

[Soundscape: interior of a car driving through the suburbs, midday]

EMIL

Hey guys! You're listening to Scam Busters, where we debunk the latest and greatest in the work of scams, hussles, and consumer protection nightmares. I'm your host Emil, and this week we've got something truly peculiar. I received a very interesting brochure just about two months ago with a very interesting pitch: "Come home to Shelterwood: Hello, Emil! Have you been missing home? Longing for the comfort of a childhood long-ago spent? Join our new development and come home all over again."

Now, what you can't see is that these Shelterwood people, they managed to hunt down a picture of *my house* from when I was a kid. Well - my Dad's house. From what I can tell - the brochure is unfortunately quite vague - these people are advertising a service where they *rebuild* the house you grew up in. In fact, they claim that the house is already built. Weird, right? Well, it's about to get weirder, because my Dad happened to be an extremely eccentric architect by the name of Raymond Hearst.

Some of you just gasped. For everyone else, you know how in the early 2000s all these houses started cropping up - McMansions, people called them - where the uber-wealthy would live in like, 10,000 square-foot monstrosities visible from space? Yeah, well, that whole trend started with my Dad. Which means the house I grew up in-

[EMIL gasps and slams on the breaks. After a beat:]

I... don't believe it. Hold on.

[EMIL gets out of the car, slamming the door. They start walking towards the house.]

6 stories tall. A sprawling 35,000 square feet of mismatched gables and turrets and half-assed topiary. I don't believe it. This is my house.

[They go up a few stairs. We hear a wind chime blow on a gentle breeze.]

How in the hell...

[They ring the doorbell.]

Hello? He- oh. There's a note. s

[They pick up and read the note.]

Emil - feel free to look around. Lock the door on your way out if you don't mind. William Brewster. I - [nervous laughter] okay. So, maybe not a scam. Let's take a look.

[They open the door and enter.]

Oh. My god.

[They shut the door behind them, more quietly now. The ambiance is close. A clock ticks.]

You guys, I - how - [Beat] This is the house. I mean, it, it *is* the house. There's a painting up at the top of the stairs, this massive, gaudy, black-and-red abstract piece. I inherited it after my Dad died, and I - I left it in the house. Because where was I gonna put it, you know? But - hold on.

[They turn around and open the door again. Maybe a bird on the wind. Chimes.]

No. For a minute there, I thought maybe - I don't know, I thought I might be on my old street. Like maybe they'd just renamed the neighborhood or something. But no, this is a different place.

RAYMOND [From far off] m

Emil?

[EMIL gasps]

EMIL

D- Dad?

[The house is quiet]

Whew. I'm hearing things! Well, let's uh - let's look around!

[EMIL starts to move through the house]

Nice of them to keep all the lights on. In a house this big, the further in you get, the less natural light is even *possible*, not that that's something my dad cared about. No, a Hearst home was about one thing and one thing only: conspicuous consumption. Which, reminds me:

[EMIL opens a door]

Hah! Yup, just as I remembered it. The dueling piano room. Two very pricey grands with exactly zero people who could play in the house. Sometimes Dad would come in here and play chopsticks. He used to ask me to play the other part with him but that got old after I was like, 9. Oh, check this out:

[EMIL takes a few steps and presses a button.]

Elevator. Goes up 6 and down two. Yes we had a sub basement, and yes it was entirely for wine and beer.

[The elevator arrives. EMIL gets in.]

Let's see if my old room is still up there.

[The elevator whirs into motion.]

This is so surreal. I have no goddamn clue how they pulled this off.

[Ding! The elevator arrives. Somewhere distant, music.]

What is... that's my CD player! Hey! HEY!

[The music shuts off.]

HELLO?

[The elevator door shuts behind them]

Who - who's there??

[Beat. Then: a new song starts playing from the other room: RAYMOND and EMIL, playing chopsticks when they're much younger. RAYMOND is playing first.]

What...?.

RAYMOND [On the recording]

Okay, ready? And... go!

[Young EMIL starts playing, but they're nervous and mess it up.]

No, no NO.

[RAYMOND slams his hands on the keys.]

Like this:

[Piano again, from the tomm p]

EMIL

Mom recorded that little music lesson. Jesus, I really am home.

RAYMOND [From elsewhere in the house; panning useful here]  
EMIL WILL YOU SHUT THAT CRAP OFF.

EMIL

- oh God. Oh god it's time to go.

[EMIL hammers the elevator door button]

Come on come on come on -

RAYMOND [Less distant]

EMMY. I AM NOT JOKING.

[The elevator arrives. EMIL spills into it]

EMIL

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

[They catch their breath as the elevator goes down, slowly, floor by floor. Very faintly, as it approaches the ground floor, chopsticks can be heard.]

No. No, no, please.

[The doors open. RAYMOND, or something like him, stops playing the piano.]

RAYMOND

There you are! You're late.

EMIL

Dad - no, Dad, you're -

RAYMOND

What?

EMIL

You're dead.

RAYMOND

No, my dear, not here. Not in Shelterwood.

EMIL

I've had this dream before.

RAYMOND

Oh? And what happens next.

EMIL

The first thing I notice is your height. How tall you are, like you barely fit in the room. You're wearing the suit we buried you in. And then you smile-

RAYMOND

Like this?

EMIL

God - all those teeth.

RAYMOND

All the better to eat you *with*.

[RAYMOND lunges into elevator. EMIL screams. There is an awful rending of flesh, and the microphone is thrown, skitters to a halt on the floor outside the elevator. The elevator doors close, quieting the mayhem. The recording is crudely spliced with something from somewhere else.]

NICHOLAS DEROSO

This is not a place of honor. This is a warning. Stay away. Do not come to Shelterwood.

STEPHEN INDRISANO

Shelterwood: A Suburban Gothic is crowdfunding during the month of July, 2023. Follow us on Twitter and Tumblr @shelterwoodpod, and support the show at [bit.ly/shelterwoodpod](https://bit.ly/shelterwoodpod). Thank you for listening.