



Dawn and the Surfer Ghost

Ann M. Martin , Hodges Soileau (Cover Art)

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Dawn is back in California just in time to see the surfing competition, and solve a mystery concerning a missing surfer, a mangled surfboard, and a ghost that surfs at night!

Dawn and the Surfer Ghost Details

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From Reader Review Dawn and the Surfer Ghost for online ebook

Ashley Adams says

Recently resurging into popular consciousness (thanks Tina Fey and Kimmy Schmidt!) the story of Dawn and the surfer ghost was a slumber party classic in the 1990s. I remember thinking the story with the surfer boy was really scary! But then, weren't all boys scary when I was eleven? Recommended reading after the attempted seance, before playing "light as a feather, stiff as a board."

Ani says

Whoa. Some childhood favorites hold up better than others, I guess.

Although, let's face it, I probably shouldn't have picked a Dawn one to read. Don't know what I was thinking with that.

Alex says

I don't know why I've always loved this one so much, but something about it is just so fun! It's probably because Dawn is my favorite babysitter, which is quite a rarity in the BSC fandom, and I love the stories that take place while she's in California. Again, that definitely puts me in the minority, as I've discovered that pretty much everyone who reads these books hates Dawn, ha.

Brittney says

In this mystery, Dawn is trying to figure out where a surfer disappeared to. His surfboard still remains along with a creepy ghost. This would be a good book for older children to read. I think it's a great book and would keep their attention.

Gwynne says

I loved Dawn. I wanted to be as cool as Dawn. For a while (my middle school years) I planned to name my firstborn Dawn.

Kristin El says

The writing is too corny for me and the girls are too goody two shoe.

Redfox5 says

About a year ago I was feeling pretty nostalgic about The Babysitters Club books, looked for them in some bookshops and didn't see them. I guess they've fallen out of favour with kids. I used to read these when I was about 13 but nowadays I'd say this book would only suit a much younger age group. I don't think teens would really enjoy it as it's far to tame by today's standards. I was looking forward to reading this as I've never read one of the mystery BSC books and it was a disappointment that it was only Dawn, not the other members. The story was okay, not very ghostly but entertaining enough. If this is your first time reading a BSC book, don't give up! There are better ones out there, from the original series.

Allison Stagg says

I was feeling nostalgic and wanted to read a BSC book. This book reminded me of a few things: 1. I remembered how EVERY book introduced all the characters, everyone's appearance, their personalities, family life, and the formation of the club each book. I guess this is necessary for people who pick up reading in non-chronological order? 2. I 100% learned how to thoroughly describe things by reading these books as a child. I remember writing my own stories and describing the characters, their appearance, their personality, the scenery, the backstory all in great detail. I definitely did that Bc of all the BSC books I read! 3. Who exactly are they talking to? I remember thinking that as a kid. The girls take turns narrating and they are talking to an audience, but who is it supposed to be? 4. These books are great for descriptions and teaching about diverse family dynamic. They strike me as very 90's in tone. And I wonder if Ann M. Martin had ghostwriters?

Andrea says

It was weird to have the character stop and say to the reader that she should introduce herself. As she listed the people in her life in an outline format, and asked the reader if we had ever had to do an outline. I don't like narratives like that. It feels like the character is writing a book, and who does that? What person explains their life to a third party inside their head? They don't.

I had two other problems with the other book I read in this series, (aside from the mystery being incredibly uninteresting and bad) and that was Dawn's healthy eating habits which seemed severely unrealistic and forced, and the love that the girls had for babysitting. The East Coast has the Babysitter's Club and the West Coast had the We <3 Kids club. As someone who has never liked kids, babies or any growth stage below an adult (I might be exaggerating just slightly) I found it grossly sexist that young girls would be so enamored with kids. Like the job of females is to take care of children and then go on to have children. These girls need another passion.

To have the entire We <3 Kids club abhor junk food and only have healthy snacks was ridiculous. These girls passed around organic chips, broccoli and spinach dip and I was like what kids have you been around lately? You're telling me all these girls prefer health food over sweets? Idk if the author was like this as a kid or she's trying to encourage kids to like healthy food, but I didn't buy it.

