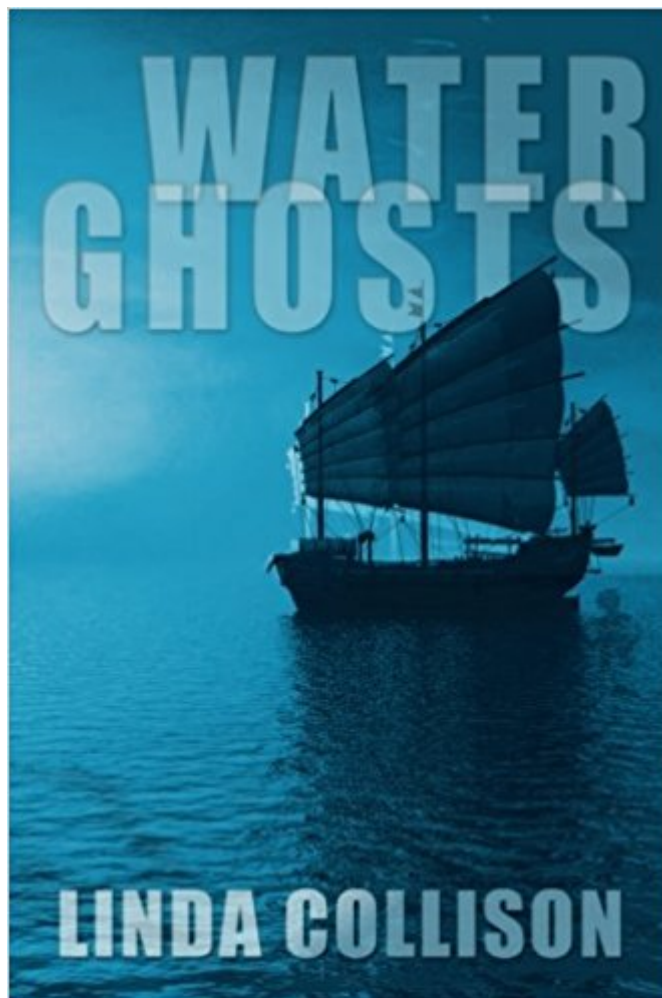


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# Water Ghosts



## Synopsis

"I see things other people don't see; I hear things other people don't hear." Fifteen-year-old James McCafferty is an unwilling sailor aboard a traditional Chinese Junk operated as adventure-therapy for troubled teens. Once at sea, James believes the ship is being taken over by the spirits of courtiers who fled the Imperial palace during the Ming Dynasty, more than 600 years earlier, and sailing to its doom. A nautical adventure and contemporary teen life story with strong historical, paranormal, and supernatural elements. "Collison's vivacious and determined narrator will remind readers of books like *American Gods* and *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*. However, the novel's intense plot and memorable cast of characters is wholly unique." -- Booklife Prize 8.25/10

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An ancient Chinese junk packed with delinquent teens and ghosts alike sets off on a dangerous voyage in this fantastic book." -- Foreword Reviews finalist Book of the Year 2015 "A tale of personal growth hammered out by the timeless ocean." -- Joe Follansbee, author of *Bet; Stowaway Daughter* "When you've read *Water Ghosts*, expect to be haunted." -- Seymour Hamilton, author of the *Astreya Trilogy* "Water Ghosts is a spine-chilling tale where fantasy and reality spin out of control." -- Margaret Muir, author of *The Black Thread* "A really fun book full of well disguised history." -- Jerry Gabriel, author of *The Let Go and Drowned Boy*. "A witty YA voyage with plenty of narrative power" -- Kirkus Reviews "A Young Adult story of personal growth mixed with history and fantasy" -- Literary Fiction Book Review

