I headed into my office, tucked just behind the front lobby of our suite.

Why do I have the feeling that Im not going to like it? Because you never like any of my ultracreative ideas. For the record, Gilleys idea of ultracreative ways to increase our professional ghostbusting business have included a man dressed up as Casper waving to pedestrian traffic outside our office, and a late-night cable TV commercial featuring Gil and a half dozen of his fellow queens (I should mention that Gil is decidedly light in his loafers) doing a mock-up of Michael Jacksons Thriller video while someone in a cop uniform rushed around busting the walking dead. I never like any of your crazy ideas, Gil, because they all cost money and dont return on the investment. Were still paying for your thirty-second stint on late-night TV, I pointed out. Gilley got up from his desk and hurried into my office. With a flick of his hand he dismissed my pessimism. Thats the beauty of this idea, M.J. It wont cost us a penny. In fact, it will actually pay us handsomely! I sat down with another sigh and picked up the mail Gil had laid on my desk, sorting through the envelopes. How much does handsomely go for these days? I asked casually. Five hundred dollars a day! Gil said, and clapped his hands happily. I arched an eyebrow at him. Thats less than we get paid for a

bust. Gilley took a seat in one of the chairs opposite me. Yes, but its free advertising! Wed actually get paid to tell the world about our business! And the exposure will be national. I tell you, this could be big! I set the mail down and eyed him critically. I always know Im in for a rude awakening when you play this stuff up. Not this time, he insisted, his knees bouncing with excitement. Fine, I groaned. Whats this latest brainstorm? I just got off the phone with a Hollywood producer Hollywood? I interrupted. Isnt that commute a little far? We live just outside Boston. Well, of course wed be flown in, he said impatiently. Anyway, as I was saying, this Hollywood producer is putting together this really cool new show for Bravo. You know how we love to watch our Bravo! Uh-huh, I said, sitting back in my chair and crossing my arms. So far I wasnt too impressed, even though Gilley and I were avid fans of the cable channel. Its an assembly of talent, the best mediums the world has to offer, Gil continued. This producer has scoured the U.S. to find the greatest psychics in the biz, in fact. Whos attending? I was pretty up on who the best intuitive mediums in the country were. I was good friends with Rebecca Rosen from Colorado, and Theresa Rogers from California, not to mention that Id actually met both John Edward and James Van Praagh in person, and if any one of them were in, then I might consider the idea. Bernard Higgins, Gil said. I searched my memory banks. Never heard of him. How about Heath Whitefeather or Angelica Demarche? I rolled the names around in my head and came up empty. Have you heard of these people? Sure! he said, in that high, whiny way that told me he was a big, fat fibber. I rubbed my temples and glanced at the clock on my desk. Nine a.m. and I already had a headache. It was a new record. The answer is no, I said flatly. But you havent even heard the whole pitch! Gilley wailed. I dont need to, I warned, leveling a look at him. Its goofy, whatever it is. It is not! Fine. I sighed. Then tell me what this great assembly of talent is all about. Its about helping people, Gilley said earnestly. And isnt that really what were all about? Who are we helping? asked a deep baritone from the lobby. Gil and I both looked up to see six feet of tall, dark, and yummy. Hey, Steven, I said. Dr. Steven Sable was my significant other and our financial backer. In other words, he was ridiculously wealthy and had enough dough to blow on some rather eccentric entertainment. Thats right Gilley and I were the entertainment. Im trying to talk to M.J. about the TV show. With the things that are possessed? he asked. Obviously he was more in the loop than I was, which could mean only that Gil had told him in order to help warm me up to the idea. Possessed? I asked, shifting my attention back to Gil. You know I dont believe in exorcisms. No, no, no! Gilley said quickly. Its not like that at all. Listen, this producer has an idea about a show where he gathers some mediums and has them tune in on objects that the owners feel are possessed with either good or bad spirits. Think of it as a haunted Antiques Roadshow. Again, I said to Gil, the answer is no. M.J.! Gilley wailed. You cant say no! I stood up from my chair and laid my hands flat on my desk. I thought I just did. But I am all packed, said Steven. What do you mean, youre packed? I asked. Gilley gave me the itinerary yesterday. He said we would need to be at the airport by noon today. Whoa, I said, shaking my head in disbelief. Gilley, you already told this producer guy yes? Its all arranged, Gilley said quickly. And Ive cashed the first check. They sent us a three-hundred-dollar bonus for signing the contract. Wait a minute! I yelled. I havent signed any contract! And then a flicker of memory burbled up in my mind. Two weeks ago Id been on the phone and Gilley had swept in, placing some documents in front of me with little sign here tabs. Gil and I were in the middle of refinancing our condos for a lower rate we lived in the same building, one floor apart so Id just assumed the papers had to do with the mortgage application. To confirm that my memory was accurate I saw Gilley picking at his sweater, avoiding my eyes, and I knew Id been had. Youre fired, I said, doing my best Donald Trump hand-like-a-cobra impression. You cant fire me, he said calmly. Were partners. I wont do it! I snapped. Get us out of this, Gilley, or so help me, Ill . . . I was so angry I couldnt think of what Id do, but I knew it was something big. M.J., Steven said, coming into the room to take a chair next to Gilley, I think you should do it. Easy for you to say, I groused. Youre not the one doing some goofy show on television thats going to make you look like a loony tune! I dont think it will be so bad, Steven said, his voice calm and soothing. And I can tell you from my own personal experience that when I watch you work I am memorized. I should also mention that Steven was born in Argentina and raised in Germany. Hes new to both the States and English. Mesmerized, Gilley whispered out of the corner of his mouth. Yes, that too, Steven said. The point here is that the show is a good opportunity for your business, and to prove to people that you are a gifted medium able to communicate with the dead. Think of it, Gilley added. I mean, how many people have some object in their home that they think might have bad energy associated with it? M.J., this could be a whole new business for us! Its not just about busting someones home anymore; now were talking busting that old hairbrush or picture frame or whatever. I sank back down in my seat. I was outmanned, outmaneuvered, and outsmarted. What happens if I dont show up? Theyll sue you, Gil said.