It was a pretty neat idea that the BSC came up with Kid-Kits, which are boxes full of toys and games for the kids they babysit.

The book started with Dawn—awesome name by the way. Tehe—going surfing with her California friend Sunny. They had an instructor, Buck, and I couldn't wait to read about their lessons. The author skipped right over it in an aside once Dawn was back home. It's decisions like that that ruin writing.

I was disappointed that they were involved in yet another thing to do with kids. Like get a life outside of children. The last thing I wanted to do as a kid was hang out with kids way younger than me. There's a huge gap there in mentality level that's hard to get past. Every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and most Saturdays they went to the beach to entertain kids whose parents were working after school. I can't say how boring I found reading about setting up juice and crackers and taking girls to the bathroom. It almost made me nod off.

It was so cute when Thrash called Dawn by the name of Kelea, a Hawaiian princess.

I could not believe my eyes when the author had Dawn and Sunny go surfing for the second time, and there was a group of girls and guys who were reportedly wild, and then the author cut off the scene just like she did the first time and had Dawn describe it in a letter to her friends back home. Here's a tip: stop having the character write letters and let her live her life. And readers would rather read about surfing and the dialogue and interactions with people at the beach rather than caring for young kids. Seriously...

All of a sudden Thrash was reported as dead. Gonzo, a fellow surfer, said Thrash left town because he knew he was going to be beaten in the competition. Others said shark attack and in the paper it was hypothesized that his board had been tampered with.

I was so excited for the beach party, even though I found it highly irritating that every bit of news we had came through Dawn telling her friends back home about it in letters. Does she have to write them for every little thing she did? And then she said they were putting it on for the kids and I'm like are you kidding me? Can she do one thing that doesn't involve children?

The ghost itself was totally lame. One of the kids saw something on the ocean after they told ghost stories, and all Dawn saw was movement. And that was it. Someone said it was a ghost and she's sure she saw a ghost and that it's Thrash's ghost. That's what you're claiming is his ghost, something you didn't even see clearly??

I could not believe that the author put such an emphasis on the babysitting kids from Connecticut. Is she in California or Connecticut? Leave the other state behind. Mary Anne told her of the twins she babysat and how one was supposed to spot her sister as she worked on the balance beam, but she got distracted and her sister fell and sprained her ankle. She thought their relationship would change but wasn't sure. It was left unexplained as if it was a tantalizing secret we actually cared about. We found out later the sister vowed to never leave her sister's side. And we got to experience the whole entire babysitting periods of 2 different girls with these twins. "Wherever I go, she goes. And wherever she goes, I go." As a twin, that's just irritating.

Jesse's babysitting ordeal lasted over 8 pages! She could have condensed that down to a brief summary so as to keep with the plot, you know, of the main character. There's a mystery going on and a possible death, and the author for some reason thought setting out Graham crackers, bananas, and milk for the girls a side character was babysitting was worthy of being read.

At least Dawn and Sunny finally saw an actual surfer out in the waves. Isn't much of a ghost story if you don't actually see a ghost. The weird accidents that were happening didn't strike me as that suspicious. A girl stepped on something sharp. That's not suspicious, that can happen to anyone. Unless the suspect placed a sharp object on the beach. Other people wiped out, got hit by their boards, went under and stayed down too long. That didn't seem like anything to me, tho one surfer said it had to be because their boards were being messed with. No one explained what you did to a board to make someone get hit by it or almost

drown...More suspicious were the incidents of the grill flaring up and burning a woman's eyebrows and a man having 4 flat tires.

Right when things were coming to a head and everyone was talking about all of the weird happenings in a week's time, when the beach seemed so dangerous and people were dropping out of the surfing competition, the author thought it would be a good time to update us on the BSC girls' progress with the twin girls. Over 7 pages of their plan to separate the girls. I DON'T CARE. Who does care? Why do you think we care?

She should have just placed this story in Connecticut since she wanted to talk about it so much. Dawn noticed a new guy with buzzed, black hair and the second time she saw him she noticed he had one ear with 3 holes and the other with 2. That's the same amount that Thrash had, tho this guy wasn't wearing the earrings now. He had on sunglasses and there was a white mark on his finger from where he wore his ring.

