

# HOME FROM THE HAUNT

JSG



*Home from the Haunt*

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**gnud**

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“When the voices in your  
head start singing along  
with the music in your  
heart, you’re stoned, baby.”

— *Socrates*

(Quote unverified.)

**T**he spirits of my parents inhabit my house, which is only fair since it used to be their house. It's a weird feeling, but there are positive aspects to it. Having your deceased mom and dad make otherworldly appearances lets you feel like you're the one guy in a scary movie who became friends with the monster. Also, you now seriously consider every eerie story you hear or read about, and that improves the spine-tingling nature of such tales.

On the other hand, you sometimes come padding out of the shower, innocently drying your ears while humming some weird mash-up of David Bowie and Giacomo Puccini, and you are suddenly confronted by your parents, both regarding you with an eyebrow raised and looking askance at your desecration of two giants of musical composition. You stand there, embarrassed, trying to formulate an excuse. Then, poof, they're gone from the room and you're alone again, feeling quite silly. Plus, you still have wet ears.

Inheriting a piece of property with a building perched atop it is nice in many ways. Assuming the place is in good condition and in a safe neighborhood, it can be financially rewarding. Assuming it isn't haunted, it can be peaceful. My inheritance, on the other hand, is inhabited by apparitions and specters.

According to extensive research I've conducted on the Internet during a lunch break, materializations are rare despite being widely reported. It's not unusual for images of the departed to appear during your nocturnal state, but it's a whole 'nother thing to have them in the room with you. It's especially nightmarish if they begin commenting on the way you're living your life.

Imagine your dead parents appearing and behaving exactly like the busybodies they were when you were growing up. It happens to me quite a lot, and while I hate to admit it, they are often correct in their assessments of my activities. This leads to feelings of guilt and recrimination, not to mention an increased reliance on the healing properties of cannabis. Look, I am pleased to know that their spirits are alive, but every time they show up, it gives

me a jolt. After catching my breath, I talk to them, but I often overcompensate...

“Hi, mom! Hi, dad!” I greet them with a little too much affability and fake nonchalance.

They do nothing but smile in return. It’s amazing how they manage to be charming and infuriating at the same time.

After that, they both begin to appraise my dedication to work, my eating habits, my choice of laundry detergent, and my leisure time pursuits. I am moved to protest.

“Mom, dad, don’t be such worrywarts,” I tell them. “Since I left the nine-to-five cutthroat world of business, I have completed a batch of novellas and several collections of short stories. Also, for the record, I am *using* drugs and alcohol, not *abusing* them.”

Our arguments continued in this manner for weeks and months. Sometimes I would just sigh and give them the standard bromides about my being in control of my life. Other times, the verbal battle was exhausting. Still, on balance, the presence of spooks in the house was not entirely unwelcome. These two are, after all, people whose memories I cherish. Plus, my parents were good people. They

loved me, cared about me, and explained their decisions, rarely resorting to the annoying practice of “because I said so” or “do as I say, not as I do.” They paid their taxes, observed the speed limit, kept their trash cans out of sight, never played loud music after ten p.m., helped their neighbors when asked, and minded their own business all other times.

My mom had a wicked sense of humor that shocked as many people as it delighted. After informing her party guests that dessert was being served in dishes usually used by the cats, my mom waited until one woman halted her spoon inches from her mouth before adding, “Don’t worry, we’ll thoroughly clean the dishes before we let the cats use them again.” There was a terrible second of silence and then everyone laughed. Except the woman.

My dad was a mathematician who loved communicating with computers and enjoyed interacting with other lovers of binary code. He divided people into two primary groups and two secondary groups. There were good people and bad people. “Try interacting with the good ones and avoiding the bad,” he told me, adding, “not that you can always control it.”

Within the group of good people there were those with a facility for numbers, and those more comfortable with words. I was a word nerd, so there probably were math geeks all over the globe who my dad liked even more than me, but he never let me know it.

Dad died at the end of the last century and mom not very long after that. There were several weeks where everything was in a haze and I was in a perpetual funk, but eventually I became proficient at sending out copies of death certificates and providing bank routing numbers for the transfer of insurance payments and pension funds.

Ultimately, I packed up my parents' stuff and had the house painted to get ready for putting it on the market. At which point, I liked the place a lot and decided to stay. A long time went by without anything strange happening in the house. But...

As I stated earlier, my parents first appeared to me in dreams, and then during those few seconds of blurred vision and foggy memory just after waking up. Now, they appear in broad daylight. It's bizarre, but it can be amusing, as you'll soon see.