The setting for *Water Ghosts* was inspired by my own experiences at sea on a small sailboat in the Pacific Ocean. Adrift at sea, it's not at all what I imagined. The doldrums, more scientifically called the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone, is a shifting, unpredictable belt of low pressure on either side of the equator where the trade winds of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres come together. It is a pattern observed in the great bodies of water, the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and well worth studying more, particularly if you're a meteorologist, an oceanographer -- or a sailor. Bob and I first encountered this strange, unsettled seascape when we sailed our Luders 36', Cheoy Lee-built sailboat, from Hawaii to Tahiti, a voyage that took us twenty-one days. Before I encountered them first hand, I imagined the doldrums to be a pleasant, placid stretch of benign water -- a welcoming place, offering a respite from our relentless windward journey as we struggled to make our easting. If the winds died for a few days, I figured it would give me a chance to wash some of our sweaty, salty clothes in a bucket of fresh water on deck, and hang them on the lifelines to dry. At rest on the deep calms might give us an opportunity to slip overboard for a refreshing bathe in the tepid water- not to mention a little sunbathing on the foredeck -- an activity all the glossy sailing magazines promised as part of a tropical cruise. Since leaving Hawaii we had been beating hard into steady, strong easterlies for eight or nine days, climbing up and plunging down sparkling blue hills of water, eight to ten feet high. Sunny skies, puffy white clouds on the horizon -- it was glorious sailing weather! But there was nothing gentle about it. Beating into those seas was physically demanding. Bob and I took our turns at the helm, watch and watch, wearing our safety harnesses and strapped to the lifeline. It was at once exhilarating, yet exhausting. Down below, cooking presented its own challenges. I strapped myself in, took a wide stance in front of the two-burner alcohol stove swinging madly on gimbals, and prepared for the juggling act that inevitably followed. Each time the boat crashed down the back side of a roller, knives and wooden spoons became airborne and supper would lift itself up out of the pot. Simply advancing the five steps from the companionway to the v-berth at the bow was a feat requiring all four extremities. Handholds were a must, I discovered as I lumbered and lurched across the swaying deck. And this was good weather, I marveled! What would a storm at sea be like? We entered the ITCZ -- the doldrums -- rather suddenly. One day the wind dropped and the next day it gasped its last breath and we were dead in the water, about six degrees north. But the water in that fabled place wasn't flat like a lake, like I imagined it would be if the wind wasn't blowing. Energy was still surging through the ocean, rocking our boat violently from side to side, but without the wind we were going nowhere -- except possibly westward, on the North Equatorial Current. The sun

disappeared and soggy, sullen gray clouds soon enveloped us. The sails slatted and banged with each wave of energy that passed beneath us -- through us -- shaking the boat and the boom, rattling our teeth and our nerves. Belowdecks, books, dishes, and anything not securely stowed flew across the cabin, as if flung by an angry poltergeist. To keep the rigging from being damaged we sheeted the boom in to its cradle and dropped the sails, lashed the wheel and went below, wedging ourselves in the v-berth amidst the spare sails to keep from being tossed about ourselves. The seasickness we had overcome a few days into the passage, came back to haunt us. We were in our own particular hell. This is when the idea of water ghosts crept into my imagination. The rocking and shaking felt like malevolent forces were intent on destroying us. Now that we weren't moving, I experienced intense claustrophobia, trapped in a small boat in the middle of the ocean, many days away from the nearest island. I drugged myself with a double dose of Dramamine and tried to sleep. There was no thought of bathing in the ocean -- the boat was rocking so hard as to make getting back on board hazardous. Not to mention the fear of sharks. On the return voyage, when passing through the doldrums, something struck our rudder (a shark? a whale? floating debris?) and Bob had to go overboard, dive down and inspect it for damage. He tied a dock line around his waist, the other end to the stanchion, donned mask and fins and dropped over the side. Fortunately, the rudder was intact -- but once again I struggled with a mounting panic as I stood on the bobbing deck, feeling trapped being aboard a small floating object in the midst of a vast, unpredictable ocean, going nowhere. Oh, and did I mention it was insufferably hot and humid? Rain squalls! The one blessing the doldrums shower upon you is freshwater. Frequent yet unpredictable little downpours, complete with their own little weather patterns, which usually involved strong but short-lived winds. A chance to raise the sails and make some progress. A chance to get out the shampoo, strip down and shower on deck. We had no water maker on that passage (and water makers take power, which requires carrying more fuel -- impractical on a small sailboat). Although we carried 120 gallons of fresh water in our tanks -- and several cases of bottled water -- we always took advantage of fresh water from the heavens. Cruising sailors are thrifty by necessity. Why not turn on the engine and motor out of the doldrums, you might wonder? Being a small sailing vessel, we carried a limited amount of diesel fuel and could not afford to waste it, just to make way. Like sailors of centuries past, we had to be patient and wait for the wind. Before the advent of steam, sailing ships driven around the world by the powerful trades were often "caught" in the doldrums for days or weeks on end, until they drifted north or south enough to pick up the reliable trades again -- or the invisible zone's ever-changing boundaries shifted and steady breezes graced them once again. "What was that?" I murmured to Bob, coming out of my drug-induced sleep. The boat

wasn't shaking so much. There was a sighing sound in the rigging as if the ocean was breathing again, in fits, starts, and listless sighs. "Wind," he said. We pulled ourselves out of our steaming hot bunks, staggered up on deck to roll out the jib, only to be disappointed. But we kept at it, each huff, each luff, we ghosted along the confused waters as far as that breath would take us. By nightfall the breeze was steady enough to raise the mainsail and we were back on course, making two or three knots. The skies cleared and new stars appeared to guide us on our journey south, toward landfall. But the idea of water ghosts stayed with me.