Her grand plan was to watch Thrash's every move whenever her and Sunny were at the beach. Considering he was at work in the concession stand, that struck me as really stupid. If you're going to watch him at all, watch him when he isn't inside a building on the clock at his job. But since I expected her to confront him and say she knew it was him, it was even more of a letdown.

I was so disappointed when Dawn caught Thrash tampering with people's surfboards. She was brave to step into the building to confront him. It was a little better that he was messing with the person who tried to kill him. He adopted a disguise in order to trick the guy into thinking he had died. He practiced his moves at night so no one could rip them off, hence people thinking he was a ghost.

It was cute that she tried to get him to stop, because it was wrong. She told him two wrongs don't make a right, and realized she sounded like a teacher. Her big plan was to have Thrash go to the police and tell them what had happened.

Thrash appeared on the beach and Gonzo, one of the fellow surfers, took off running when he saw him, announcing his guilt. Then undercover cops dressed as surfers went after him. I found the whole thing outlandish. That they would believe a young guy's word that there was a murder attempt, then disguise themselves to wait for the culprit to do something that announces his guilt. Him running away didn't admit anything. And what exactly did Gonzo do to try to kill Thrash??

It was sweet that Thrash called her Kelea and said she could do it, before the comp started.

Dawn watched the male beginners and said they chose bad waves or had short, unimpressive rides and she could do better than *that*. That was a mean thought.

There were some tidbits of surfer lingo. The competition scoring was based on the length of the ride, and the moves, style and choosing good waves. But I wanted more, like to experience the character, you know, actually surfing.

Dawn pointed out that the girl who went before her had a "very short" ride. My, someone who isn't very good at surfing never misses an opportunity to point out when others aren't good. That's not a very good lesson to teach kids. I couldn't wait to see what it was like. I got "It wasn't a bad one."

I couldn't believe it. The author had dropped the ball again. Wth? You chose to have a surfing competition and you literally can't write the surfing.

Her second attempt was "terrible" and I thought that's what she deserved for talking so much crap about the other beginners. Of course her third was one of the best of her life. I didn't expect her to win anything, so it was a bit much that she got 3rd place. Thrash winked at her when he won, so that was nice.

I really liked the scene with Thrash. He congratulated her on the competition and said she did well. He thanked her for helping him and setting him on the right track. He said maybe she would get to Australia someday--which is where he was going. He said he thinks she was a friend and he's a loner and not used to it. He gave her his snake ring to remember him by and I loved that!

This is the second book I have read in this series and I found each one to be extremely boring and terribly uninteresting. The babysitting dominates it to the point that almost every second of the book is devoted to watching someone's kids or talking about watching someone's kids. They shouldn't even be mysteries at all because the mysteries aren't even good and not enough time is given to them. They're 90% babysitting and letter writing about babysitting and 10% mystery. I can't understand why someone would think readers cared about what was happening with the children back home while the MC is in California. What should've been a cool beach read about surfers was instead a boring tale because the story mostly remained back in Connecticut. I really didn't like the format of letter writing, explaining things that had already happened to her friends, and then going back and explaining the rest. Everything had already happened before she wrote the letter, and she would go back and explain it to her friends. Terrible format. Just terrible. I've heard there are better mysteries, ones where Dawn isn't the MC, but I don't think I even want to try any more. If I want a mystery I'll have to search for another author.

Nicky says

I really enjoyed The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt, it really spoke to me, especially because one of the only books Kimmy has while she's kidnapped is this Babysitter's Club Mystery. It's not one of the ones I read when I was going through my BSC phase, and it piqued my interest. A mystery? A surfer? A GHOST?!

Spoiler alert, it's not a ghost. Because whatever else BSC is, it's not Sweet Valley High (don't know if this is a good or bad thing) so you're not going to get werewolves or vampires, there may appear to be a werewolf or a vampire, but there'll end up being a perfectly reasonable explanation.

