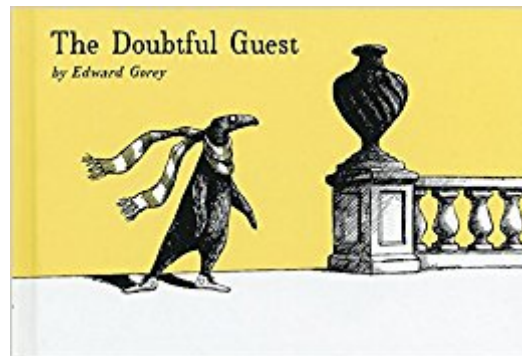


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The Doubtful Guest



Synopsis

A vaguely sinister comedy of manners by beloved artist Edward Gorey's Told in a set of fourteen rhyming couplets, *The Doubtful Guest* is the story of a solemn, mysterious, outdoor creature, dressed rather ordinarily in sneakers and a scarf, who appears on a winter night at a family's Victorian home and never leaves again. Gorey's eerie and charming illustrations accompany the verses, making this an enjoyably strange (and strangely enjoyable) read for all ages.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (74 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I used to pick up my dad's Edward Gorey books when I was a wee boy, read them in half an hour and put them back on the shelves, quivering with fear. Admittedly I was also scared of Doctor Who, old people and "Strawberry Fields Forever". But Gorey has definitely tapped into a seam of subterranean panic; his hollow-eyed pseudo-Edwardian families have a look about them as though some sort of hideously deformed ancestor has been chained up in the attic for centuries. *The Doubtful Guest* is ostensibly for kids, telling the story of a strange, aardvarkesque creature in tennis shoes (typical Gorey touch, the tennis shoes) that comes to stay one "wild winter night", but maybe you have to be an adult to find it truly unnerving. The creature slopes about the house, eating plates, lying in doorways and hiding towels, and the hapless family can't bring itself to dispose of the thing. At the end of the book it's been there for seventeen years and is sitting in the drawing room with the same look of wide-eyed expectancy, while the enervated family stands about aimlessly with as little of a clue as ever. This isn't quite my favourite Gorey. Other contenders would be the almost absurdly depressing *The Hapless Child* (small girl is born, parents die, is sent to workhouse, winds

up perishing in the street, is found by its actually-not-dead-but-until-recently-in-Africa father who, typically, fails to recognise his daughter) and the surreal The Object Lesson (classic Gorey opening line: "It was already Thursday, but his Lordship's artificial limb could not be found..."). Or else there's the sexy but menacing The Curious Sofa...He's still a master and a true original. Check out the way that the house in The Doubtful Guest seems to have been invaded by a black fog; Henry James took over a hundred pages to write The Turn of the Screw, but Gorey can squeeze comparably effects into 26 pages. Not many "children's" books of 43 years ago still have this power to charm and alarm.

This is my single favorite Edward Gorey book, partially because of the amusing couplets it is written in, but mostly because of the appearance of the guest himself, which never ceases to amuse me. The concept of a strange creature who mysteriously visits and decides to stay (seventeen years) while exercising odd whims (like fits in which he removes all towels from the bath or hiding inside a soup tureen) is particularly suited to Gorey's odd brand of humor (although it is not one of his more unusual books, by any stretch of the imagination.) I have liked Edward Gorey since I was in my teens, and still find him as unique and entertaining as ever. This is my very favorite Gorey book, and would make an excellent introduction to one of the oddest cartoonists of the twentieth century.

This is the second book of Gorey's that I've gotten, the first was The Gashlycrumb Tinies. I think I like Doubtful Guest even better than that volume. The wonderful illustrations of the prim and proper residents of the house, as they put up with the antics of the Doubtful Guest tickle me to no end. The rhyming verse that Gorey uses to tell this tale is whimsical and bizarre. It brings a smile to my face every time I think of this book, if you like Gorey, you've got to have this one. My only gripe is that the book is a little short. I can easily tolerate it, however, as it's just so much macabre fun...

This book tells a simple and easy story with rhyming couplets. It is a sort and fun book that, unlike some of his other books, is completely appropriate. It is drawn in a complex, dark, crosshatching technique. The characters are beautiful, with their flowing robes and melancholy expressions. The background is just as detailed, and appears have as much effort put into them as the characters, so as a result, the illustrations fit and are nicely proportioned. Over all, this book is one of Gorey's best works, along with After the Outing. It is a macabre, enjoyably fantasy that anyone should have on his or her bookshelf or coffee table.

"Quirky" barely begins to describe the work of Edward Gorey who, for much of his productive life was suspected of being Victorian, British, or dead. Gorey (who passed away in 2000) was none of these, but he did very much create his own world, and "The Doubtful Guest" is as good a place as any to begin exploring it. His work is a little difficult to describe in words other than his own. Some idea of the content may be gleaned from the diminutive scarved and sneakered furry creature on the cover, and this line from the end of the story: "It came seventeen years ago, and to this day, it has shown no intention of going away." Enjoy.

This story in poem form amuses me greatly, as I have an odd tenant in my house who has been with me for 14 years and has behaviors that remind me of the creature in the tale. I showed it to him and he laughed uproariously. The writing is quite clever, smacks of truth, and rhymes nicely.

Gorey is brilliant as usual with this absurd tale of a creature who inexplicably shows up on a family's doorstep and moves in, only to spend most of his time licking the walls. Classic stuff.

WHO CAN NOT LIKE EDWARD GOREY. THIS IS TYPICAL FOR HIM. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A FAN. THIS BOOK IS DISPLAYED IN THE GUEST ROOM FOR GUESTS TO READ. HIS BOOKS ARE SMALL AND CAN BE READ IN LESS THAN 15 MINUTES. BUT THEY ARE GREAT TO HAVE AROUND TO FASCINATE ANY GUESTS STOPPING FOR COFFEE OR OVERNIGHT.

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