Apparently, I'm the only one who can see them. Check that: I'm the only human who can see them. If a friend comes over with a dog, the animal notices them. Some dogs are frightened by the sensations, but most of them seem eager to make friends with the spirits.

Having the opportunity to ask about what happens after death has resulted in changes to my lifestyle. I eat more fruits and vegetables. I am kinder to strangers. I never pass up an opportunity to rub a cat under the chin or a dog behind the ears. I no longer worry if I don't know the latest pop music. I'm reading more and watching less television. I listen to jazz and classical music instead of fluff.

Perhaps the greatest benefit to this whole ghost affair was getting to learn about "the other side." For example, it was a revelation to find out that what we call God is not a person, but an interconnected energy force comprised of the brainwaves of authors, composers, philosophers, and scientists, all powered by logic, caffeine, music, and whatever it is that causes salmon to swim upstream. I don't know about you, but I feel better knowing the answer to that whole "is there a God?" question.



Oh, here's something else. God is a supporter of the Oxford comma. Isn't that neat?! And yes, sharp-eyed readers will notice I defy God once in a while on this point, and I do so without fear or trepidation because it turns out that God can let things slide now and then. God is pretty cool. Just saying. (God is not thrilled with people who say, "just saying," so I'll be working on that.)

Okay, not everything about the haunting was hunky-dory. The girlfriend situation posed a bit of a problem. Let me just say that post-coital conversations proceed more smoothly if they do not feature sardonic comments from dead-and-buried relatives. The embarrassment is compounded by the fact that your partner frequently can't hear their side of the conversation. This means you might respond to your mom's advice about fondling breasts, and your partner thinks that your justifiable comment, "Mom, please stop calling them yam-yams" has just come out of nowhere.

*"What did you just say?!"*

*"I wasn't talking to you, darling."*

*"Don't you 'darling' me!"*

*"But—"*

“Look,” she said firmly, “you can call them breasts in public or tits in private, but don’t ever call them yam-yams!”

We needed to discuss this situation and I did the best I could to explain things.

Chantal, my girlfriend, was incredulous at first, but she became intrigued at the idea of having a consultant who could accompany her to give advice and guidance. Like in judging the ripeness of mangos at the grocery store, or in discerning the “tell” of opponents in a poker game. Chantal was a devotee of poker parlors, both legal and otherwise.

After a couple hours of explanations, clarifications, and demonstrations, I thought she might be ready to join me in crossing over to this new lifeforce of spirituality.

“Basically,” I concluded, “if you believe in them, and if you believe in me, then you will see them and hear them.”

“See them and hear them,” she repeated.

“That’s what happens,” I assured her.

“Give me a moment to process all this,” she said.

“Absolutely,” I replied, praying that she would come to accept this new reality.

She stared into space for what seemed like a very long time. She looked at me without seeing me. She bit her lip. Slowly, she cocked her head about fifteen degrees to her left. The silence was swirling around us. Suddenly, she straightened her head and her eyes focused on mine.

“You know,” she said very quietly but with gritty intensity, “we could make this work.”

I started to ask what she meant and stopped myself. But I couldn’t think of anything else to say, so I asked what she meant by that.

“I mean,” she said with a lilt in her voice I had never heard before, “I’ve never tried a four-way. It might be fun.” She looked at me with one of those half-smiles that women use when they combine innocence with devilry. She was being a femme fatale. I liked it. I liked it a lot. So did my dad. Surprisingly, so did mom.

We all stared at each other for an eon or two. Somewhere in the world, it was magic hour. Time stood still, and then we agreed on a public statement I will now read to you:

“On behalf of the four of us,” I said, “we ask you to please give us our privacy at this time. We all feel it would be inappropriate to make any comments that might lead to unnecessary and unwarranted speculation.”

“Well said, son.”

“Thanks, dad.”

“Enough chitchat, let’s do this thing.”

“Okay, mom, hold your horses. Chantal, are you ready?”

“I’m halfway there.”

“She’s my kind of girl.”

“Dad!”

“Just saying.”

“Don’t forget what I told you about the yam-yams.”

“Mom!”

## *About the Author*

**W**inner of the celebrated *Grand prix de l'évitement du lave-vaisselle* (Grand Prize in Evasion of Dishwashing), John Scott G is a twisted little geek with the intellectual acumen of a newel post and the sincerity of a bag of packing pellets. Too disagreeable to interface with people, he dons disguises to appear in public. At home, he never opens the curtains except on nights when there is a full moon, and what transpires on those evenings is shrouded in mystery. Or buried under the cactus garden.



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