It's my first BSC book in a really long time. I'm disappointed to find the books are more MG than YA and that there is a LOOOOTTTT of babysitting. I know right, big surprise the Babysitter's Club books feature babysitting...I just don't remember it being so prevalent.

There is a crazy amount of hair description in this book. Every time a new character is introduced, the first piece of information we have about them is what kind of hair they have, second thing is what illness do they have, apparently Mallory has ME? This is news to me. The surfer ghost, whose name is Thrash has shoulder-length, platinum blond hair, and his illness is wearing lots of tacky jewellery.

In this book Dawn is living in California, for good apparently, and oh my God Dawn writes to the BSC a LOT. Every other day she's writing to one or another of the club, Claudia I wish you were here to help me pick an outfit, Kristy I wish you were here to help me deal with my grief over the death of the guy from the surf shop I spoke to once, Mallory, gee, having ME must suck. She's moved away from Stoneybrook to be in California even though she thinks about Stoneybrook constantly and it seems like her dad is never around and her brother couldn't care less. Go back to Stoneybrook, Dawn. They love you in Stoneybrook. In California you're just another surfing blonde, sucking down raw broccoli as a fun snack (?!!?!).

I read the UK version so it's been changed a bit for UK audiences, like I guess "math" has been changed to "maths" and every so often I'd come across something like "I put on my tracksuit trousers" and think hang on, would an American say this? And in the case of "tracksuit trousers", would a human say this? It's another example of children being underestimated by publishers (the other one I'm specifically thinking of is

updating 80s/90s series to appeal to today's youth). They're not stupid and would probably figure out that "math" means "maths" and that when Americans say cookies they're referring to any type of biscuit. The cover for the UK version is whack too. On the US cover Dawn looks like a kid. She is a kid! On the UK cover she looks about 25.

Anyway, this Babysitters Mystery did not stir my ardour to re-read any of the others. I might though? I sort of remember some good stuff happening, like they go to camp and Disney World and a Jersey Shore knockoff that I can't remember the name of. Sea City! So I might have to revisit some.

Shira says

this is my first time reading this book!

in this cali-style (gag me with a spoon) mystery by ghostwriter Ellen Miles, dawn becomes weirdly obsessed with this way cool surfer named thrash. he's got a tubular board and gnarly moves. then one day, he disappears/maybe dies: how un-groovy! turns out he faked his death because someone had it out for him in a mondo way (and tampered with his board). with dawn's help, he gets back at his would-be murderer in a truly outrageous way: snitches to the cops, and wins a surfing contest with his funky moves! awesome! (note: yes I *did* just work every level name from the special world in super mario world into that blurb. you're welcome, nerds.)

highlights:

- I couldn't stop thinking about that episode of unbreakable kimmy schmidt where xanthippe pretends that the story from this book is her life. LOL.
- is this really just endless summer: the bsc book?

- according to dawn, maggie wears leather jackets and big black boots, "but she's not a punk or anything. she's a very nice girl and a good student." dawn is such a prude, I love it.
- the cops don't care about investigating thrash's potential death. they call him "that bum" -- I love how the bsc books *do* tend to semi-accurately portray police as both prejudiced AND incompetent.
- dawn wonders whether the surfer ghost wears glow-in-the-dark jams while surfing. any reference to jams in these books wins me over so hard. I love hideous early 90s fashion!
- dawn wins third place in the surfing contest. I love when characters try really hard and still don't win. it's like the opposite of every jessi book!

lowlights/nitpicks:

- dawn describes the design on thrash's board as looking like "primitive tribal tattoos"
- the whole plot. it's so dumb. every part, down to thrash having faked his death.
- in a subplot, carolyn arnold hurts herself because marilyn said she would spot her but didn't, so then marilyn refuses to leave her side. when marilyn can't be there, her imaginary friend gozzie kunka helps out. I appreciate a gozzie kunka reference, but this plotline is both annoying AND unrealistic with these characters.
- there's a surfer ghost. but it's obviously thrash. and he's obviously not dead. HOW IS NOBODY REALIZING THIS?
- twins plot solved when kids invite them over but can only allow one friend over
- thrash tries to retaliate by tampering with the board of the guy who tampered with his. dawn stops him and convinces him to go to the cops. but this is **SURFER JUSTICE**, dawn. something a surfposer like YOU couldn't possibly understand.
- dawn talks about how the surfers compete, and wanda, a surfer who is one of the best, "male *or* female," according to dawn. she describes her as looking great in the competition in her wild purple wetsuit. UGH.