Water Ghosts is about adventure on the high seas with seven troubled young teenagers, a salty sea captain whose closest companion is a bottle of booze, a love struck female counselor who is having a romantic interlude with the rugged (but colorful) first mate. There is intrigue and mystery and after getting acquainted with the characters and the unique oddities of these learning mariners, the action kicks in. One mysterious event happens after another and these kids end up on their own and no idea which direction the Good Fortune should be sailing. Linda did a superb job building James's character. He is a troubled child who hears voices. Much against his will his mother places him in a summer program aboard an old Chinese Junk. James struggles to blend in with his eclectic collection of quirky sailmates. Hope rises when he becomes smitten with Ming and finds solace in her friendship. Like everyone else Ming made fun of the voices James heard in his head. There is a surprising twist to the story where the reader is taken back in time to the days of the Imperial Ming Dynasty and James comes to terms with the water ghosts that live in his head. The ending is riveting and James redeems himself. Linda's style of descriptive writing seems to make her stories come alive. I believe this reading would appeal to both genders, perhaps leaning more to the female audience of older adults who might be reading about the destiny of these young kids through the eyes of a mother. I would highly recommend this book for young adults. I think older adults would enjoy it as well. I enjoyed it and I am an senior. Linda Collison is a very talented writer. I have read her previous works and look forward to reading her next book (Southern fiction) entitled Blue Moon Luck.

A group of troubled teenagers sailing the summer away on a Chinese junk. What could go wrong? Linda Collison proves her versatility again with this young adult novel about a troubled boy who sees and hears ghosts. Like her previous YA novel, Looking for Redfeather, this story moves smoothly forward with engaging characters that everyone can relate to, whether you are a young reader or an adult. I have enjoyed Linda's adult writing, but I find that her voice truly sings and soars

when writing YA like *Water Ghosts*.

Seven teenagers with problems, on an elderly Chinese junk that has the ironical name of Good Fortune, herded about by an artificially enthusiastic counselor, and with cynical men in charge of the craft. Off they sail into the vast Pacific, and so the adventure begins. It sounds like a fairly standard scenario for a YA novel, doesn't it? But no, it is not. James, the protagonist, is a sensitive. He sees auras, and is vividly aware of changes in others' moods; he sees his shipmates in eccentric ways -- one of them for instance, smells of liquorice, and when his companions are excited, they give off light. He can hear dead men singing in the water. And he has a terrible premonition of disaster. These dead men come from a distant, violent past -- a history that they want to resolve. And James knows it. This, he thinks, is how the disaster is going to come about. As the junk drifts on an empty sea, and the ship's personnel begin to die off, the tension mounts almost unbearably, aided by superb writing. An un-put-down-able book, permeated throughout by the author's obvious love of the sea and her thorough knowledge of Chinese lore. Highly recommended.

Fifteen-year old James McCafferty sees things other people don't see -- like dead people. And he hears things other people don't hear -- like the voices of dead people. His mother simply cannot deal with him so she ships him off to a fishy summer camp for teen slackers aboard a salty old Chinese junk. In spite of its uplifting moniker "Good Fortune," James senses an aura of doom from the get-go. His new shipmate Ming "the only bright aura on this ship of fools" aptly dubs it a "floating prison." Even Captain Dan, the first mate Miles, and the camp counselor Marty strike him as slightly sinister. What begins as a character-building adventure voyage for seven sullen and resentful teens gradually descends into the macabre. On the open sea, the ghosts and voices of the drowned, the shui gui, multiply exponentially for James. One in particular Yu Chin taunts him mercilessly with his plan to rise from the dead and take over his body. Meanwhile James' clairvoyance about the captain and crew is validated when their hidden agenda is revealed. But nothing prepares these seven shipmates for the panic and terror that await them after Marty and Miles disappear and Captain Dan kicks the bucket. Collison intertwines nautical lessons and ancient Chinese history and mythology, encompassing readers with the sensation of being out-to-sea with these ill-fated souls. "Water Ghosts" is a spine-tingling paranormal thriller that reaches up from the deep and pulls you under.

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