Breach of contract and all. I closed my eyes and pinched the bridge of my nose. How long is this going to take? Including tonight, it'll take three days. We land this evening, and they start shooting tomorrow at eight a.m. sharp. So were back here by Monday? I asked. Yep. And there's no new business on the calendar? It had been a slow couple of weeks. Nothing. Not even a nibble. And you've already made arrangements for Doc?

Doc was my African Gray parrot. I'd had him since I was twelve. Mama Dell and the Captain are going to look after him. Mama Dell and her husband, known only as the Captain, owned the coffee shop across the street and were good friends of ours. I looked from Steven to Gilley and back again, hoping one of them would come to his senses and back me for a change. Finally I rolled my eyes and sighed. Fine. But I swear to God, Gil, if this in any way makes me look like an ass, you're going to pay for it. Don't I always? Gilley muttered, but quickly flashed me a big, toothy smile and clapped his hands. It'll be fun! I gave him a dark look, and he wisely hurried out of my office, muttering something about heading to my condo to pack a bag for me. He's right, you know, Steven said after we heard the front door close. About this being fun? Don't count on it. No, about it being good for the business. Or it will be really bad for business, I countered, still irritated at having been hoodwinked. What is your worry over this? he asked, genuinely curious. I'm worried

that this program is exploitive, that the intent isn't to educate as much as it is to disprove, and that the producer will use every opportunity to showcase any miss I get and call me out on national television as a fraud. But you're not a fraud, Steven said gently. You are the real McCain. One corner of my mouth lifted. McCoy, I corrected. And I know that, but you should see what goes on in the editing room, Steven. I mean, they can take so much out of context that they could make Einstein look stupid. Maybe you are taking this too seriously, Steven reasoned. It seems to me the show is about entertainment, not about making some sort of ideological point. My eyes widened in surprise. May I say that your English is really improving? Thank you, he said modestly. I've been practicing. He got up then and came around my desk, lifting me up out of my chair and pulling me into his wonderfully developed chest. I have a feeling you will look very good on camera, he said, and kissed me lightly on the lips. You have a face for the television. I smiled a little wider. So if this thing turns ugly, you promise to get me out of there? Mmmm, Steven said, and kissed me again.

Yes, I will rescue you, he added, caressing my back. We did some heavy petting and smooching until we heard an Ahem from someone in the lobby. Neither of us had heard anyone come in. I stepped quickly away from Steven and spotted Mama Dell, looking very uncomfortable in the doorway. Hey, there. I coughed, straightening my clothes and patting my hair, which I knew was likely tousled. I'm so sorry, Mama Dell said, color rising to her cheeks. I didn't know you were . . . uh . . . busy. Presentation de l'diteur A demonic guest terrorizes a haunted hotel When ghost hunter and medium M.J. Holliday appears on a television show called Haunted Possessions, she encounters an evil knife that releases a demon. Now all hell has broken loose in the haunted hotel where M.J. is staying? and it's up to her to give the uninvited guest an early checkout.