WHY DOES IT MATTER WHAT THE FEMALE SURFER IS WEARING/HOW SHE LOOKS?

no outfits (aside from wetsuits) and **no snacks in claudia's room**. don't bother with this one, guys.

Samantha says

Oh man. This was so, so stupid.

Thrash. Really? We have come to this?

Oh God.

Marna says

I just want to say that I knew exactly where the plot of the Kimmy Schmidt pilot was going the second I saw this book as I had just read it a few weeks before.

Is it spooky how the later ones, where Dawn gets dragged into the Stoneybrook alternate universe against her will, she just sort of sits around shaking her head at their ridiculous problems?

Like, 'this is so juvenile. We have like, real problems in California. Like, depression and not just that fake depression Stacey's ex jock boyfriend had like, the real deal. And death. And, like, one of my friends is 'different,' you know what I'm saying? He's friends with a bunch of 13 year old girls even though he's like, fifteen and wears like, creepers and bowling shirts. You know?'

Prisha says

While Martin usually writes family/friend dramas and realistic fiction, she showed how well she can write by taking up a different genre entirely! It's quite realistic, though not as descriptive or suspenseful as I would have liked.

Ciara says

it's not really okay with me that we still have to read dawn books even though dawn lives in california now. dawn kind of sucks, & i don't care about her california friends, the we <3 kids club, or her california sitting charges, who run the gamut from bratty (the dewitts) to hippie (sunflower & daffodil) to mary anne (stephie & her emotion-induced asthma attacks). but i'm reading all these books as a personal project, so...here we go.

dawn is spending a lot of time at the beach these days because a) she lives in california & obviously everyone in california spends as much time as possible at the beach, b) she & her best california friend sunny are taking a beginning surfing class, & c) she & some of the other we <3 kids club members are volunteering

for some after-school program in which they watch over children at some beach activity program. they do stuff like play games, tell ghost stories, have bonfires, etc. it's not that consequential to the story--just another attempt to shoehorn babysitting into a story that would probably be better off without it.

dawn starts noticing a really great surfer on the beach. he's probably about twenty years old, very tan, with long bleached hair, multiple ear piercings, a purple surfboard patterned with black tribal designs, & he always wears a ring shaped like a little snake coiled around his finger. his name is thrash. she chats him up a bit at the local surf shop when she's in there choosing her rental board for her lessons. she notices that he's using custom blended surf wax with a skull on the label. he gives her some tips on which board to rent & calls her "kelea," after a hawaiian goddess that was a great surfer, according to thrash. sunny thinks dawn has a crush on thrash, but dawn insist that he's too old for her & that she just admires his surfing skills. there's a big surf competition coming up (dawn & sunny plan to enter the beginner division) & thrash is favored to win--though there is some competition, to be sure.

the next thing you know, thrash's board washes up on the beach, sans thrash. the board is all banged up & no one knows what happened to thrash, though it seems like most people think he's dead. they speculate that he drowned in a riptide or was attacked by a shark. dawn goes to the police station to see if they have any info, but they practically laugh her right out the door. they dismiss thrash as a "drifter" & tell her that either his body will wash up on the beach at some point...or it won't. some people think thrash may have been murdered by another surfer who wants to win the competition, & the cops seem remarkably unconcerned about this theory, although they don't dismiss it. i find this all VERY WEIRD. dawn kind of makes a big fuss about living in a really nice california town. her dad has a huge house with skylights in every room & enough money to hire a housekeeper. in a later book, a bank robbery is enough to force the town to cancel trick or treating on halloween. but in this book, someone may have been murdered on the beach, & the cops don't give a fuck? this strikes me as wildly inconsistent.

