

WELCOME HOME

By

Gary Parr

Parrtothepeople@gmail.com

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

CRAIG sits at a kitchen table eating a bowl of cereal, reading a newspaper. He is mid thirties with mousy brown hair and average looks. He gets to the property section and freezes, a spoon of cereal halfway to his mouth. Milk drips on the table.

We see the page and focus on a property near the middle. It's a two storey, mid-terrace house that's seen better days. He puts the spoon back in the bowl and grips the paper with both hands, they begin to shake. After a few beats he throws it down and quickly leaves the kitchen.

INT. PSYCHOTHERAPISTS OFFICE - DAY

Craig and another man, PETER, sit opposite each other in a comfortable looking office. Peter is an older man, with grey hair and beard. He is wearing a shirt and chinos. Craig fidgets nervously in his chair. He's playing with a Rubik's cube, each twist and turn fills the room with clicking.

Peter gestures to the newspaper lying open between them.

PETER

Seeing this has obviously been triggering for you.

No response.

PETER (CONT'D)

What's going through your mind right now?

After a few beats Craig finally looks at Peter.

CRAIG

I don't even know where to start.

Peter points to the paper again.

PETER

Lets start with that.

Craig begins to twist and turn the Rubik's cube more rapidly.

CRAIG

I've been dreaming about him. Well...nightmares really.

PETER

The old man in the dirty brown suit?

CRAIG

Yeah. He has me strapped down,
cutting into me with a knife. He
keeps telling me to come home.

PETER

What do you think about that?

CRAIG

Well, I'm not overly keen on the
idea.

PETER

We've been through this, it's just
a house, an empty shell. No ghosts.

CRAIG

Part of me believes that.

PETER

And the rest?

CRAIG

The rest is telling me he's still
there, waiting for me.

PETER

You went through so much back then.
It's understandable you thought the
place was haunted.

CRAIG

My dad did terrible things, I'm not
denying that. But that house
damaged me just as much.

PETER

How so?

CRAIG

The old man...I think he was
feeding on me somehow.

PETER

Feeding on you?

CRAIG

Yeah, like all my pain and misery
made him stronger.

PETER

You really believe that?

CRAIG

After seeing the house again, even just in the paper, I do.

PETER

Trauma is complicated. Our minds are even more so.

CRAIG

You think I imagined it all?

PETER

Look, sometimes our coping strategies don't make a lot of sense. But they can stay with us for a long time.

CRAIG

You probably think I'm crazy. Well, crazier.

PETER

I'm never going to think you're crazy. I think this is all just unresolved trauma.

CRAIG

So you're keeping the straight jacket on standby then?

PETER

Now you're deflecting.

CRAIG

Hey, maybe I need an exorcist instead of a therapist.

PETER

Now you're definitely deflecting.

CRAIG

OK, what do you think I should do?

PETER

I think I have an idea.

CRAIG

Lets hear it, I'll do anything to make the nightmares stop. I want to stop being afraid.

PETER

Have you ever heard of exposure therapy?

EXT. DAY - STREET

Craig and Peter are standing across the road from the house in the newspaper. From the outside it looks dire, the paint is peeling, the gutters are broken, the windows are filthy, and the garden is an overgrown mess.

Craig is visibly nervous, tensed up, hands in his pockets, shuffling from side to side.

PETER
How are you feeling?

CRAIG
I'm about to go into the house that scarred me for life. Lets just say I'm a tad nervous.

PETER
I get that, but bringing you here is a great way for you to confront your fear of this place.

Peter puts his hand on Craigs shoulder reassuringly.

PETER (CONT'D)
I'll be with you every step of the way.

CRAIG
Are you charging me extra for this?

PETER
No, now lets go, the agent would only let me have the place for an hour.

Craig takes a deep breath and reluctantly follows Peter across the road.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

We're in a short, dark, dingy hallway, dust motes fill the air. The front door at the end opens and the two men enter, Peter closes it behind them.

CRAIG
Well here we are, home sweet home.

PETER
Thoughts?

Craig stares down the hallway. There are water stains on the wallpaper and the carpet is threadbare.

CRAIG

I love what they've done with the place.

Peter sighs in exasperation.

PETER

You know what I mean.

Craig shrugs.

CRAIG

I'm not picking up any bad vibes if that's what you mean.

PETER

How are your anxiety levels?

CRAIG

Well, lets just say I'm glad I popped a couple of diazepam before we came in.

Peter turns to look at the stairs.

PETER

Right then, lets get started. Where's your old bedroom?

CRAIG (SHOCKED)

Wait, you wanna just go straight up there?

PETER

No point wasting time. That's what we came to see.

Peter heads off towards the stairs. After several beats, Craig moves to follow him.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

The two men are standing outside a closed door. Peter is calm and collected, whilst Craig is tense and jittery.

PETER

You can do this.

