

Intro, I'm Dead

I'm dead. I don't know how I'm talking to you now when I'm dead, really dead, but I am. I mean, really really really dead. It's like I woke up, and instead of being alive now I'm dead. It doesn't feel that different, just sort of cut off and isolated. Kind of lonely. You'd think someone would have welcomed me to death, like the tunnel, and family members, and the light and all. Nope. It's just dark and lonely, and cut off.

I haven't been dead very long, and I wasn't the first to die. It's been really scary, actually, because a bunch of people died before me. There was Jimmy, and Dick, and Judy; they're all dead too. And a bunch others. I didn't know them all. Why haven't they come to say "hello" to me? And the dog too. The dog was the first one to die. I'd sure like to pet his head right now. He was murdered!

There, I said it. Murdered. We were all murdered. There's a serial killer out there and I'm just the latest victim. I don't like admitting it, because we shouldn't have been murdered. We were helping and all. I'm pretty sure I know who did it, but it doesn't make sense. I was the strongest one. I'm the one who was digging the hole for that damn bomb shelter. Now what's he going to do without his hole being finished. Guess he'll just have to dig it himself. Humff.

So, first it was the dog, and we were all horrified enough because that beautiful dog was just killed. And what did he do, you ask? What did that poor dog do to deserve being killed? He peed on the floor. He was a good good dog, but was always peeing inside the house, usually in the middle of the floor. And then you know who would get up in the morning all grumpy like and then step in the pee.

Boy, would I laugh at him. He'd be hopping and swearing, and going on about how he was going to "kill that damn dog." I didn't like the part about killing the dog, but I thought he was just joking back then.

And now I'm dead too. I don't know what to do with myself, you know, now that I'm dead and all. What do dead people do with their time? ...all that time? At least I can keep an eye on things, and if someone else is killed off I can say "hi, welcome to being dead" or something like that. Why can't I see the others? I can see what's happening in the house, and hear some of the conversations, but the

other dead ones just seem to be gone. Except me. I'm dead but I'm here. Kind of.

Author

Okeechobee is a sweet little town to live in, and Adam likes it here. He has a cute one story, two bedroom home with a lime green stucco exterior. Adam says the green is brighter than he would have liked, but it's the color that it is and he's not going to bother painting it.

Okeechobee is a town of over six thousand people, small enough to be known by others, large enough to still see strangers on occasion. They say hello to you by name at the grocery and post office, and where Adam works at the service station. Adam doesn't greet people by name, not in the same way other people do. Even if he knows them he rarely says hello. After all, he's in the garage fixing their cars while Jerry is pumping gas and running the joint.

Adam's house is in Cypress Quarters, an unincorporated town that's off on its own just a hop away from the main town. Ha! When I say main town, I just mean the cross roads where there's the one and only traffic light, but surprisingly with a bustling little downtown. Cypress Quarters is a nice little neighborhood with big lots, lots of trees, and quiet roads, just the way Adam likes it. Quiet, peaceful, neat and orderly.

Adam has owned this house for just a year. His father passed away, and his mother, seeing opportunity in Miami, forced him to buy it from her. The price was more than it was worth on the market, but less than it was worth to him to be rid of her and have the home to his own.

He got to cleaning right away, which was a big deal. His mother was a hoarder, and there were narrow paths from room to room, narrow paths with walls of stuff and filth that tilted back like a canyon, but precariously unstable. You couldn't see the floor anywhere, but you could smell that there were things there that shouldn't be. It took Adam a few months to throw everything away, and then to clean and clean again until the smell was mostly gone. He bought all new furniture, and even replaced all the dishes and cooking items.

For all the horrors in this house, he had reclaimed it and made it his own.

Sometimes he would avoid a certain spot in...

"Hey's you! Wat about me?" says a small voice.

"Who are you?" I reply.

"I's Dennis. But who's you?" he asks.

"I'm the author," I reply.

"The what?" he's incredulous, "Wha's an autor?"

"I'm writing this book, Adam's story."

"Oh, ya' mean my story! Right!?!!"

"Yours?" I ask.

"Yeah! You need ta write ma story."

"Do I now? How old are you, Dennis?"

"I'ma 5."

"Such a big boy."

"I wuddn't know 'bout dat. I stay mostly ta maself. Kinda lonely."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"So that's why I want ya to write ma story."

"Hmmm, I can write about you too."

"Woud ya? Woud ya? Woud ya? PLEASE."

"Here, let me to do this. You can have a whole page for yourself. Here, take this piece of paper and draw your story for me."

"Uh K. I'ma gunna do that."

So as I was saying, sometimes he'd avoid a certain spot in the house, walking around it or turning his back to it. He'd find a new throw rug or a nice painting and then he'd be able to tiptoe by that spot without flinching.

