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“Ruh Roh Raggy, a Rhost!”

By Ella Schmitt

“And I would have gotten away with it too if it weren’t those meddling kids.” This is the line that everyone that gets caught in a Scooby-Doo movie or episode says. This can only happen if the villain (this includes ghosts, ghouls, zombies, goblins, banshees, monsters, creatures, and any other title that is used to describe the types of things that are in the Scooby-Doo universe) is just some guy in a mask, so what would they say when the monster they catch is real? There are only a handful of movies where this takes place; two of which are *Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island* and *Scooby-Doo and the Witch’s Ghost*. When discussing the differences between the two and the realism involved in kids’ cartoons about zombies and ghosts it is important to consider, how the gang got into this situation and how believable the villains are.

Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island (ZI) starts off with Daphne telling the story of a mystery that the gang had solved before they broke up. Fred asks the gang to surprise Daphne for her birthday by helping her look for real haunted houses. They eventually encounter Lena, who invites them to Moonscar Island, haunted by pirate Morgan Moonscar. On their way to the property, Shaggy and Scooby fall into the water and are saved from an alligator by Snakebite Scrugga and his pig, Mojo. When they arrive at the house Scooby and Shaggy see writing being craved into the kitchen wall, “GET OUT”. While Daphne is reporting about the writing, “BEWARE” appears. They look over the tape and see the pirate with his sword carving into the wall. While in the woods, Mojo runs Shaggy and Scooby into a hole where they pull a old root out and that reveals a hand and lets out a spell that brings a skeleton to life as a zombie. Simone invites the gang to stay the night when it starts to get late and as they are getting ready for dinner Shaggy sees a civil war zombie in the mirror.

At dinner Scooby gets kicked out of the house for disturbing the cats and, while him and Shaggy are relaxing, zombies come out of the water and ground near them. After hearing a scream, Fred and

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Daphne are attacked by a zombie at the van and Shaggy and Scooby come out of the bushes. When Fred tries to take the mask off of the zombie, he pulls his whole head off and they realize that they are real. More zombies come out of the water and chase them and Fred loses the camera that he has been recording with in quicksand. Fred, Daphne, Velma, and Beau go back to the house and find Lena and Simone under the stairs in a secret passageway that leads to Simone in a ritual place.

Lena and Simone tell them that they need to drain the life force from them to continue living. They tell the gang that they have been around for centuries and how Morgan Moonscar had let the rest of the village be eaten by alligators. They prayed to their Cat God and asked that they would drive the pirates away but when the pirates were gone they were still werecats who needed life from the living. Taking human lives turn them into zombies, showing where all the zombies came from. Jaques the ferry driver had come to them and asked for immortality and when Shaggy and Scooby try to leave they find that out themselves. The zombies come to everybody's rescue by overtaking the werecats and freeing the gang. When Lena, Simone, and Jaques don't get their new human life, they turn into dust. Because the zombies had been avenged, they moved on as spirits.

Scooby-Doo and the Witch's Ghost (WG) shows the gang finishing up with a museum investigation when they meet Ben Ravencroft, a horror author doing research for his next book. Velma gushes over his books and he tells the gang that he knows who they are and invites them to visit his home town with him. The mayor tells them about Ben's ancestor, the ghost of a witch that is haunting the town due to the construction of the recreation town that they built. Ben argues that she was a wiccan who used herbal remedies to help people. The mayor tells them that they found a bunch of stuff when building and Ben asks if they had found a book from Sarah Ravencroft, his ancestor. They later find tire tracks which lead to a barn that the mayor is in. Shaggy and Scooby follow the mayor and see that he is making some weird purchases very late at night. They follow him into another shed and have another encounter with the ghost.

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In response, they set a trap to get the ghost and unmask her and it's the pharmacist from the town, but Velma reveals that the whole town is involved in the hoax of Sarah Ravencroft's ghost. The mayor and the pharmacist come to apologize for using her ghost for money and to tell Ben that they had found Sarah's grave marker. Velma figures out that they had been looking around the wrong tree for Sarah's stuff. When they look under the right tree Scooby digs up a box with Sarah's spell book in it. Ben reveals that he had paid the people from the original mystery so he could meet the gang to help him find her evil spell book. He tells them that the other wiccans had trapped Sarah in her own book and that he was going to release her so that he could become as powerful as Sarah. Shaggy and Scooby get the book off the ground and gets it to Thron, one of the Hex Girls, who is part wiccan and puts Sarah back into the book by reciting the spell. When Sarah goes back into the book, she grabs Ben and takes him in with her. A tree branch falls on the book and burns it so nobody can ever do anything with it again.

The gang was able to get into both situations in similar fashions. In *ZI* the gang just wanted to look at a haunted house and were tricked into becoming the new life force for the werecats. In *WG* the gang meets an author who invites them to visit his hometown only to be tricked into looking for the book of his ancestor. When looking at how realistic each of them seem, *WG* just does not feel like something that could happen based on how quickly the gang went with Ben. Whereas in *ZI* the gang is actively looking for a place that is haunted and would be more likely to go with someone who tells them that they know of a haunted house. The gang also thinks a little bit about it before leaving. When talking about the realism of each of the movies *ZI* does a better job of getting the gang on to the island and for a better reason compared to the creepy strategy that Ben Ravencroft uses in *WG*.

Believability is important in every movie as it makes the viewer feel immersed in the world on the screen but when talking about a cartoon that deals with real monsters it is much harder to make believable. Each of these movies takes history and turns it into a fantasy world that allows the gang to do something about what is happening. In *ZI* the werecats come from them praying to the Cat God so that they come get rid of the pirates that are invading the village. This idea of pirates just taking whatever they

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please does give a feasibility to the story as this is a big part of American history with pirates and other invaders. This being said, them having a Cat God that they pray to is wildly unrelated to the story as in the flashback there is only a few cats shown to be on the island.

Along with this, if they were settlers from somewhere else in the world that would mean that they would have to bring the cats that they worship with them or came to the island and decided to create a new religion based on the cats that they found there. Turning to *WG* the ghost is based in the idea of the Salem Witch Trials and how witches were prosecuted at the time. Sarah Ravencroft sometimes being described as wiccans and other times being a witch was a problem that a lot of women during this period faced. Many people who would have described themselves as a wiccan were killed because they were thought to have been a witch even though they were practicing herbal healing. This being the basis of the story allows for witches to be more believable because we were given the context of why she was the way that she was. A cartoon talking about real monsters will never truly be believable but when it comes to *ZI* and *WG*, *WG* gives more context and believably for the ghost to be real.

Realism is an important part of what makes a good movie since people will always want to feel immersed in what they are watching. Sometimes that can be hard when you are talking about cartoons, but even for little kids, they want to feel like they are apart of the action. *ZI* is a very good movie until you get to the end and they discuss why they are werewolves. *GW* has a good representation of a ghost but because a lot of the movie focuses on the fake ghost it rushes when the real ghost in the movie. Both of these movies do an excellent job of diving into a world where there is no guy in a mask but *Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island* handles it just a little bit better.

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Works Cited

Scooby-Doo and the Witch's Ghost. Directed by Jim Stenstrum, Warner Home Video, 1999.

Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island. Directed by Jim Stenstrum, Warner Home Video, 1998.