Craig nods, takes a deep breath and opens the door.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

We see a small, sad looking box room with peeling wallpaper, bare floorboards and cracked ceiling. Craig lets out a sigh of relief and turns to Peter.

CRAIG

It's so small. I remember it being such a big, dark, scary place.

Both men enter and look around. There's nothing of interest except for a small, faded brown stain in the corner.

PETER

How does it feel to be back?

CRAIG

I'm not loving it. But mostly, I feel...ok.

Peter gives him a smile.

PETER

Are you feeling any kind of presence?

Craig shakes his head.

CRAIG

No, nothing.

PETER

So, seeing the place again isn't as scary as you'd thought it'd be?

CRAIG

No. It's strange, I just feel sad.

Craig looks around the room again before turning to Peter.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I think we can go now.

INT. CAR - DAY

Craig sits in the passenger seat of Peter's car, deep in thought.

PETER

Are you ok?

CRAIG

Not really. But I will be.

PETER
And the house?

CRAIG
You were right. It's just a shell.
The only thing haunting that place
are memories.

PETER
You should be proud of yourself.
What you just did was very brave.

Craig turns to him with a smile.

CRAIG
Do I get a lollypop now?

Peter returns the smile.

PETER
I think the diazepam's enough,
don't you?

They both laugh

PETER (CONT'D)
OK, let me drop you home.

Before he starts the engine Craig shakes his head.

CRAIG
Wait.

PETER
Whats wrong?

CRAIG
Nothing...it's just...I think I
want to go back up there. On my
own.

PETER
What are you thinking?

CRAIG
I need to face it, one on one. So I
can put all this to bed once and
for all.

Peter nods in understanding.

PETER
Ok then. I'll be right here waiting
for you.

INT. BEDROOM -DAY

Craig enters the room and slowly takes it all in.

CRAIG (FIRMLY)
I'm done with you.

He turns to leave and is shocked to find a tall, old man standing in the doorway. He's wearing a dirty brown suit. He's gaunt with sunken eyes and the skin is so tight on his face he looks almost skeletal. Craig, mouth open in shock, takes a step back.

CRAIG(SHAKY VOICE) (CONT'D)
It's you.

The old man slowly moves into the room.

OLD MAN (GRINNING)
I knew you'd be back.

CRAIG
No! I'm not doing this. You're not real!

OLD MAN (CHUCKLING)
Oh, I'm real enough.

Craig closes his eyes and shakes his head.

CRAIG
This isn't happening..this isn't happening.

Craig's eyes snap open and he sees the old man still advancing. He now has a long sharp knife in his hand.

CRAIG (CONT'D)
What the fuck do you want?

OLD MAN
We'll get to that, don't you worry.
First I want to tell you a story,
just like I used to.

He's now only a couple of steps away.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
When I lived here, a long time
before you arrived, I got accused
of all-sorts

Craig takes another step back.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Horrible things. They said I was a
kiddie fiddler and a murderer.

CRAIG (VOICE TIGHT)
Why are you telling me this?

OLD MAN (SNEERING)
Isn't that why you came? To delve
into all the dirty little nooks and
crannies.

Craig shakes his head.

CRAIG
That's not why I came.

OLD MAN
They couldn't find their little
kiddiewinks, so they broke in one
night and slaughtered me.

He gestures towards the stain with the knife.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
I bled to death right there in that
corner. Bled so much, it stained
this place forever.

Craig glances around to look at the stain, it looks bigger
and darker.

CRAIG (VOICE CRACKING)
I'm getting the fuck out of here.

The old man has closed the gap between them.

OLD MAN
You can't leave yet, I haven't
gotten to the best bit. Do you want
to hear it?

Craig shakes his head.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
All those little guttersnipes never
did show up again. Do you know why?

Again Craig shakes his head. The old man's rictus grin seems
to grow even wider.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Because I murdered every single one
of those little bastards. Took my
time too.

The old man closes his eyes and sighs contentedly.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
I squeezed the fear right out of
them and drank it up like single
malt.

He opens his eyes again and stares intently at Craig.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
After I died, I went
somewhere...somewhere dark...cold.

Craig moves, he shoots past The old man and speeds toward the door. It slams shut before he can reach it.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
But when you came, your pain...your
fear...so succulent...so ripe. It
called me back.

Behind The old man, the stain has become a pool of blood. It begins to bubble and churn. Craig stares on in terror. Something slowly begins to emerge, pulling itself out. We see that it is a blood soaked small boy, maybe six years old. He has scars for eyes and his mouth is stitched shut with thick black string. His legs end in ragged stumps below the knees. He begins to drag himself across the floor. The boy reaches out to Craig, a mewling sound escaping through his stitched mouth. The old man watches on gleefully. Behind him, more children begin to drag themselves out of the blood. They crawl towards Craig, he cowers in fear.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Welcome home Craig, welcome home.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

We see the closed door to Craig's old bedroom. Loud screams are heard(O.S.). Then silence.

FADE TO BLACK.