The people in Okeechobee are fine folks, friendly and kind. Most of them know Adam, even if he doesn't know all of them. They keep an eye out for him, and show him little kindnesses whenever they can. As small as it is, Okeechobee is the county seat, and there's a big, white, and important looking Greek Revival courthouse in the center of town. Adam doesn't go there, because that's where the most strangers are in town.

I forgot the mention the movie theater. Gilbert Movie theater is Adam's favorite place to go. In the line of the Park Street stores, conjoined two story brick

buildings, is the Gilbert theater. Every Saturday you can find Adam at the theater for the latest opening. He gets his ticket, then goes in to get a big tub of popcorn with extra butter, and an ice cold Coca-Cola. He was one of the few people who cared about the start time of the movie, and would sit up front so that he didn't have people pushing past him to get to their seats mid-movie.

With his neck cricked back, looking up at a huger than life movie screen, Adam stuffs popcorn into his mouth with one hand and sips his Coca-Cola from the other, with a smile on his face. Tonight he is here to see....

"Here!" says Dennis.

"Here what?" I reply.

"My picture. Here."

"This is quite the picture. Very interesting," I say looking it over carefully. "Tell me about your picture."



“See that boy, he’s me, an’ I wanna be outside. I can’t be outside ‘cause the gators are there and there. My house is in the tree, an’ that’s where I stay. I stay there all the time and I’m alone. It’s nice outside. It’s sun shiny, but I have to go inside. I’m bad, so tha’s why dares algators. They’re the mean kind. Not the nice ones like in the lake.”

“Wow,” I say, “that’s quite the picture. And you drew that all by yourself?”

“Sho did!”

“I will put this in my book. Can you draw me another picture please?”

“Yas sir!” he says, “I’ma draw you that thar aleen that’s floating in Okaychobay lake. Didja hear that? I can say Okaychobay.”

“Yes. Very good. But a what floating in the lake?” I scowl.

“The alEEn! In his fwyng susser.”

I mumble to myself, “aleen in a fwyng...OH flying...susser. Saucer!” Then louder I say, “Oh, an alien in a flight saucer. Yes, that sounds like fun. Go draw that for me.”

“Fun? Dunno why you think that bugger is fun. He’s uggy.”

“Ok, then. Go draw.”

“K. Bye!”

Adam is going to see “Some Like it Hot”. He’s gone alone, as usual, but the ticket clerk doesn’t think anything of it. He just says, “Hi Adam,” and hopes he’s in a good mood tonight.

Casper

I’m the one that know’s what’s really going on here. I can disappear and am quieter than a mouse. And I heard Lyssa talking after she made Adam buy the house. She’s a no-good, lying, rotten scoundrel!

I heard her and Theo talking. He’s a rotten scoundrel too, I tell ya! Rotten! He says they can take Adam’s money from the house, and buy a whole apartment building in Miami! Yeah, and then they’re going to rent it out to all those people escaping Cuba, as if they have any money. No, no, she says, they can rent it out to the soldiers and sailors who are all going down there to fight Castro. As if they’re going to take that \$8000 from that tiny house and buy some huge building. You need at least \$30,000 for something like that! I know, I looked it up in the classifieds. They just kept going on and on about how rich they’re going to get from those stupid Cubans, and kept laughing like they’d won a game show.

But then I found out the real reason they're leaving, and that makes a lot more sense. Because if I know anything, Lyssa can't just leave this house and all of her precious belongings. But now she's talking about just leaving it all, not even caring or looking back, just going. She won't even let Adam throw out a newspaper, let alone keeping his own room clean, but now she's chucking it all out the window, so to speak.

Theo was going on about some warrant or something about a robbery. Lyssa started screaming at him about why he got her all involved in this. She was mad about having to sit in some car while he ran errands, then goes on about how he was running really fast and screaming at her to drive. She was really mad about it, but it sounded like really she was scared.

He told her to just shut up about the whole thing, and to stop crying and all. I heard a loud crash, and I think it was Lyssa that groaned.

She was going on saying Ok, Ok, Theo, Ok, just let me be, Ok.

He said she was a dirty ass woman who didn't deserve to go with him.

Then she started screaming that it was her money that he was going with, and if he wanted to buy that apartment building, that then he needed her.

The he said, awe, shut up and was stomping around. This place is a hell hole anyway, he said.

Fuck you, she said, and she started crying again.

Fuck you, Fuck you, Fuck you, he yelled louder and louder.

I don't know what happened next. I was just listening, I couldn't see them. But there was a lot of crashing and bumping and grunting. It was like they were dancing, but with all those things piled up they were all crashing to the ground. But then I heard some more thuds with grunts, and I hid. I know when it's time to be invisible, and that's what I do. That's why I'm Casper. I've heard it before, and I stay away.