anyway, dawn becomes convinced that thrash was indeed murdered, probably by a surfing rival. when she & the kids spend an evening on the beach enjoying a bonfire (isn't that environmentally unsound?), she spots a figure way out in the ocean, surfing alone by moonlight. she decides it's the ghost of thrash, come to haunt the beach until his murderer is caught. dawn & sunny watch the figure until they can't see it anymore, & then they walk to the parking lot to meet their ride. they pass the concession stand on the way & dawn notices a new employee--a very tan young man with very short black hair. he gives dawn the creeps, but she doesn't know why. remember this. also make a note that dawn wears sweatpants at the bonfire. not because it matters to the plot, but because it's hideous to imagine. no one should ever leave the house in sweatpants.

this book really drags. it's pretty boring, considering that it's about a surfing ghost. people start having accidents at the beach. a kid in the after-school program cuts her foot. a surfer is conked on the head with their board & almost gets knocked out. sunny wipes out while surfing & bruises herself to the point that she can't compete in the surfing competition. dawn thinks it's the ghost of thrash, wreaking vengeance. okay. sure.

when buying a smoothie at the concession stand (dawn pauses to inform the reader about what smoothies are--like no one who doesn't live in southern california has ever had a smoothie before), dawn gets a closer look at the new employee flipping burgers. when she spots the snake-shaped untanned portion of his finger, she realizes it's thrash--in disguise! his disguise consists of removing his jewelry, cutting his hair, dyeing it black, & getting a job at the concession stand. that's the worst disguise i've ever heard of. dawn decides to keep an eye on him, because he must have faked his death for some reason...& then hung around on the very beach where everyone knew him & where he faked his death? this makes no sense.

also, remember how she saw him at the concession stand before & got the creeps? you know...mere moments after she saw the person who turns out to have also been thrash way the fuck out on the ocean, surfing? what the fuck? how did he get out of the ocean & to his concession stand job (the stand was just closing the first

time dawn saw him, by the way, which means he wasn't just starting a shift after a quick ride on the waves) so quickly? more quickly than it took dawn to walk from the edge of the water to the concession stand?

anyway, dawn catches him tampering with another surfer's board. he spots her spying on him & is all, "hey, kelea. what's up?" while he tampers away. he admits that he DID fake his own death, but that the dude whose board he is tampering with tampered with his board first in an effort to kill thrash. so now it's payback time. he changed his appearance & got a job at the concession stand...apparently to look inconspicuous to await the perfect moment for said rival to randomly abandon his surfboard in public so thrash could tamper with it. for serious? these dudes are basically professional-level globe-trotting surfers. they definitely own their own boards & i don't know why they'd just leave them laying around, to be tampered with by anyone who strolls by.

anyway, dawn racks her brain trying to come up with another way for thrash to get revenge that does not involve attempted murder. finally she's like, "a ha! i have a brilliant scheme..." & the scene fades to black.

cut to the surfing competition. everyone is gathered at the beach, waiting for the festivities to start when suddenly...thrash walks up, brand-new board in tow. he's dyed his hair blond again & is wearing his usual jewelry. everyone's like, "OMG thrash!" & he's like, "yup! i'm not dead after all!" another surfer gasps & starts to run away. thrash is all, "get him, boys!" & a bunch of undercover police chase the dude down & cuff him for thrash's attempted murder.

seriously? this was dawn's plan? have thrash go to the cops & tell them, "i'm not dead, but someone tried to kill me. tomorrow when i show up at the surfing competition, he's sure to publicly incriminate himself by running away, & then you can arrest him, despite having no actual evidence or other legal grounds to arrest him." worst plan ever.

the competition happens, dawn does well enough to scrape third in her division, & thrash wins the whole thing. afterward, thrash thanks dawn for her help & says he's never really had a friend before, but maybe she is his friend. he gives her his snake ring & then leaves for australia.

& there's a whole stoneybrook babysitting plot involving the arnold twins & gymnastics, but seriously. no one cares. all it's good for is raising questions about why the members of the babysitters club bother writing each other letters that say, "wait until you hear this story. it involves thrills, chills, & a talking antelope. i can't wait to tell you all about it! okay, 'bye!" seriously? why not just include the story in the letter? what the fuck?
